

UNDERSTANDING THE "GOD GAP":
RELIGION, POLITICS, AND POLICY IN THE
UNITED STATES AND GERMANY

AICGS GERMAN-AMERICAN ISSUES

04

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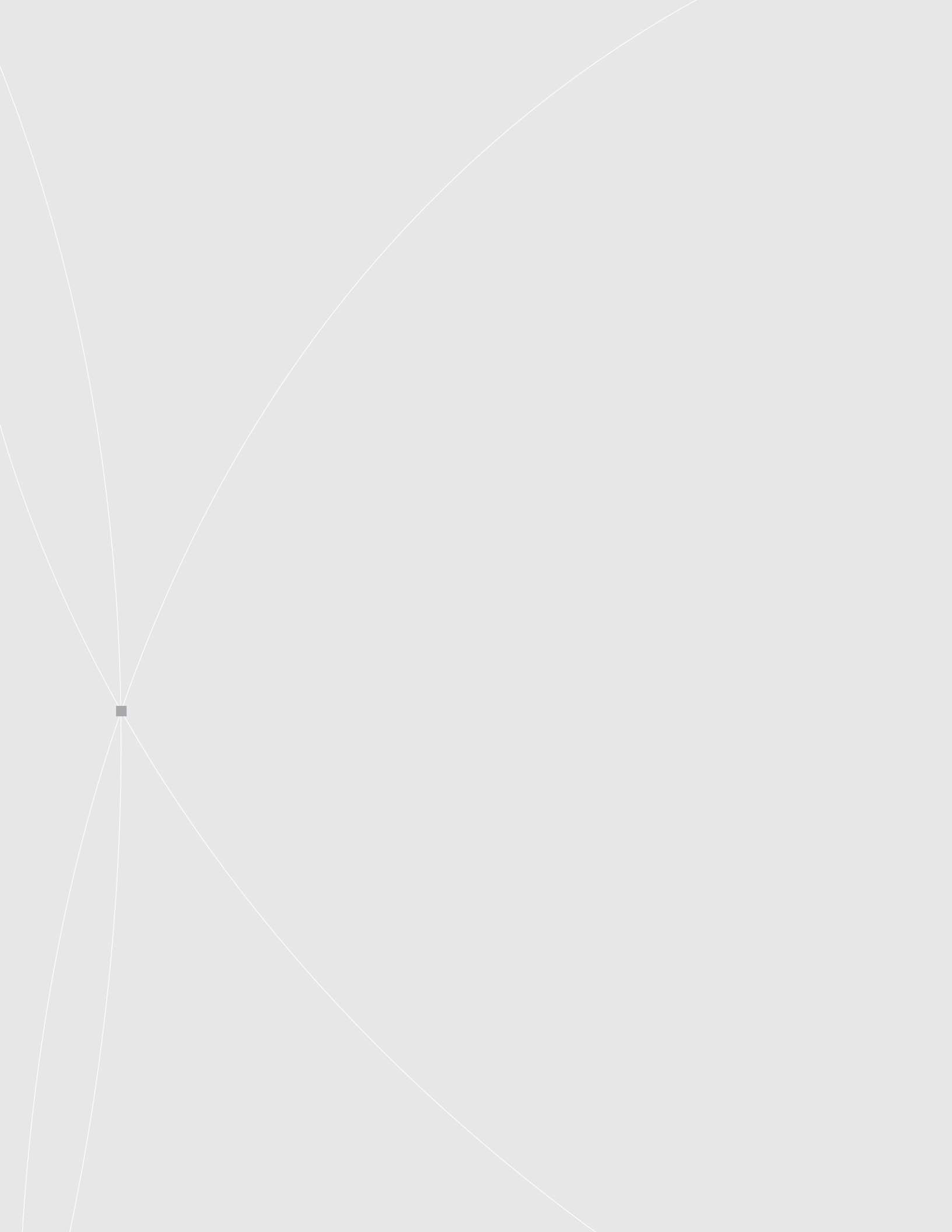
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FOREWORD

In foreign and domestic policy, the United States and Germany would appear to be drifting further apart. Despite their continuing economic interdependence, the rancorous transatlantic policy debates over such diverse issues as the Iraq war, the Kyoto Protocol and global climate change, UN reform, or the U.S. treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo have fueled a sense of mutual alienation, prompting observers on both sides of the Atlantic to wonder whether the United States and Europe continue to constitute a “community of values.”

German-American differences have appeared particularly profound when it comes to the role of religion and religiosity in public and political life and rhetoric. In a December 2002 Pew poll, six in ten Americans claimed that religion plays a “very important role in their lives,” as compared with 21 percent of German respondents.¹ In a June 2003 survey, 58 percent of Americans expressed the view that a belief in God is a prerequisite to personal morality, as compared with 33 percent of Germans polled.²

To some European observers, the United States may appear to be caught in the throes of a fundamentalist revival that is leading to the more frequent insertion of conservative religious beliefs and influences into foreign and domestic policy and politics. Some Americans in turn may see Europe as a continent that has become so secular that it no longer knows how to deal with the religious factor in society and politics, as seen in the difficulties that countries across the continent are encountering in integrating growing Muslim populations.

Behind these simplistic stereotypes lie more complex realities, as the collection of essays in this volume underscores. Moreover, while media headlines may trumpet differences, in fact, both countries are grappling with similarly difficult questions regarding the appropriate relationship between religion, state, and nation. And though they provide different answers to these questions, as conditioned by historical experience, cultural influences, and institutional structures, in both countries, religion and its role in public life, in notions of community and national identity, and in relations with third countries, above all, the Muslim world, have become more salient.

To encourage an intensified German-American dialogue on these and other issues, the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, with the support of and in partnership with The German Marshall Fund of the United States, in July 2004 began a new comparative project on religion and politics in the United States and Germany. The initiative is part of the Institute’s broader program on culture and politics, which explores the impact of cultural factors, changing interpretations of history, and collective notions of identity, on German-American relations.

Impetus for this dialogue has come not only from current events, but from a year-long exchange at the Institute on the future of German-American and transatlantic relations after the tumultuous debates over the Iraq war. A constant theme throughout these discussions was the impact of culture broadly understood on politics and policy in the United States and Germany and on German-American relations. Although political relations between the two countries have stabilized and economic integration remains deep and extensive, in the longer term a central question is whether the United States and Germany and its European partners continue to hold the same fundamental values or whether societal trends are causing our respective societies to drift further apart in ways that will affect our ability to cooperate on a broad range of issues.

The first phase of this dialogue has involved a bilateral exploration of key issues related to religion, politics, and public life in the United States and Germany. At a conference in May 2005, an interdisciplinary group of theologians, historians, analysts of culture and cultural critics, social scientists, and policy experts explored the historical and contemporary relationship between religion, the state, and national identity in Germany and the United States, including the challenges of religious pluralism and the impact, if any, of religion on domestic policy and on U.S. and German foreign relations and diplomacy. The conference, as well as the larger dialogue of which it is part, have underscored the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context of religion and politics in Germany, Europe, and the United States. For history has taught Americans and Germans different lessons about the dangers, or conversely, benefits of religious influences in the political and public sphere, and also leads our societies to respond to the challenges of globalization and religious diversity in different ways.

The essays contained in this volume present a variety of perspectives on the role of religion in public life and in politics in the United States and Germany. Many of the contributions focus on the challenges peculiar to either the United States or Germany—e.g. the role of evangelicals in the pluralistic American polity or of Turkish/Muslim minorities in Germany; others explore our different choices when faced with similar questions regarding the appropriate relationship between state and religion or the role of religion in defining national identity.

The differences between the United States and Germany are most evident in Rolf Schieder's thoughtful exploration of the complex relationship between the nation, the state, and religion in the two countries. In the United States, the institutional separation of church and state coexists with political rhetoric and debate that is infused with religion references and language. But the influence of religion goes even deeper, extending to Americans' self-understanding as a people and a nation. The United States is, Schieder observes, "a nation with the soul of church." Americans have a spiritual relationship to their own nation, which encompasses a belief in a special American mission in service of a greater, universal good. Despite the lack of a state church, Schieder notes, "religion and politics are knit into a closely woven fabric." Importantly, he argues, it has been a fabric that encompasses a "plurality of private faiths and denominational interests."

Germans, in contrast, have a far more ambivalent relationship to their nation. The relationship between worldly and religious leaders in German history has been the source of repeated conflict and fraught with mistrust. In contrast, Germans have tended to place relatively greater trust in the ability—and responsibility—of the state to provide for the welfare of its citizens. This German "statism," Schieder observes, extends to the organization and regulation of the major religious denominations in Germany. This existing institutional structure is coming under new strains, however, as Germany and Germans face difficult choices regarding the religious entities that will be either included or excluded in public life. Schieder concludes with a plea for greater understanding of German-American differences in the way that we "perceive, sell, and control" religion, which is the first step toward the discovery of our commonalities.

The future of the American civil religious fabric and its claim to encompass a "plurality of private faiths" may depend in part on the future of the Christian Right, the subject of Clyde Wilcox's essay. Wilcox challenges a common perception—particularly in Germany and Europe—that the Christian Right has "taken over" much of American politics. Examining the Christian Right as a social movement, Wilcox notes that the Christian Right has consistently mobilized in support of Republican candidates, most recently to secure the reelection of President George W. Bush. Yet, Wilcox argues, the relationship between the Christian Right and the American president is complicated; although President Bush has successfully cultivated the Christian Right, it is not clear that Bush indeed is an evangelical. Wilcox concludes that, rather than advancing the conservative social agenda of the Christian Right, President Bush and the Republican Party have seldom pushed forcefully on

the issue topping the evangelicals' agenda. The forthcoming battle over new appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court could be a test case of the administration's willingness to deliver on the Christian Right's agenda. Whatever the outcome of the battle, the influence of the Christian Right will doubtless remain at the center of U.S. debates about the appropriate place for religion in public life.

In the meantime, regardless of realities on the political battlefield, many Americans perceive the Christian Right to be on the ascendance, but draw different conclusions about the consequences of evangelicals' mobilization in U.S. politics. The challenges facing "Americans Jews in an evangelical America" is the focus of Jeffrey Peck's essay. Peck examines the recent alliance between some conservative and orthodox American Jews and the American Christian Right, a coalition that appears to be fueled both by evangelicals' unquestioning support of Israel and the pervasive fear of terrorism. Peck cautions American Jews to examine closely the claims and agenda of the Christian Right, which is incompatible with Americans' Jews' traditional support for liberal causes and their interest in a strong separation between church and state, which is essential to the protection of religious minorities' rights. Citing eminent scholar Professor Fritz Stern's reminder that democracy needs a liberal foundation, Peck urges American Jews to consider carefully not only what binds them to the Christian Right—unstinting support for Israel—but what divides them as well. These are questions that should concern all Americans, Peck concludes. At a time in which religious divides and schisms appear ever more salient to American public life, Peck asks "How much religion, defined across a broad spectrum of faiths, values, and spiritualities, can we bear as a foundation for who we are as Americans?"

The challenges of religious pluralism are at the heart of Jytte Klausen's examination of Germany's Muslim minority. Based on extensive interviews with European Muslim political and civic leaders, Klausen assesses the ability of Germany's Muslim population to be integrated into the existing structure of church-state relations. Political participation of German Muslims to date has been slowed by divisions within the Turkish-Muslim community, unhelpful interference by Turkey, and low naturalization rates, but there is also a clear disjuncture between the requirements of the German state for religious denominations that wish to gain formal legal standing and the fractured nature of Germany's Muslim community. The latter is divided between modernists and traditionalists and has yet to coalesce behind a single association that could gain official recognition as the representative of the German Muslim faith community. These divisions make it difficult to assess the potential impact of full integration on German political life. Although many Turks tend to support left-leaning parties, some traditionalist Muslims would prefer to lend their support to conservative parties that might allow a larger public space for religion—if these parties were to define religion as going beyond Christianity. The balance between religion and secularism in political and public life is likely to remain highly salient in Germany, spurred in part by debates about ethical and/or religious education in public schools, or related discussions of Europe's borders and identity in the wake of the European constitution's failure and the still looming issue of Turkish membership in the European Union.

While there are religious undercurrents in the current European debate about the EU's relationship with Turkey and Europe's identity, in fact, in the practice of both German and American foreign policy, there is a presumption against religious influences. The unwritten norm in both countries has been to separate the realm of foreign policy from religion. As the essays by Gardner Feldman and Johnston demonstrate, religious elements nevertheless have a role to play in German and U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy.

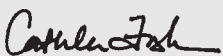
In her essay on German foreign policy, Lily Gardner Feldman argues that religion has had both a subtle and a direct role in German foreign policy. Religion's subtle influence is seen in the German government's foreign policy of reconciliation with France, Israel, the Czech Republic, and Poland after 1949. Germany's policy of reconciliation, Gardner Feldman notes, reflects a moral commitment to learn from National Socialism and the Holocaust. In practice, the process of reconciliation has constituted an "unarticulated, but nonetheless real,

search for forgiveness.” Though the latter may not always resonate with the German public, Gardner Feldman suggests that a more accurate measure of Germany’s commitment is in what Germans in fact do. The practice of reconciliation includes, importantly, the direct participation of the Protestant and Catholic churches, as well as religiously-based organizations (*Gesellschaften für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit* and *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste*).

As in Germany, religion per se plays no official role in American foreign policy. Whether the official exclusion of religious considerations serves U.S. interests in resolving international conflicts and combating terrorism is the focus of Doug Johnston’s essay. Johnston reasons that contemporary conflicts often have a significant religious component. This is particularly true with regard to religious terrorism. Yet, the United States, committed to the separation of church and state, lacks the ability to integrate the religious component with its practice of diplomacy, its conflict resolution efforts, and its counterterrorism campaign. Drawing on the experience of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, Johnston argues that the conscious melding of religion and statecraft can have a positive impact on conflict resolution and in combating religious terrorism, for which “religious reconciliation” offers a potential counter.

The implications of these similarities and differences in German and American approaches to religion, public life, and policy are examined in the closing essay by Cathleen Fisher. Religion increasingly plays into German perceptions of the United States—of American culture and values, of American political life, and of American leadership. In this sense, real or perceived divergences in religiosity could provide one more reason or justification for the German-American or transatlantic divorce that some may view as inevitable. Beyond the bilateral relationship, the religious element is an integral part of German and American relations with some third countries and could affect their ability to cooperate in pushing for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our differences should not obscure important commonalities, however. Both the United States and Germany are struggling to come to terms with the challenges that religious pluralism poses to national identity and societal cohesion, and to the traditional relationship between church and state. Moreover, both countries are confronted with fundamental questions regarding the role of religion in modern societies and in the age of globalization, which has engendered profound insecurity not only about jobs, but also about community, cultural identity, and values in our increasingly diverse societies.

In undertaking this exploration, AICGS has benefited from the advice, enthusiasm, and interest of numerous German and American partners who share the Institute’s belief in the importance of an intensified exchange on religion and politics in the United States and Europe. We are grateful to Ursula Soyez and our other partners at The German Marshall Fund of the United States. We would also like to acknowledge, in particular, the encouragement from Ambassador Karsten Voigt, Coordinator for German-American Affairs; and the insights and advice of Professor Rolf Schieder and his colleagues at the new *Forschungsbereich Religion und Politik* at the Humboldt University in Berlin; Dr. Marianne Zepp, Program Officer for Contemporary History and Development of Democracy at the Berlin office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation; Dr. Timothy Shah, Senior Fellow in Religion and World Affairs of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life; and Dr. Jeffrey Peck, Professor at Georgetown University and the director of the AICGS Culture and Politics program. As always, Ilonka Oszvald has provided invaluable assistance in the editing and preparation of this publication.



CATHLEEN FISHER
Deputy Director

NOTES

1 Pew Global Attitudes Project, "U.S. Stands Alone in its Embrace of Religion," 19 December 2002.

2 Pew Research Center For The People and The Press, Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Views of a Changing World," June 2003.

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ESSAYS

CHURCH, STATE, AND NATION IN GERMANY

ROLF SCHIEDER

“We are the Pope”—read the headline of *Bild*, the most influential tabloid in Germany, the day after the election of Benedict XVI. *Bild* did not use the traditional verbiage, “We have a Pope” (*habemus papam*) or “They [the Catholics] have a new pope.” In this case, “we” did not refer to German Catholics, but to Germans as a whole. Much like the headline, “We are the champions” that typically follows soccer victories, the newspaper tried to appeal to national sentiments. *Bild*’s attempt was, however, unsuccessful. Although German Catholics (comprising 30 percent of the population) were proud of a German being elected head of the Roman Catholic Church, many Protestants (30 percent of the population) as well as those without a religious confession (30 percent of the population), did not identify with the civil religious enthusiasm of *Bild*.

The reactions of German President Horst Köhler and President George W. Bush to the election of Pope Benedict XVI demonstrate the different roles religion plays in public and political life in Germany and the United States. The German president stated that he was “pleased” and “even a little bit proud” of the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger to the papacy. Before the statement was issued, Köhler’s advisors had discussed whether an expression of pride would violate the neutrality of the state and his position as president of non-religious as well as religious Germans. In contrast, President George W. Bush not only praised the new pope as a “man of wisdom,” he also stated that he, Laura, and the American people would “pray for him.” Keeping in mind that in the early days of the United States the pope was viewed by many as “the Antichrist,” it is remarkable that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have a Protestant president of a political superpower who has no problems in showing sympathy for the Catholic leader of a religious superpower in Rome. As

many church historians proclaim, “First and fourth Rome in diplomatic harmony.”¹

While most Americans do not take issue with the use of religious language by their president, this practice would cause severe political problems in Germany. Confessional competition—including anticlerical world views of a socialist and nihilistic nature—is still a political factor in Germany. Germans view the religious language of U.S. presidents as a violation of the separation between church and state and do not understand that religion and politics can be so closely interconnected while separation is strictly carried out on the institutional level.

The opposite is the case in Germany. On the one hand, there is strict separation between religious and political language. On the other hand, there are close ties between the two official churches and the state. Churches in Germany are entitled to the status *Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts* (KOR),

which roughly translates as “corporations of public law.” Other KOR include incorporated towns, public services for transportation, energy, and water, and public foundations. To gain KOR status, an organization’s purpose must be deemed to be in the public interest and the organization must be accredited by the state. Recently, the administrative court of Berlin ruled that it is illegal for the state to deny the application of Jehovah’s Witnesses for KOR status. Because of the neutrality of the state in religious matters, it is difficult for the state to differentiate between what constitutes a “church” as opposed to a “sect,” between “good” and “bad” denominations, and between traditional churches and new religious movements. Although German public opinion and politicians protested the ruling, they had few juridical arguments to challenge it.

There is a feeling among the German public that small religious denominations, referred to as “sects,” which lie outside of the traditional established Catholic and Protestant framework, are endangering the common consensus. This attitude is in contrast to the Catholic and Protestant churches, which are seen as stabilizing forces helping to integrate the nation on ethical and spiritual matters. Churches with KOR status accredited by the state stand in conflict with processes of religious pluralism and individualism. Increased differentiation among religions weakens the state’s ability to maintain its traditional special partnership with the established churches. The established churches are not only responsible for the education of German youth, but also are needed for civil religious ceremonies in the communities. By virtue of their legal status as public bodies, the churches have guaranteed slots on public television, and they are always invited to take part in the consultations of national ethic councils.

Jehovah’s Witnesses in the United States must have difficulty understanding the situation of their fellow Witnesses in Germany. After all, why should a religious denomination step into a special relationship with the state? The American experience seems to prove that neither the establishment nor the prohibition of religion by the state is beneficial for religious development. Thus, applying for state privileges seems wrong. The likely answer of German Jehovah’s Witnesses would be that the religious culture in

Germany is significantly different from the American one, and they must adapt in order to survive.

The United States from a European Religious-Political Point of View: A Nation with the Soul of a Church

English poet G. K. Chesterton characterized the United States as a “nation with the soul of a church.” Most Europeans are inclined to agree with this metaphor. Indeed, Americans have a spiritual relationship with their country. This spiritual relationship manifests itself in several different ways. The American flag is on display in almost every church. The Pledge of Allegiance is meant to be a civil religious ritual, not a nationalistic one. The Pledge is not the worship of the nation as such, but an appeal to the visions, aspirations, and ideals that American society stands for—and a reminder of the standards by which current political practices are being judged and found wanting. Abraham Lincoln’s famous notion of America as an “almost chosen nation” and the “last best hope on earth” still plays a vital role in the minds and hearts of the American people.

From the very beginning, the “American experiment” was understood as playing a vital role in the millennial task of bringing about the “kingdom of God.” As John F. Kennedy stated, and as every visitor of his memorial in Arlington Cemetery can read, “Let us go forth to lead the land we love asking his blessing and his help, but knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.” The feeling that America has a manifest destiny in the Judeo-Christian history of salvation has led theologians to raise their warning voices. Is the kingdom of God an American possession? As H.R. Niebuhr put it in his famous book *The Kingdom of God in America*,

Henceforth the kingdom of the Lord was a human possession, not a permanent revolution. It is in particular the kingdom of the Anglo-Saxon race, which is destined to bring light to the gentiles by means of lamps manufactured in America.²

There certainly is a “wall of separation” between church and state in the United States—but religion and politics are knit into a closely woven fabric. When

Europeans think of religion, they immediately associate it with a church. This is, however, quite a parochial and narrow-minded perception. The subject of “In God We Trust” on the U.S. one dollar bill is not a “church” but the *people* of the United States—regardless of the church membership or confessional orientation the dollar’s owner might have. It is difficult for Europeans to understand that there exists in the United States a public civil religion alongside the plurality of private faiths and denominational differences.

American civil religion stands in the tradition of the theology of the covenant of the Old Testament. God had entered into a covenant not with a church, but with a people as a whole. America as “God’s New Israel” was the vision many immigrants had as they fled the oppression of Europe’s religious majorities. For them, crossing the Atlantic seemed much like the biblical crossing of the Red Sea, the arrival in America akin to having reached the Promised Land. Immigrants did not gather in ethnic ghettos but could be found in the denominations that had close ties to their native countries. Germans joined Lutheran churches, Italians Catholic ones, the English joined Anglican or Presbyterian congregations, and so on.

The Religious-Political Culture in Germany: Churches with the Soul of a Nation

When Americans say “church,” they think of a denomination, a congregation in the neighborhood, a place where family life on Sundays takes place. The church is an integral part of private life. When Catholic Germans refer to “church,” they think of the Holy Father in the Vatican in Rome, the bishops, old cathedrals, and a highly influential spiritual and political institution. When Protestant Germans think of the church, they remember an experience of loss—the end of the monarchy in 1919, when German Protestants not only lost their highest bishops, but also their position of state church. From the early years of the Reformation until the end of the nineteenth century, the kings and princes had not only ruled over the political realm but also over the spiritual realm. This was true for all European countries. As Alexis de Toqueville wrote in *Democracy in America*, “In Europe, Christianity has been intimately united to the

powers of the earth. Those powers are now in decay and it is, as it were, buried under their ruins.”³ While the First Amendment of the American Constitution ruled that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” the religious history of Germany has been the permanent struggle of establishing and prohibiting the exercise of religion. While the United States has not experienced any religious-political conflicts for more than 200 years, the political history of Germany can be read as an enduring conflict between secular and religious powers. The fact, for example, that German civil servants are prohibited from wearing a cross, *kippa*, or headscarf bears witness to this heritage.

In terms of historical development, the church was the first overarching institution to develop in Germany, followed by individual states, and only then by the nation. Germany is in this sense a “late developer” in comparison to England, Spain, or France. After the Reformation, Germany was deeply divided along religious lines, and the religious wars of the seventeenth century devastated the country. The Prussian state had assumed the mantle of German nationalism in the nineteenth century, but the idea of Prussia as the “germ” of the German nation came to an end after World War II. There is thus no founding myth worth remembering and the ambivalence of many Germans toward “nation” and “nationhood” remains—the German government even wanted to abolish the Day of German Unity in order to save money.

German awareness of its nationhood is not rooted in the positive, but in the negative, primarily in the remembrance of the Holocaust. There is no political event that Germans take pride in. The only field where German national feelings seem to be alive is soccer. “The miracle of Bern” in 1954, when Germany defeated Hungary in the World Cup soccer tournament, is viewed by many as being parallel to the events of 1989, when the first GDR-citizens passed through the gates on the Hungarian border into Austria. As songwriter and GDR-dissident Wolf Biermann stated, “Twice the Hungarians were open for German desires—once in 1954, now in 1989.”

The new “Berliner Republik” is still in search of its identity. Some hope that German identity will dissolve

into a European one—but this “Europe of nationalities” seems to be divided on central political issues. Although the term “nation” derives from the Latin word *nasci* (to be born), and *Natio* is the Latin goddess of birth, the modern idea of a nation is less connected with the idea of an ethnic body, which is constituted by the bonds of blood, but more with the idea of a civil body that has a common understanding of human constitutional rights, and a shared vision of a nation’s role in history and of its destiny. In this sense, we should not worry about German nationalism, but rather the lack thereof.

The Religious-Political Culture in Germany: The State with the Soul of a Nation?

For Germans, the state has always been more important than the nation. The term “state” developed during the seventeenth century, became popular in the age of Absolutism, and was indispensable for political theory in the eighteenth century. Originally the term referred to the state of security and common good within a specific territory. Catholic and Protestant churches alike accepted the necessity of a political agent responsible for justice and the ordering of society. The need to differentiate not only between church and state but also between state and society was common in the nineteenth century, because only this differentiation guaranteed human rights and the freedom of the individual.

There is a special German sense of *Etatismus* (statism), the belief that the state is responsible for the social, economic, and private welfare of its citizens. The realization that the state is not capable of living up to these responsibilities is a new and frightening experience for many Germans. Statism, not nationalism, is the most pressing problem in Germany. The idea that everything in life, from cradle to grave, has to be ordered by the state, and that there is no need for personal and private initiative, is not only deeply rooted in the religious-political history of Germany but also in the current religious-political culture.

The establishment of individual freedom of religion was not the only outcome of the Reformation in

Germany. Another important result was that the organization of religion became the responsibility of political leaders. This responsibility of the state for religious matters was heightened during the age of Absolutism. The famous saying of the Prussian king Frederick the Great that, “In my country everybody can search his blessings in his own way,” is, on the one hand, a sign of religious tolerance. On the other hand, religious pluralism remained a “top-down” business and was under the control of the state even under this Enlightenment king.

Even today, Germans expect the state to be the organizing body for determining the inclusion or exclusion of religious entities from public life. When confronted with the growing numbers of Muslims in their country, Germans appealed immediately to the state for intervention. In Berlin the Social Democrats plan to establish compulsory religious education, *Wertekunde* (study of values), in public schools in order “to relativize religion.” Religious education in Germany has not been compulsory—students could opt out if they chose. History has shown, however, that a state that fights against the religions of its people will not survive.

Outlook: Defining Religion for Transatlantic Purposes?

Finding common ground is necessary if we want to make a difference in the way we communicate across borders and cultures. Terms and notions like religion and politics are often used to establish this common ground. However, in intercultural communication we face the problem that the meaning of these notions not only changes through history but also varies among different cultures. This is especially the case with the term “religion.” After German reunification, a young girl from eastern Germany was asked whether she was religious; her answer was, “No, I’m normal!” For her, religion was an abnormality—not in a psychiatric sense, but in a social sense. Scientists and theologians in Germany are prone to seeing religion as something special, something distinctly apart from everyday life that only a minority can achieve. The idea of religion as a distinct realm has a long European tradition. When St. Augustine differentiated between the *civitas Dei* (kingdom of God) and

the *civitas terrena* (kingdom of earth) he invented the notion of a heavenly perfect society (i.e. the church) in opposition to a worldly political society that stands under the rule of the devil.

While the notion of religion has an exclusive character for many Europeans, the American concept of religion tends to be inclusive. One can become religious about almost everything—about psychoanalysis as well as about the family, about art or the progress of society. It did not come by chance that Max Weber developed his famous theory about the mutual influences between capitalism and Calvinism after visiting the United States. Furthermore, the great theologian Paul Tillich did not invent his highly influential definition of religion as “something which is of ultimate concern”⁴ until he had emigrated to the United States and encountered American religious life. Tillich’s theory that religion is the substance of culture and culture is a form of religion can be proven easily in the United States of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Although this theory might be true for all cultures, Europeans have difficulty accepting it, because for them religion connotes exclusion, not inclusion.

Perhaps a “God gap” between Germany and the United States does not exist, but there is a distinctly different way of perceiving, selling, and controlling religion. This essay is an appeal for an increased awareness of the deep differences not only concerning religious beliefs and practices, but also of the differences concerning the religious-political cultures as a whole, on whose ground we develop our theories.

NOTES

1 There are some church historians who see the history of Christianity in terms of the different centers of power over the ages. The first was Rome itself, the second was Byzantium, the third was Moscow, and the fourth is Washington.

2 H.R. Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1937), 179.

3 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, The Henry Reeve Text as revised by Francis Bowen now further corrected and edited with Introduction, Editorial Notes and Bibliographies by Phillip Bradley, 2 vol., 12th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 319.

4 The term “ultimate concern” is explained at length in Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955).

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT IN AMERICAN POLITICS: CONQUERING FORCE OR EXPLOITED FACTION?

CLYDE WILCOX

Many observers in the United States and Europe believe that the Christian Right has taken over the Republican Party and, in turn, the U.S. government. They see a Republican party overrun by fundamentalist fanatics, a born-again president sympathetic to the Christian Right, and a country engaged in a culture war that religious zealots are winning.

From one standpoint, it is easy to see the Christian Right as an ascendant force. The long and angry debate over the fate of Terri Schiavo, a woman declared by her doctors to have been in a persistent vegetative state for fifteen years, dominated the national agenda for several weeks. The House of Representatives issued a subpoena for Schiavo to testify, a spectacle that the Courts mercifully prevented. Congress and the president collaborated to allow Schiavo's parents to appeal her case directly to federal court, although no federal court sided with the parents.

Many states now teach sex education entirely as abstinence and forbid teachers to answer questions about condoms. Several states have greatly reduced the teaching of evolution in the public schools. The United States has pulled funding for family planning centers across the globe, and funded AIDS programs in Africa that tell clients that condoms are risky choices. With the nation facing a record budget deficit, a war on terror, and a difficult struggle in Iraq, many American voters seemed to believe that the most important issue facing the country was to stop gays and lesbians from marrying in Massachusetts.

Yet I will argue that the Christian Right has not taken over America; it is instead the least successful of the major social movements of the last century. Although

it has become a major part of the GOP coalition, it has primarily served to deliver the votes for the core agenda of economic and foreign policy conservatives and, in turn, has been rewarded with symbolic politics.

What is the Christian Right and What Does it Want?

The Christian Right is a social movement that inhabits the interstitial zone between conservative and conservative politics. The movement targets primarily white evangelical Protestants, and especially the fundamentalist and Pentecostal subsets of evangelicals. The movement has made halting attempts to reach out to conservative Catholics; to date these have been less successful but this may be changing. It has also paid lip service to attracting African-American evangelicals, but has invested little in that effort.

Historically evangelicals have been less affluent than other Americans, somewhat less educated, and more likely to live in rural areas and in the south. Their religious doctrine has led them to be less active in politics, and their lack of affluence has made them unlikely targets for political mobilization.

Yet evangelicals have two remarkable assets in politics. First, they meet regularly. Evangelicals are far more likely than other Christians to attend church

every week, and some go several times a week. This makes churches an especially valuable infrastructural tool. Environmental groups, feminist groups, and even business groups have many resources, but few can muster even a small portion of their members to a weekly meeting.

Second, evangelicals believe that the Bible is the word of God, and this gives pastors a powerful tool for political mobilization. When evangelical ministers preach, citing Biblical references, the sermons find receptive ears. The meaning of scripture is socially constructed in evangelical churches as elsewhere, but the dominant interpretation has a powerful impact on listeners, who come ready to trust the pastor and ready to be convinced by scripture.¹

The core agenda of the Christian Right has focused on four issue areas. First, Christian Right activists seek to enforce traditional sexual morality. In practice this means opposition to abortion, to discussion of contraception in schools, and to gay rights policies (especially same-sex marriage). Second, evangelicals seek to educate their children in their values. Some have chosen to build their own religious schools, or teach their children at home. Others seek to return spoken prayer to public schools, to hang the Ten Commandments in classrooms, or merely to incorporate religion into the curriculum. Third, evangelicals seek policies that support traditional nuclear families, with a male wage earner and a female homemaker. They oppose policies that make it easier for women to work for wages (although most evangelical women do work outside the home), oppose efforts to broaden the definition of families, and seek to convey traditional gender roles in the public sphere. Finally, Christian Right activists seek a more visible public presence for Christianity in public life. This means public displays of Christian faith and symbols, proclamations by government officials, and general recognition of the role of faith in the lives of citizens.

The Christian Right in American Elections

The most recent incarnation of the Christian Right has focused heavily on electoral politics. More than

any social movement in the last century, the Christian Right has chosen to use its resources to elect politicians who shared their views. Chuck Cunningham, former voter mobilization head of the Christian Coalition noted, “you don’t change policies on abortion by changing politicians’ minds, you change policy by changing politicians.”²

Although technically organized as a tax-exempt charity, the Coalition’s voter guides were designed to show Republicans in a favorable light, and to inspire evangelicals to turn out and vote. Eventually the Christian Coalition was stripped of its tax-exempt status because the IRS deemed the voter guides to be electoral tools. But by 2000, the Christian Right had achieved the goals that Pat Robertson had set for the Coalition in 1990—a Republican controlled Congress by 1994 and a conservative Christian Republican in the White House by 2000.

Along the way, Christian Right activists targeted Republican Party committees, taking over party organizations at the local and sometimes even the state level. By the late 1990s, Christian Right activists were well ensconced in the party bureaucracy, and had helped many conservative Republicans win their party’s nomination. In 1994, the Christian Right helped the GOP to win control of the Congress, and in 2000 the movement was a key source of support for George W. Bush.

Yet evangelical turnout dropped in 2000, and Karl Rove believed that this was why Bush had lost the popular vote. The White House in 2004 decided to directly campaign to evangelical Christians, bypassing to a certain extent existing Christian Right groups. The strategy was twofold. First, the campaign sought to emphasize not Bush’s record on socio-moral policy issues, but instead his personal faith. Supporting groups and individuals financed videos and other materials seeking to portray Bush as a man of deep personal faith. The dust jacket of one DVD shown in churches across the country proclaimed:

Like no other president in the history of our nation, George W. Bush boldly, publicly, and genuinely lives

out his faith on the job ... Nobody spends more time on his knees than George W. Bush. The Bush administration hums to the sound of prayer ... Decide for yourself whether President Bush's faith has been good for America!

The video is described as a "non-political program," which allowed it to be shown in churches without violating tax laws. These videos were distributed to pastors, who were encouraged to show them in their churches. Pastors were promised help with legal defense should their political activities endanger their tax-exempt status. Focus on the Family provided pastors with sermon outlines and other materials, all designed to lead evangelical voters to a Bush vote. Pastors responded with a deluge of sermons on "How Would Jesus Vote," the upshot of which was that Jesus would definitely vote for Bush and might just use his divine powers to cast some extra votes in the process.

Second, the campaign directly contacted evangelical voters by phone and by mail. The Bush campaign encouraged pastors and church leaders to share their membership lists with the campaign to help build a list to be used for voter mobilization. This brought a sharp rebuke from leading evangelicals who supported Bush, but who believed that church membership rolls should not be used for partisan politics. The Republican National Committee even copied fundraising letters from Christian Right groups, mailing materials in West Virginia and another state warning that liberals wanted to take away Christians' Bibles.

The Bush appeal to evangelical voters was substantially helped by a Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling that interpreted the state's constitutional language on equality as implying that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry. Although Bush had consistently resisted pressure from the Christian Right to attack gay rights groups or to make it more difficult for gays to serve in the military, he had always opposed same-sex marriage. Bush reluctantly gave in to Christian Right pressure to support an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would stop same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and in other states as well. The "defense of marriage" issue was an effective one for conservatives. With the issue newly on the agenda

and little time for voters to deliberate, thirteen states voted in the 2004 general election for state constitutional amendments to ban same sex marriage in their state. Many churches that had previously resisted pressure to become involved in elections became involved in the referenda.

In the 2004 balloting, Bush won 82 percent of the votes of white, frequently-attending evangelical Christians, while losing the votes of the rest of the country by 54-46. Nearly half of evangelicals cited moral values as the top issue deciding their vote, and 25 percent cited Bush's personal faith as the most important trait that influenced their vote. Evangelical turnout was up in 2004, but there is insufficient evidence to determine if the increase was larger than for the general public.

Bush and the Christian Right

During the 2004 election campaign, many European journalists and some American journalists depicted Bush as a fundamentalist Christian who was a leader of the Christian Right, and who had invaded Iraq out of eschatological theology. In fact, Bush's personal faith is somewhat more complex. Bush experienced a religious renewal in 1984 which helped him stop drinking. He has described this experience differently to different audiences, but never publicly described it as being "born again." Bush prays regularly and engages in Bible study. Indeed, Paul Kengor reports that Bush took part in a year long study of the book of Luke.³

But as governor of Texas, Bush was viewed by the Christian Right with great suspicion, and the movement did not offer strong support for his gubernatorial campaigns. As he prepared his presidential bid, Bush worried that Christian Right leaders might actively oppose his candidacy. He made pilgrimages to key Christian Right leaders, where he told them of his personal religious faith and practice, and told them that he would work to appoint conservative judges to the Supreme Court. Thus Bush is not himself a Christian Right activist, nor has he always enjoyed Christian Right enthusiasm. Instead, he has used his personal faith to persuade Christian Right leaders and activists to trust him, which they did with some hesitation in 2000 and with more enthusiasm in 2004.

Bush's references to his religion are remarkably devoid of anything remotely resembling doctrine, and Bush has himself professed a lack of curiosity about doctrinal differences among various denominations.⁴ He is a member of the mainline Methodist church, and in Washington attends an Episcopal church that welcomes gays and lesbians. He has said that he does not think the Bible is the literal word of God, that Muslims and Christians pray to the same God, and that he does not know if people are born homosexual. None of this qualifies Bush as a fundamentalist.

Bush has managed to woo evangelical voters with repeated talk of his religious devotion, and how his faith makes him feel. He talks frequently about praying for strength and sometimes mentions asking for guidance. Bush has consciously projected this ambiguous image, allowing evangelicals to think of him as one of their own—a born again, Bible inspired politician—without threatening more moderate Christians with the image of a fundamentalist Christian.

The Christian Right and the GOP: Invasion or Exploitation?

When members of the Christian Right began moving into Republican politics in the early 1990s, many moderate Republicans saw them as barbarian invaders intent on destroying the party of their narrow ideological goals.⁵ In a recent editorial in the *New York Times*, former Republican Senator and UN Ambassador John Danforth, an ordained Episcopal minister, suggested that the party had been hijacked by Christian conservatives, who were using it to advance their sectarian agenda.⁶

Since the Christian Right has become active in politics, other members of the GOP coalition have won major policy victories because of their support. Economic conservatives celebrated sharp tax cuts on business and the wealthy during the Reagan administration, and then succeeded beyond their wildest dreams in the Bush administration. Between 1978 and 2001, during the years of Christian Right mobilization, the income share of the lowest quintile has shrunk from 4.3 to 3.5 percent, whereas the share of top 5 percent has gone from 16.2 to 22.4 percent. Over the next decade these trends will accelerate because of changes in tax law, and trends in wealth

will be even more marked. Business has also benefited, from a reduction in environmental and other regulations, increased opportunities to pursue profit on federal lands, and specific tax breaks targeted to individual companies.

Foreign policy conservatives have also won big with support from Christian conservatives. The United States has asserted a more muscular and unilateral foreign policy, withdrawing from international treaties and bodies such as the Kyoto Protocol and the International Court of Justice. Neo-conservatives have long wanted to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein, and this has been accomplished.

But the policy agenda of the Christian Right remains largely unfulfilled. During the Reagan, Bush I, and Bush II years there have been executive orders denying federal funds to family planning agencies at home and abroad that mention abortion, but abortion remains legal. Congress passed a bill outlawing one late-term abortion procedure, but it did so in language that guaranteed that the Court would overturn it. Although Bush has repeatedly spoken of support for a "culture of life" he has asked Congress for no legislation on abortion, and has never used his bully pulpit to try to persuade the public on the issue.

After more than twenty-five years of activism, the Christian Right has lost ground on gender roles: today nearly two thirds of women with children under the age of six are in the paid labor force; this is true for a majority of regularly attending evangelical women as well. It has lost ground on gay rights: in 1990 only one Fortune 500 company offered health benefits for same-sex partners; by 2005 nearly half did so. On both of these sets of issues, public attitudes have become increasingly liberal over time, and in the case of gay rights the change has been quite rapid.⁷

The Christian Right has made marginal progress in other areas such as education and faith in the public sphere. Compared to the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and even the gay and lesbian rights movements, however, the Christian Right has accomplished less than most other movements. Had Rip Van Winkle fallen asleep in 1960 and woken again in 2005, he would have been shocked at the progress of African-Americans,

women, and gays and lesbians, but he would not have been similarly surprised by the achievement of Christian Right policies.

Of course, the Christian Right may have staved off still further cultural liberalization. Maybe its victories are in preventing policies, rather than in implementing them. But Republican leaders have repeatedly shoved aside the movement's agenda to make way for the agenda of business interests and neo-conservatives. In the 2004 presidential campaign, the Bush administration set as a top priority the mobilization of evangelical voters on issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion. But in 2005, the president has pushed primarily to privatize Social Security, making thirteen speeches on the topic in April 2005 alone. In contrast, he made no speeches about same-sex marriage, abortion, or any other issue on the Christian Right's agenda.

Consider the top priorities of the Bush administration in the first part of 2005. The administration has pushed hard to create private retirement accounts in Social Security. It has pressed hard for allowing oil companies to drill for oil in a pristine wildlife preserve in Alaska. With a record budget deficit, Bush and the GOP Congress passed a permanent repeal of the estate tax, a policy benefiting a tiny number of very wealthy families—rejecting a proposal that would have limited the tax to the largest 0.3 percent of all estates that would have cost \$300 billion less over the next decade. Meanwhile the administration has proposed cuts in health care programs to aid the poor, citing budget deficits as the reason for the cuts.

Most notable is the bankruptcy bill that Bush signed into law in April 2005. A Harvard University study shows that a significant portion of personal bankruptcies in the United States are caused when a wage earner is ill (e.g. with cancer), loses his/her job, and then loses their company-sponsored health insurance. The GOP saw credit card companies and banks as the big losers when this happens, and therefore made it harder for the family to declare bankruptcy and get out of debt—without closing any of the loopholes that allow wealthy citizens or corporations to declare bankruptcy.

In contrast, the only action on anything central to the Christian Right agenda was the furor over Terri Schiavo. Even in this case, however, the Republican Congress passed a personal bill, meaning that it applied only to Schiavo, and to no other cases. Moreover, the president has proposed and Congress seems poised to approve cuts in Medicaid, which is the program that pays for keeping patients like Schiavo alive.

Republican politicians benefit from an angry Christian Right, not one that has even partially achieved its goals. The party has used misleading rhetoric to frighten and mobilize evangelicals, and benefited from their support. Although only one church has been stripped of its tax-exempt status in modern times, pastors are warned that liberals will try to silence them, and Republicans speak of (but do not pass) a bill to make it legal for churches to endorse candidates and remain tax-exempt charities. Republican mailers warn voters that liberals want to take away their Bibles. The Senate Majority Leader is prepared to participate in a public session that argues that Democrats are blocking a handful of Bush's judicial appointments as part of an attack on people of faith. These statements are false, and serve only to keep evangelicals in fear, keeping them loyal to the GOP.

But what of the current GOP attack on the courts? Perhaps here at least the Christian Right may achieve its goals? This is possible, but the heated rhetoric by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and others (which worries many social conservatives) serves not only to deflect attention from DeLay's personal ethical lapses. It also reinforces recent efforts by corporate interests to replace justices in state supreme courts. In 2004 in West Virginia, a coal company executive with important business before the Supreme Court formed a group called "And For the Sake of the Kids" that ran ads against a Democratic incumbent on the court, charging him with having voted to extend the parole of a sex offender. In other states, corporations have mounted similarly circuitous efforts to change the membership of courts that interpret state constitutions and state law in ways which can save corporations millions of dollars.

It may be that in the end, the Christian Right will get new justices on the Supreme Court who will benefit business interests but also reverse key liberal decisions such as *Roe v. Wade*. If this happens, it will be interesting to see what twenty-five years of activism channeled through electoral politics will accomplish. Some states such as South Dakota, Utah, and Louisiana may move to ban all abortions, if the Court ruling allows them. But in the United States, citizens are free to travel to other states to obtain services, and many states will retain legal abortion, which is protected by statute in many states and in state constitutions elsewhere.

Over twenty-five years the Christian Right has mobilized on behalf of Republican candidates, and received in return primarily symbolic reassurances. Over time, these symbols have become increasingly focused and powerful, but there remain few policy victories of the movement, especially in comparison to their electoral strength. In 2005, the Christian Right has not taken over America; they instead continue to be exploited by Republicans.

NOTES

1 For an account of the power of the Bible as a rhetorical tool in evangelical churches, see Ted G. Jelen, *The Political World of the Clergy* (New York: Praeger, 1993).

2 Personal communication, 2004.

3 Personal communication, 2005. Such extended Bible study is common in evangelical circles, where students try to discern the meaning of Biblical passages for their lives. Indeed, in many ways it is surprising that Bush was able to finish with Luke so quickly. It might seem that reconciling his economic policy with scriptural teachings would take far longer.

4 For a more general account of the decline of doctrine generally, see Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For an account of Bush's faith and politics, see Carin Larson and Clyde Wilcox, "The Faith of George W. Bush: The Personal, the Practical, and the Political." Presented at a conference on religion and the presidency, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2004.

5 For an account, see Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox, *Second Coming: The Christian Right in Virginia Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

6 John C. Danforth, "In the Name of Politics." *New York Times* 30 March 2005.

7 See Clyde Wilcox and Robin Wolpert, "Gay Rights in the Public Sphere: Public Opinion on Gay and Lesbian Equality." In Craig A. Rimmerman, Kenneth D. Wald, and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *The Politics of Gay Rights* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

AMERICAN JEWS IN AN EVANGELICAL AMERICA¹

JEFFREY M. PECK

Since the 2004 election, many progressives, liberals, and even middle-of-the-roaders who voted Democratic have felt increasingly alienated from George Bush's America. In particular, Jewish Americans, who are traditionally Democratic, in 2004 voted overwhelmingly at 77 percent for John Kerry, while only giving Bush 22 percent of their support.² While disagreements with the Republican agenda range over foreign, social, and economic policies, one issue that prominently emerges for American Jews is religion, specifically the relationship between church and state expressed in President George W. Bush's close relationship to evangelical Christianity.

Concerns about morality and values dominated the discourse of the election. Many people felt that these terms were merely euphemisms for gay marriage, a hot-button issue that galvanized conservative voters for the Republicans. To match Bush's religious enthusiasm and support by Christians, Kerry was obliged to talk about his Roman Catholicism and his belief in God. We were a far cry from the candidacy of John F. Kennedy, another Catholic Democrat, who in the 1960s needed to assuage the American public's fears that his loyalties would be torn between the Vatican and the United States. Even the Bush-Gore election, which included the presence of an Orthodox Jew on the Democratic ticket as vice presidential candidate, did not seem to bother non-Jews or non-religious Jews; the latter, in fact, were pleased that a Jewish candidate had come so far in American politics. While attitudes about the role of religion in American politics have obviously changed in the last forty years, as evidenced by Lieberman's candidacy, on the one hand, and the power of the Christian Right, on the other, many American Jews are still uncomfortable with George W. Bush and the Republican Party's brand of evangelical Christianity that is displayed so prominently in public and political settings. To many, it seems that the First Amendment

protection of the separation of church and state is in danger.

To be sure, this debate is not one-sided. Many conservative and Orthodox Jews welcome the Christian Right and some of its proponents, such as Jerry Falwell, Ralph Reed, and Pat Robertson, as well as evangelicals' zealous support for the Holy Land and its protection from Muslim terrorism.³ Christian Zionist organizations are also active, and many conservative American Jews and Israelis cultivate and defend the Christian Right from attacks in the Jewish Community. In order to be more acceptable to Jews, some of these Christian groups have wisely changed their language to include the Jews in their "Judeo-Christian" world view rather than spout invectives about their killing of Christ, an anti-Semitic truism that does not disappear. At the meeting of the National Religious Broadcasters, Israel's Ministry of Tourism had a booth and hosted a breakfast replete with a backdrop of a shattered bus blown up by Palestinians. In need of visitors and their money as tourism drops off, Israel, through its Minister of Tourism, welcomes these Christians with open arms. Even conservative Jewish talk show host Michael Medved, one of the "most prominent defenders of Mel Gibson's biopic,

The Passion of the Christ," attended this meeting, claiming that "A more Christian America is good for the Jews."⁴

Unfortunately, many Jews seem to forget that in evangelical doctrine, Israel, which in fact has "a divine right to rule over the Palestinians," becomes the setting of "the final stage of history [an Armageddon where Israel would be destroyed] before the advent of the Antichrist and the Second Coming of Christ." They apparently forget that this scenario would mean the conversion of all Jews from the entire Diaspora who would have gathered according to their philosophy in this holy site.⁵ They seem as well to forget that, according to this doctrine, those who do not convert would die.

These demonstrations of what only can be called a philo-Semitic attention to the Jews and Israel are worrisome, because they instrumentalize Jews for a Christian agenda and blind American Jews to the right-wing ideology of the Christian evangelicals. Moreover, the fear of attack by Muslims or Arabs, which played a significant role in the outcome of the 2004 presidential election, should not encourage American Jews to support the Christian evangelical movement. American Jews of all ilks should be concerned, especially when in a similar vein, Abraham Foxman, Director of the moderate Anti-Defamation League (ADL) welcomes the Christian Right, even "on this specific issue on this specific day we come together. ... The issue is fighting terrorism."⁶ Such caveats to explain these particular shifting alliances may mean little when the conservative policies and language of the Christian Right convince a confused American public to vote for a president or other political officials whose policies fly in the face of other Jewish domestic interests.

In the critical discourse on Bush and his agenda, especially from Germany, however, comparisons emerged that may, in fact, be drawn too far. At the beginning of the Iraq War, Chancellor Schröder's Minister of Justice, Herta Däubler-Gmelin compared Bush to Hitler and lost her job. It is true that Germany produced a mass movement that melded nationalistic, mythical, and religious language and symbolism to unite a fearful and despairing people under a leader like Hitler, leading ultimately to the Final Solution. Yet,

as a Jewish American scholar of Germany, the country that Jews called "the land of the murderers," I am still wary of loose and sloppy comparisons of democratic and sovereign governments to totalitarian movements. I have always been critical of Americans and American Jews in particular who use historically specific terms such as "Nazi" or "Fascist" to describe any expression of control or authority. As a scholar and teacher trained in the study of culture and language, I think we should be precise in the words, meanings, and the historical contexts in which they are used and compared. The misguided comparisons of Israelis to Nazis (or even Bush to Hitler) have been examples of crossed boundaries, both national and ethical. On the other hand, words and deeds, couched in the veneer of godly-sounding speech and narrow moral values, may exhibit tendencies that, while unintended, can be interpreted as ideologically and symbolically reminiscent of authoritarianism. In other words, Fascism, or at least proto-Fascist tendencies, do not always appear in brown shirts and hobnail boots, but rather in buttoned-down shirts and striped ties.

In this vein, Fritz Stern, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany recently cautioned the American public. Stern, whose family had converted to Christianity before the rise of Fascism and is a prominent Professor Emeritus of German and European History at Columbia University, warned America to be vigilant against totalizing ideologies from the past. He points in particular to the danger of the Christian Right. Stern cautions against "the moral perils of mixing religion and politics," which the Nazis did so well, especially through their propaganda, and also targets those who fall prey to "the pseudo-religious transfiguration of politics." Although Stern acknowledges that there are "significant differences," he warns of "mass manipulation of public opinion, often mixed with mendacity and forms of intimidation." He believes in liberalism "manifested in the spirit of the Enlightenment and the early years of the American republic." He continues, "The radical right and the radical left see liberalism's appeal to reason and tolerance as the denial of their uniform ideology ... Every democracy needs a liberal fundament, a Bill of Rights enshrined in law and spirit, for this alone gives democracy the chance for self-correction and reform. Without it, the survival of democracy is at risk."⁷

While Stern's anxiety about the Christian Right might be dismissed as an exaggerated biographical projection, as an historian, he is trained to recognize such parallels with an objective and critical eye. As a survivor of Nazi Germany, he is particularly sensitive to demagoguery of all kinds. The *New York Times* journalist Chris Hedges, who covered this story, emphasizes that Stern "has devoted a lifetime to analyzing how the Nazi barbarity became possible."⁸ It was also quite prescient that Stern's comments were given during a speech at the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, a center for the study of German-Jewish history, at which he received a prize from Joschka Fischer, the German Foreign Minister.

Many American Jews still fear or hate Germany for its National Socialist past and lag behind prominent Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, which have developed productive dialogue with contemporary Germany. Perhaps rather than focusing their anxiety principally on Germany, American Jews should attend to the domestic scene and the increasing power of the Christian Right. We live in the wake of an election that produced clergy exhorting their flocks to vote against Democrats or anyone supporting a pro-choice position, and religious faith enters into Congressional debates on judicial appointments and filibustering. The president of the National Christian Broadcasters vows that he will support efforts to block hate crime legislation, since it might prevent Christian broadcasters from attacking gays and lesbians—unless, of course, they are willing to be converted both religiously and sexually. The Terri Schiavo case revealed how far the Christian Right will go to forge a new balance in the relationship between church and state.

These developments provide good reason to reexamine the sudden closeness between the Christian Right and American Jews. The common phrase uttered by Jews for decades, "Is it good for the Jews?" has particular resonance when the subject is the Christian Right. Are Jewish Americans, who have traditionally associated themselves with liberal causes such as social justice, tolerance, diversity, poverty, women's and minority rights, and many other issues, willing to sacrifice these rights for the sake of the Christian Right's unqualified support for Israel? Opinion polling in June 2000 on "religion and the

public square" has shown that Jews, still "remain more separationist (or less accommodationist) than other Americans, even those with similar regional and educational distributions."⁹ A follow up after the nomination and campaign of Senator Lieberman "seemed to have convinced many Jews to continue to oppose it [more tolerance for religion in public life]."¹⁰ If Jews and, according to this data, Jewish leaders especially want to maintain the traditional separation of church-state relations, then how do we explain the comments of Foxman or others? Perhaps, as a leading Jewish institutional chief suggested, Jewish leaders now are more willing to see the benefits of alliances on specific issues like Israel. Alternatively, perhaps the liberal resolve of Jewish Americans has been weakened by the confluence of September 11, 2001, the Second Intifada, and the fear of further terrorism. Together, these events have created an environment that made possible Bush's election and this new moral majority composed of the Christian evangelicals.

Or perhaps the discomfort produced by these new alliances is part of a larger issue concerning our identity as Americans, with the Jews as merely one example? Perhaps all Americans are really asking ourselves, as we fight a vague war on terrorism and a controversial war in Iraq, what priorities and values hold us together as Americans? A cultural insecurity underlies the willingness of many Americans in the last election to vote, for example, against their economic interests by supporting a moral agenda. How much religion, defined across a broad spectrum of faiths, values, and spiritualities, can we bear as a foundation for who we are as Americans? The Jewish dilemma I am posing here is relevant for any American who believes that our body politic must incorporate both civic and religious values.¹¹ It has always been possible, precisely in the United States, to follow these two paths in parallel. It has always been possible to think of oneself as a moral individual based on secular and liberal values without necessarily referencing religion or God. American Jews, religious or not and mostly Democratic, must be able, just as any citizen of this country, to consider themselves morally or ethically upright, even if their religious beliefs diverge from the majority.

The question of what holds us together pertains as well to the new alliance between the Christian Right

and American Jews. Even as social alliances and political affiliations shift as a result of changing demographics and class relations, Jews should not allow themselves to be taken in by the leaders of the Christian Right who proclaim uncritical support of Israel. To do so is to risk climbing into bed with people who would sacrifice tolerance for blind faith in a Biblical Israel that few except radical settlers on the West Bank and Gaza believe should be created. Fortunately, there are Jews who themselves can look beyond the narrow vision of the Christian Zionists and see how Jews are being instrumentalized. Gershom Greenberg, the author of *End of Days*, a book about Christian evangelicals who read the Bible literally, warns “They don’t love real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their story, in their play, and that’s not who we are, and we never auditioned for the part, and the play is not one that ends up good for us. If you listen to the drama they’re describing, essentially it’s a five-act play in which the Jews disappear in the fourth act.” Yossi Alfer, an Israeli who served twelve years in the Mossad and became Israel Director of the American Jewish Committee, draws the battle lines even more sharply in political terms, “God save us from these people. ... When you see what these people are encouraging Israel and the U.S. Administration to do, that is, ignore the Palestinians, if not worse, if not kick them out, expand the settlements to the greatest extent possible, they are leading us into a scenario of out and out disaster.”¹²

If American Jews see the Christian Right as potential allies for the protection of Israel, they should be wary of the consequences not only for Israel, but also for Jewish rights as Americans. With a following among 70 million Christian evangelicals, Jerry Falwell is a powerful political broker who has declared that “the Bible Belt in America may be Israel’s only safety belt right now.”¹³ While this may be true, at least from Falwell’s perspective, the Christian Right may also instigate the very breaches of tolerance and pluralism that gave the Jews the freedom and security that have allowed them to prosper in America. While Jewish history continuously reminds us why American Jews should support Israel, we should also remember this nation’s history, its Bill of Rights, and a Constitution that protects American Jews from literal interpretations that could abrogate their rights and the rights of any minority in a Christian country.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank Ken Wald and Luis Lugo for their comments during the AICGS conference on “Religion, Policy and Politics in the United States and Germany: Understanding the ‘God Gap,’” Washington, D.C., 6 May 2005, that influenced this essay. In particular, I would like to thank Cathleen Fisher for her advice on the substance of this essay.

2 Survey data provided by Ken Wald at the 6 May conference.

3 Chris Hedges, “Feeling the hate with the National Religious Broadcasters,” *Harper’s Magazine* (May 2005) 59. Other references to the NRB meeting are taken from this article.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Rod Dreher, “Evangelicals and Jews Together. An Unlikely Alliance,” *The National Review*, 5 April 2002, www.nationalreview.com, 1.

6 “Zion’s Christian Soldiers,” 8 June 2003, CBSNEWS.com, 3.

7 “Chris Hedges, “Warning From a Student of Democracy’s Collapse,” *New York Times*, 6 January 2005, Section B, 2.

8 Hedges.

9 Steven Cohen, “Religion and the Public Square: Attitudes of American Jews in Comparative Perspective,” *Survey of American Jewish Opinion*, www.cjcs.net/survey.htm, 17. This survey uses the terms “separationist” to mean those who believe in the traditional notion of the separation of church and state and “accommodationist” to mean those who are willing to accept closer relations between the two.

10 Cohen, “Religion and the Public Square: Attitudes of American Jews in Comparative Perspective—A Follow-Up Study,” *Survey of American Jewish Opinion*, www.cjcs.net/survey4.htm, 1.

11 Some moderate Christians have also voiced concern. See John C. Danforth, “Onward, Moderate Christian Soldiers,” *New York Times*, 17 June 2005.

12 “Zion’s Christian Soldiers,” 2-3.

13 *Ibid.*, 1

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: RELIGION AND THE POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF GERMAN MUSLIMS

JYTTE KLAUSEN

Helmut Schmidt, the former chancellor of Germany, argued in a book published in December 2004 that a peaceful accommodation between Islam and Christianity is possible only in authoritarian states.¹ He also expressed his regret that, under his stewardship, Germany had opened the doors to Muslim labor migrants. In retrospect, he said, it had been a mistake. In his most recent book, Samuel P. Huntington argues that Muslims are an “indigestible” minority and invokes an old German concept, *Kulturkampf*, to describe his agenda for the self-defense of western democracies against the Muslim invasion.²

These apocalyptic pronouncements are not only counter-productive, they are also dangerously misleading. The question of Islam in Europe is neither a matter of global war and peace, nor about a clash of civilizational values. Rather, it raises a more familiar set of domestic policy issues about the relations between state and church, and on occasion even prosaic questions about government regulation and equitable policy enforcement.

On balance, there are two striking differences between Europe and the United States with respect to the integration of immigrants. One is that in the United States, every new religion is added to the range of policies and norms created under the umbrella of the First Amendment, and to some extent also the Fourteenth Amendment. Working together, the two constitutional amendments have firmly established the norm that all religions are treated equitably in practical policymaking and in the public mind. The second difference is that even if immigrants cannot or do not vote, U.S. politicians know that their offspring will, and therefore will take into account how new immigrants can be added to existing political

constituencies. Europe has no comparable tradition of religious pluralism and, as Edward Mortimer pointed out, “for most of recorded history the general view, in European as in other parts of the world, was that the state could not remain indifferent to questions of such overriding importance as the relationship between its citizens (and subjects) and their Creator, or their prospects of eternal life.”³ On the question of political integration, there is, outside Britain, no discernable “second-generation” effect that allows immigrants and their descendants a measure of self-representation.

The quotes and numbers presented in the following essay are taken from my forthcoming book, *The Challenge of Islam: Politics and Religion in Western Europe*.⁴ The book is based upon 300 interviews with Muslim political and civic leaders in six countries, including Germany.⁵ Acquiring political representation and finding ways to build “home-grown” institutions for Islam in Western Europe are the two issues foremost on European Muslim leaders’ agenda. What to do with such representation is a second—and highly divisive—question.

Political Associationalism among German Muslims

German Muslims are particularly handicapped in their effort to obtain national recognition as a political constituency by two factors. The first is the restrictive naturalization laws in Germany, which means that out of about 3.2 million Muslims, only a half million can vote. The second is that of the 3 million Muslims estimated to reside in Germany, 2 million are of Turkish origin and Turkish Muslims have for decades been deeply divided because of the deep divisions in Turkish politics and the strong hand the Turkish government has been allowed—and even asked—to play in the exile communities in not only Germany, but also in France, the Netherlands, and in Scandinavia. Rapid change is taking place due to the control of the current Turkish government by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has brought a thaw to relations between the different factions of the Turkish communities in Europe, and because of the prospective Turkish negotiations on accession to the European Union.

Naturalization rules vary widely from country to country, but most countries now allow a narrow window for young people between eighteen and twenty-three years of age, who have lived in the country for a specified period of time (usually between five and ten years), to claim citizenship under relaxed procedures. Yet, even when the door to naturalization is opened, access is often restricted by administrative rules that narrow the pool of applicants. Proof of a minimum of savings and of acculturation, or “attachment,” are also required. In Germany, another sticking point is proof of commitment to the values of the Constitution, the Basic Law, a requirement that is incompatible with membership of a large number of German Muslim associations. The self-sufficiency criterion means that anyone receiving public aid—including social assistance and housing aid—is disqualified. Since the 1993 reforms, naturalization rates have dropped off in France, and the German reform of 2000 has not advanced naturalization rates with the speed supporters had anticipated.

The proportion of Muslims who are citizens of the countries in which they reside varies between European countries, largely as a function of different naturalization rules. The ability of Muslims to vote and become elected officials varies accordingly. In most countries, only 10 to 25 percent of the Muslim population can vote. There are two exceptions: the Netherlands, where 50 percent of Turks and Moroccans hold citizenship, and as mentioned earlier, Great Britain.⁶ Large pockets of disenfranchised residents, in some cases a quarter or more of the local population, are developing in cities with large concentrations of immigrants and non-national descendants.

Non-citizens cannot stand for national or local political office, and they generally cannot participate in elections. Denmark and Sweden allow foreign nationals who fulfill certain residency requirements to vote in local elections. About one-third of the eligible non-national legal residents take advantage of this opportunity. Denmark has 3.5 million eligible voters but there are about 250,000 long-term non-national residents (7 percent) in Denmark who cannot vote in national elections. One estimate is that only half of Danish Muslims can vote in national elections. In Italy, less than 10 percent of Muslims are eligible. In Germany, as few as 500,000 of 3.2 million resident Muslims are naturalized citizens of voting age.⁷ In Great Britain, half or more of all Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indians born in the country are citizens, and three-quarters described their national identity as English, British, Scottish, Welsh, or Irish.⁸

Germany stands out in a comparative perspective for having both a high ratio of native-born leaders—one-fourth of the leaders I interviewed were born in Germany—and a high proportion of non-naturalized leaders. In the other countries, 90 to 100 percent of the political elite held citizenship. In Germany, only three quarters did. We do not fully know what the consequences are, but one obvious consequence is that that Muslim self-representation is carried out outside the established political institutions rather than inside the parties and the elected offices of governments. There are positive aspects to this. One is that non-nationals are politically active in Germany.

Another is that uniquely German patterns of civic engagement, such as inter-faith organizations and religious associationalism, have become assimilated into the process of Muslim self-organization.

Table 1. Muslim Leaders: Citizenship and Origin by Country (percent)

Country of residence	Citizen	Native-Born
Denmark	90.9	12.1
Sweden	95.5	4.5
Netherlands	100.0	26.1
Germany	76.6	25.5
Great Britain	96.8	16.1
France	89.4	16.1
n = 161		

The final picture is mixed. On the one hand, Muslims are seriously underrepresented in European power elites. There are currently about 15 million Muslims in Europe but fewer than thirty Muslim members of European national parliaments. On the other hand, hundreds of Muslims have been elected to city councils in the major European cities, and with every election more are added. In certain cities, Berlin and Rotterdam, for example, Muslim voters are becoming important and are beginning to influence city council elections. The Berlin city council has three Muslim members, one from the Greens and two from the PDS (the successor party of the former Communist Party of East Germany). Riza Baran, also from the Green party, is president of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district council. In places where Muslims have emerged as a voting bloc, local governments have become innovators in integration policy and manifested a new willingness to find ways to help Muslims build faith institutions and establish dialogue.

The Associations

The integration of Islam in Germany has moved to the forefront of the political agenda for German Muslims.

Article 4 of the 1949 Basic Law obliges the state to maintain neutrality in religious matters, but German law does not preclude close cooperation between church and state. Recognized denominations are eligible for federal government assistance in raising a 9 percent church tax, administered by public tax authorities. Recognized faiths have public rights and responsibilities. As the government states, "in exchange for administrative and financial assistance from the state, established religious organizations play an active role in German society. They run many hospitals, nursing homes, day care centers, and similar institutions in Germany as well as humanitarian aid and assistance programs in the developing nations."⁹ They are represented on government boards and are allowed to conduct religious education in public schools. There have been efforts to create a comprehensive umbrella association, but most Muslim associations now seek instead to obtain some of the benefits of recognition by other means, such as the right to conduct religious instruction in public schools.

One reason for the failure of German Muslims to establish an umbrella organization is the enduring animosity between the two largest Turkish associations. One is *Milli Görüs*, an exile organization originally connected to the Welfare Party that has ceased to formally exist. It is the parent organization of the *Islamrat der BRD*. The other is the *Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion* (DITIB), a Turkish government-funded association responsible for the delivery of religious services to Turks residing in Germany. This animosity has prevented the creation of a unified council to represent Muslims in Germany. One response to this deadlock was the creation of the unaffiliated *Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland* (ZMD), or the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, in December 1994. The organization is modeled on the Central Council of Jews, and brings together about twenty national or regional associations of diverse purpose and origin.

Following German practice, the ZMD is incorporated as a federal association (*Verein*) but its claim to represent all German Muslims was rejected by an administrative court in Düsseldorf in 2001. The court noted the existence of a rival organization, the *Islamrat*, and argued that the ZMD was not a true *Spitzenverband* (central association) for German Muslims. As a result,

no association has been granted recognition as the representative of the German Muslim faith community, and Muslims have been denied the privileges of public status accorded to the recognized faiths of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants.

Relations between *Milli Görüs* and DITIB have begun to thaw. The militancy of the former had derived from the rift between the Turkish military and the Turkish government parties and Welfare party. The November 2002 election, which put Tayyip Erdogan and the Welfare party's successor, the Justice and Development Party, in government, opened the door for a rapprochement between the main associations appealing to Turkish-origin Muslims. DITIB, however, insists that the other groups recognize it as the largest organization of Muslims in Germany. "One day," a spokesperson from the association explained, "it is possible to imagine that the other Muslim groups might have representatives on our *Vorstand* (head council),"¹⁰ indicating that the DITIB would not accept anything less. The difficulty, of course, is that the DITIB is an association of Turkish-built mosques and Turkish-financed *imams* and owes its size to the unique role of the Turkish government in providing pastoral care to German residents of Turkish origin. Critics of DITIB point out that anything the organization does requires instructions from Ankara. Language is also a barrier, as the current secretary-general of DITIB does not speak German.

DITIB representatives complain occasionally that the ZMD represents only "10 percent of German Muslims" but gets all the attention. In the press, Nadeem Elyas, the secretary-general of the organization, is frequently described as "having ties" to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). (Other sources estimate the ZMD's membership at 800,000, the equivalent of 25 percent of all German Muslims, but 10 percent seems the more accurate number.) Elyas was born in Saudi Arabia and came to Germany to study medicine in 1964. He was for many years chair of the *Islamisches Zentrum Aachen-Bilal Moschee* (IZA), which was formed in 1964 and has long been regarded as a Brotherhood "project." As for the connection to the MB, Elyas says he never was a member of the Brotherhood. A more important factor weighing against discounting the ZMD is that it is based on volunteer membership and is the only multi-

ethnic Muslim association. It is home to converts as well as a diverse group of Muslim associations organizing Muslims from Albania, Bosnia, Turkey, and Arab and African countries.

The *Süleymancis* organized their own association in 1980, VIKZ, *Verband Islamischer Kulturzentren*. They came as labor migrants and were among the first to create permanent schools and mosques in Germany. Today the VIKZ organizes about 300 mosque communities. The group is named after Süleyman Efendi (1888-1959), a Turkish religious reformer born in what is today Bulgaria. The VIKZ's members regard themselves as Sunni Muslims and while they deny that they are a sect within Islam, the VIKZ does not belong to either of the umbrella organizations.

A new type of community-based religious organization has emerged outside the traditional sectarian and political delineations. These groups distinguish themselves by being grassroots organizations, or "round-table" (*Runder Tisch*) groups. Examples are the Hamburg *Schura* and the Berlin-based *Islamische Föderation Berlin* (IFB). These are local or regional groups that have grown up around particular functions, such as inter-faith collaboration and representation, as in the case of the Hamburg *Schura*, or the provision of services, and religious education in public schools in the case of the IFB.

Perhaps as many as 20 percent of Turkish-origin Germans are Alevites and are outside the main Muslim associations for theological reasons.¹¹ Alevites do not regard the Koran as the Prophet's divine revelation, and neither Sunni nor Shiah Muslims recognize them as Muslims. The Alevites do not have mosques but worship in a *cem*, a community house.

Representatives from the main Muslim organizations met in February 2005 in Hamburg to discuss the creation of an umbrella organization that would seek official recognition as a representative of Germany's Muslims.¹² A number of local associations, including the Hamburg *Schura*, the host of the meeting, also attended, as did some of the "leading personalities" in German Islam. Prior to the meeting, DITIB announced that it was ready to represent all German Muslims and requested official recognition as the "dialogue partner" (*Ansprechspartner*) and sole

representative from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The initiative to once again try to create a national umbrella association was prompted in part by another initiative from North Rhine-Westphalia. Earlier in 2005 the Social Democrats in the state government proposed to create a public registry of mosques. The purpose of the register, according to the government's announcement, was to create a congregational structure for the mosque communities that would be "compatible with German church law."¹³ Both initiatives have been greeted with much optimism as proof that a new willingness to find compromise solutions exists.¹⁴ Caution is indicated, however, as reform efforts in the past have invariably been shipwrecked on organizational rivalries, or they have failed to win the approval of the conservative German administrative courts.

Milli Görüs remains blacklisted by the German federal agency for the protection of the Constitution, the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*. The agency's 2003 annual report describes it as the largest Islamist organization in Germany by far and labels the group's social work among youths as "disintegrative ... anti-democratic and anti-western."¹⁵ The blacklisting of *Milli Görüs* means that government groups and offices are not allowed to include the group in discussions of local problems or even to maintain routine contacts. One local CDU politician complained "we cannot meet with half of the Muslims in town because the *Verfassungsschutz* says they are a danger to our values."¹⁶

People fear being associated with the group (or being exposed as a member), in part because anyone who has been a member can be denied public sector employment. A recent case involved a worker who was refused a job at the airport in Düsseldorf until he could prove that he was no longer a member of *Milli Görüs*. The *Verfassungsschutz's* embargo was breached, however, when the affiliated Islamic Federation of Berlin (IFB) was awarded, by order of an administrative court, a contract with the Berlin government to provide religious instruction in public

schools. (All faiths, except Islam, have had the right to provide students with instruction in their own faith in the schools.) Since 2003, the IFB has provided religious instruction to Muslim students in thirty-seven of Berlin's public schools.

Ethnic-origin associations with one foot in the country of origin and another in the country of residence continue to play a role but are increasingly irrelevant. One example is the *Türkischer Bund Berlin-Brandenburg* (TBB), a workers' association originally started twenty-five years ago for migrant workers which now is trying to branch out to include North African migrants. Similar associations exist for Turkish and North African workers in France and the Netherlands. Many were started in the late 1970s to serve the first waves of labor migrants. European countries commonly funded civic groups of a cultural or educational nature, including sports associations, but they did not fund religious associations. Funding practices were reflected in the names of associations, as in *Anatolsk Kulturforening* (Denmark) or the *Association Culturelle et Sportive Cappadoce* (France). The "cultural associations" are often storefront mosques, where cultural activities pay the rent for a place to worship on Friday. Only a few are large and vibrant multi-purpose organizations like the TBB. The more obvious reason for the decline of transnational associations is that immigration restrictions mean that one of their primary functions, namely the facilitation of migration and transfer of resources between the "home country" and the country of residence, has ceased to matter.

Secularists versus "Religionists"

In European politics, faith has generally compelled people towards the right while the left has been resolutely anti-clerical. French Muslims (and non-Muslim academics) complained bitterly about the Socialist party's intolerance of religious expression, and tended to remark that one had to be committed to "the holy principle of *laïcité*" to succeed in the party.¹⁷ Abortion, gay rights, and bio-ethics are some of the issues where religious Muslims find common ground with other religious associations and lobbies.

More religious leaders tend to describe themselves as centrist, in part, because many Muslim leaders, and particularly individuals who are associated with Muslim associations or mosque groups, are uneasy about the large political parties. Contrary to Huntington's and Helmut Schmidt's apocalyptic pronouncements about Muslims as "indigestible" enemies of secularism, Muslims are as divided as other voters—between secularists and those who want faith to play a public role and to be supported by national and local governments.

It is clear, nonetheless, that for many religious Muslims "value conservatism" may be less salient than other issues, which are generally important for the left, in particular anti-discrimination enforcement and social protection. It is these priorities that continue to push many religious Muslims towards the Greens and, to a lesser extent, the Social Democrats. The success of the Dutch Christian Democratic party in attracting support from Muslims suggests, on the other hand, that the right could do better among Muslims if it de-emphasized Christianity and instead spoke about faith and religious values in general.

Political scientists have concluded that Turks residing in Western Europe are overwhelmingly supportive of left-wing parties.¹⁸ Some studies have estimated that two-thirds of voters of Turkish origin tend to support the large social democratic parties. As a consequence, both the right and the left have taken the left-leaning proclivity of Turkish Muslims for granted. But recent research suggests that it is a mistake to do so. Two Turkish political scientists, Ayhan Kaya and Ferhat Kentel, who conducted a survey of German and French Turkish-origin immigrants, found that among those who took an interest in Turkish politics, which turned out to be only about half of the people interviewed, a plurality of about one-third identified the Justice and Development Party, the party of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the current prime minister, and a successor to the now banned Welfare Party. They also found that German Turks (25 percent) were a great deal more likely to vote in Turkish general elections than French Turks (8 percent).¹⁹ A Dutch survey also found much greater support for the Christian

Democrats among Turks in the Netherlands than among other groups of immigrant origin, with Dutch Turks splitting themselves evenly between the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats. (16 percent voted for the Greens.)²⁰ It is probably a mistake to take the loyalty of voters of Turkish origin to the left for granted. On the other hand, it is also the case that many residents of Turkish origin in Europe are not value conservatives and Muslims of Turkish origin often hold strongly anti-clerical views.

One religiously conservative manager of a controversial German association of mosques hesitated when asked which party Muslims like himself could best expect to work with in the future. "Many people say the Greens," he said, "I am not so sure. Probably, the Christian Democrats are better." His hesitation was understandable, since he and his association had just been subjected to yet another volley from the Christian Democrats about German commitments to "occidental" and "Christian" values.²¹

On the other hand, Muslims who might be inclined to support conservative parties are made to feel unwelcome. A German Christian Democrat of Turkish origin, native-born and a citizen, had been one of the founders of an inter-ethnic youth organization, *Muslimische Jugend*, and was elected as a Christian Democrat to a state parliament. He explained that Muslims, who like himself draw their civic values from their faith, see nothing wrong with a party program that mentions "God." Such a program is preferable to the secularists, who will allow no public space for religion. But when religion comes to mean, exclusively, "Christianity" and "occidental values," then Muslims object. "Why," he asked, "should Muslims now participate in the CDU?"²²

Secularists instead prefer the strict separation of state and church and, if this was already the established rule, their first preference is that the state provide no assistance to religion. But given that state neutrality is generally not an option, Muslims often want religious equity instead. Among anti-clerical Muslims (of which there are quite a few in Germany but nearly none in Great Britain, for example) and secularists,

religious expression is not first on their minds. They want parity for Islam because they hope that stigma and discrimination against them will abate once Islam becomes integrated within existing national frameworks. Many also worry about sectarian religious movements and, like other European secularists, they think the state can tame religion. One Muslim councilor from Berlin expressed the parity view very clearly:

What goes for the Christian confessions goes also for Muslims. So if the Christian churches [the Protestant and Catholic synods] send in clergy to teach religion in public school, then Muslims should be allowed to do that too. But it would be best if we had a change of the constitution and created a completely secular system, in which case there should be no religion taught in schools.²³

Another city councilor, also from Berlin, added his concerns about excessive religiosity in the absence of state intervention:

In a multicultural and multi-religious society like Germany, there should be compulsory education in ethics which would give all children knowledge of other worldviews and faiths, so they will know how to interact and have a dialogue. Confessional-based education in religion is a mistake and harmful!²⁴

Lale Akgün, the SPD member of the *Bundestag*, told me that, in her view, when the history is written about how Muslims changed Europe, it will be that they promoted secularism and the separation of state and church. First the churches were happy, she said, but then they realized what it might mean and became worried:

Because of this decision by the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (i.e. the Ludin decision²⁵), we are having a discussion about secularism. I do not say that things will change in two months, but we are looking for a new parity of state and secularism and religion in Germany. It is very interesting that Islam has brought a new dimension to the discussion in this country. It is a very big difference, and when you look in five years, in ten years, what will have changed will be because of this decision.²⁶

She was sure, more sure than I can be, that the Bavarian decision to put crucifixes in public school classrooms would have to be declared unlawful by the court because of the Ludin decision.

NOTES

1 Quoted in *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 24 November 2004.

2 Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). The term, "culture war, or in German, *Kulturkampf*, was originally used to describe the struggle between liberals and conservatives over the German constitution in the Bismarckian period from 1871 to 1891. It was also used by the Nazis to describe the struggle against Socialists and secular liberals until Hitler's assumption of power in 1933.

3 Edward Mortimer, "Christianity and Islam," *International Affairs*, 67, no. 1 (1991), 7-13.

4 To be published by Oxford University Press in fall 2005. A German edition will be published by Campus Verlag in January 2006 under the title, *Die muslimische Elite in Europa*.

5 The other countries are the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.

6 Again, reliable figures are difficult to find. The estimates are based on country reports in *Intolerance and Discrimination Against Muslims in the EU: Developments since September 11*, Report by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, March 2005.

7 Deutscher Bundestag, "Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Grosse Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Jürgen Rüttgers, Erwin Marschewski, Wolfgang Zeitmann, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der CDU/CSU," Drucksache 14/2301, 8 November 2000, 5.

8 National Statistics, "Ethnicity and Identity," www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=459.

9 <http://www.germany-info.org/relaunch/info/archives/background/church.html>

10 Interview 108, Berlin, 28 October 2004.

11 Ursula Spuler-Stegeman, *Muslims in Deutschland, Informationen und Klärungen* (Freiburg: Herder spectrum, 2002), 36.

12 <http://www.Muslim-Zeitung.de/organisationen/5012119610150bc01.html>

13 "Eine Form der Selbstorganisation zu suchen, die mit dem deutschen Kirchenrecht vereinbar ist."
<http://www.nrwspd.de/presse/meldung.asp?ID=20739>.

14 Interview with Aiman Mazyrek, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 February 2005, 26.

15 The *Verfassungsschutz* 2003 annual report has the following to say about the organization, "Die bei weitem größte islamistische Organisation ist unverändert die 'Islamische Gemeinschaft Milli Görüs' (IGMG). Sie betreibt eine faktisch desintegrative Jugendarbeit. Dies und ihre nur vorgeblich auf Integration zielende Politik fördern islamistische Milieus in unserem Land. Die Milli-Görüs-Bewegung ist einem als 'Gerechte Ordnung' propagierten umfassenden Regelungssystem verpflichtet, das die westliche Zivilisation, ihren Wertekanon und ihr Demokratieverständnis negiert." Available at http://www.berlin.de/seninn/verfassungsschutz/publikationen/jb_akt.html

16 Interview 102, Stuttgart, 8 October 2004.

17 Interview 76, Paris, 17 May 2004; Interview 81 and 82, Lyon, 24 May 2004.

18 Andreas Goldberg and Martina Sauer, *Konstanz und Wandel der Lebenssituation türkischstämmiger Migranten in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Essen: Zentrum für Türkeistudien, 2003), table 34; Lise Togeby. "Migrants at the Polls: An Analysis of Immigrant and Refugee Participation in Danish Local Elections," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 25, no. 4 (1999), 665-84.

19 Ayhan Kaya and Ferhat Kentel, "Euro-Turks: A Bridge or a Breach between Turkey and the European Union?" Research Report, Center for Migration Research, Istanbul Bilgi University, September 2004.

20 Eddie Nieuwenhuizen, "Political Participation of Migrants in the Netherlands." Research Report. Landelijk Bureau ter bestriding van Rassensdiscriminatie, (no date).

21 Interview 113, Berlin, 26 November 2004.

22 Interview 98, Boston, 15 June 2004.

23 Questionnaire 05.44.

24 Questionnaire 05.10.

25 In 1998, the board of education in Baden-Württemberg rejected the application of Ferestha Ludin to become a teacher in the Stuttgart public school system. Ms. Ludin, who had come to Germany as a political refugee from Afghanistan, had started to wear the headscarf during her internship as a teacher. The school board refused to hire her on the grounds that the headscarf represented an act of proselytizing for Islam and violated the requirement that schools must remain neutral in religious matters. Ms. Ludin sued on the grounds that her religious freedom was violated. On 24 September 2003, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the refusal to hire Ms. Ludin had been unlawful because no state law existed at the time barring teachers from wearing the headscarf. The court also declared that the competence to define the meaning of the neutrality requirement rested with the states and not the federal government. Following the decision, several states announced plans to enact laws barring teachers or, in some states, civil servants generally from wearing the headscarf and/or other religious symbols.

26 Interview 110, Berlin, 8 November 2004.

RELIGION: A SUBTLE AND OVERT DIMENSION OF GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY

LILY GARDNER FELDMAN

In the first speech in German to the Israeli *Knesset* by a President of the Federal Republic, Johannes Rau began his February 2000 remarks with language rooted in religion: “I ask forgiveness for what Germans have done—for myself and my generation, for the sake of our children and our children’s children.” He went on to repeat a maxim of Germany’s external behavior: “Shared responsibility for Israel has since the foundation of our state been a basic tenet of German foreign policy.”¹ Just two months before, Rau had also asked victims of slave and forced labor now resident in Israel, the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the United States for forgiveness.²

Echoing Rau’s message, in September 2000 German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in a major address to the World Jewish Congress in New York asked for forgiveness on behalf of his generation for the crimes of National Socialism and emphasized Germany’s historically-based duty regarding Israel’s security and right to exist.³ In a joint article with Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom for the fortieth anniversary of diplomatic relations, Fischer reprised the same theme, but this time to indicate there could be “no forgiving and no forgetting,” given the enormity of the Holocaust.⁴

The religious tone of German foreign policy is not confined to contemporary external relations, as Willy Brandt indicated when recalling his 1973 visit to Yad Vashem, where he read from the Bible at a memorial service.⁵

However, despite the prominence of the president, the foreign minister, and the chancellor, these examples are isolated cases of the direct use of religion in official German foreign policy. And if one looks beyond practice, at the scholarly analysis of German foreign policy, there is essentially no place accorded to religion, even among those observers who highlight

the importance of societal and transnational forces or see Germany as a “civilian power.”⁶

In the following essay, I suggest that religion in fact has played a role in German foreign policy in two ways: as a subtle dimension by forming the basis of the German government’s foreign policy of reconciliation since 1949; and as an overt dimension in the external behavior of religious organizations. In other cases of attempted international and internal reconciliation, we can clearly identify the role of religion, for example in South Africa, and in Latin America, making the presence of this phenomenon in German foreign policy unsurprising.⁷

The focus on reconciliation does not imply that other avenues for evaluating religion’s role are not useful: for example, the ethical arguments and the activism of religious actors regarding the whole question of war and peace, from German rearmament in the 1950s through the missile debate in the 1980s and on to the wars in Kosovo and Iraq more recently; and the new emphasis on religion in the government’s policy in the Arab world, or the problem the German government encounters with the active role of religion in American politics and foreign policy.⁸ However,

reconciliation at the governmental and societal levels provides the longest-standing and most consistent case of the indirect and direct role of religion in Germany's external affairs.

A Subtle Significance: Official Foreign Policy

The hint of religion's influence is seen in the very terms Germany employs for reconciliation: *Versöhnung*, a word that has religious, spiritual and emotional connotations; and *Aussöhnung*, which suggests pragmatic, political behavior. From Adenauer through Schröder, all German governments have been committed to reconciliation with countries and peoples who were the victims of National Socialism, especially France, Israel, the Czech Republic, and Poland. All German chancellors have used both terms—*Versöhnung* and *Aussöhnung*—to capture the goal and nature of relations.⁹

Adenauer gave priority to relations with France and Israel; Brandt began the process of reconciliation with Eastern Europe, although after 1968 Poland was the priority country rather than Czechoslovakia. Schmidt and Kohl tried to balance relations with the West and relations with the East. After German unification, new efforts were undertaken with Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic.

Schröder and Fischer have continued the trend initiated towards the end of Kohl's chancellorship to view these four cases as parts of a whole. Indeed, the general commitment to reconciliation as a central element of Germany's peace policy is evident in the agenda of the government-inspired and funded Berlin Center for International Peace Contingents.

German official statements couch the need to draw lessons from the past of National Socialism and the Holocaust in moral language that in some ways provides a substitute for religious concepts. This emphasis on morality does not exclude the role of interests and pragmatism in forging these relations. From the time of Adenauer's address to the *Bundestag* in September 1951 offering compensation to Jews and Israel through President Köhler's February 2005 address to the Israeli *Knesset*, offi-

cialdom prefers the non-religious term responsibility (*Verantwortung*) rather than guilt (*Schuld*), although Fischer, Köhler and Rau have used the latter term.¹⁰ German leaders refer to "unspeakable crimes" or "evil" rather than sins.¹¹

The process of reconciliation in each of the four cases has begun with German acknowledgement of the historical grievances the four countries harbor and a commitment to creating new relationships. These acknowledgements, whether in statements or in international legal agreements, are the equivalent of apologies that form the first step in the religious process of reconciliation.

Reconciliation as a process has continued with the creation of bilateral governmental and non-governmental institutions that create a new equality between the partners and a new reliability and predictability in relations. Confronting history is a significant dimension of bilateral ties, even if it is contested, as in the German and Czech cases. In this sense, German officials do not endorse the attitude attributed to some religious thinking that forgiveness entails forgetting.

The behavior of reconciliation involves also symbolic demonstrations, such as the Adenauer-de Gaulle joint mass in Reims, the Adenauer-Ben Gurion meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria, Willy Brandt's kneeling in Warsaw, or Kohl and Mitterrand holding hands on the battlefield of Verdun.

Germany's unarticulated, but nonetheless real, search for forgiveness does not always resonate with the other party, particularly not with Israel, whose presidents and prime ministers have repeatedly stated that they cannot accord forgiveness, as such pronouncement lies only in the realm of the murdered victims or God on Yom Kippur.¹²

There is another audience for whom the historically-based forgiveness approach does not appear to resonate, albeit in a different direction: German public opinion. In a poll conducted by the University of Bielefeld, 69 percent of respondents expressed some degree of annoyance (24 percent somewhat; 45 percent fully) that crimes against the Jews were still being held against Germans.¹³ Whereas the German government deems reconciliation an ongoing, eternal

process involving moral lessons from the past, the large majority of Germans seems to disagree. While not all criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic, in the last few years the boundary between anti-Israel sentiment and anti-Semitism has been increasingly blurred, as Foreign Minister Fischer has noted with great concern.¹⁴ However, we should not see public opinion as gospel in terms of societal views. Instead, a more accurate measure may be what Germans do rather than what Germans think, and here institutionalized, non-governmental actors are important.

The Overt Influence of Religion

There are two kinds of societal actors of significance: first, the Protestant and Catholic churches that have played a role in reconciliation among other activities; and second, two religiously-based organizations that have devoted themselves to reconciliation, the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (*Gesellschaften für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit*) dealing with Israel, and Action Reconciliation/Service for Peace (*Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste*), focusing on all four countries. As in the subtle case, forgiveness behavior spans decades and generations.

Like other non-governmental actors, churches have performed the part of both catalyst and conduit for governments. Government leaders have recognized their contribution to reconciliation.¹⁵ In three cases—France, Poland, and Czechoslovakia—the church played an early role in building new ties for Germany, frequently preceding official efforts at reconciliation. This dimension was absent in the Israeli case due to the lack of a counterpart, although there was the Peace with Israel Movement (*Frieden mit Israel*) which articulated an ethical call for relations with Israel before Adenauer's ground-breaking statement of September 1951.

In the French case, both the Catholic and Protestant churches in the two countries were involved in dialogue beginning already in 1945. Moral Rearmament, the faith-based international organization, provided an important forum in Caux for some of the first meetings between German and French politicians in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Already in 1962, almost a decade before the German-Polish treaty that sealed the new reconciliation framework, the German Evangelical Church published an internal memo, designed to influence parliamentarians, calling on the German government to surrender its claim to sovereignty over the Oder-Neisse border and the Eastern territories. This initiative was followed by other statements on reconciliation, including the 1965 letter of the German Catholic bishops' conference in response to the letter of its Polish counterpart, and the 1968 memo of Catholic theologians and lay members, the so-called *Bensberger Kreis*. In December 1995, Polish Primate Josef Glemp and Karl Lehman, the head of the German bishops' conference, jointly reconfirmed the 1965 reconciliation statements.

In the Czech case, the churches in the two countries did not play a similar role until after the major breakthrough in relations in 1989. The German Catholic bishops' conference did issue a quick response on moral obligation and forgiveness in 1990 to the overture of Czechoslovakia's Cardinal Tomasek concerning the expulsion of Sudeten Germans after the war. The Catholic Ackermann Community (*Ackermann Gemeinde*) of Sudeten Germans was open to reconciliation before 1989 but ties developed only after 1989 with the Czech Bernhard Bolzano Society. The Protestant churches in the two countries also exchanged letters in 1995-96 at a time when official relations were in difficulty.

The two societal organizations—the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation and Action Reconciliation—work consistently on reconciliation. The Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation were founded in 1947 in Hamburg, Wiesbaden, and Munich with the desire to confront the past and the lack of a Christian-Jewish dialogue. Today there are eighty-three local and regional societies. In addition to creating a remembrance culture (*Erinnerungskultur*), the societies very quickly focused on Israel as the contemporary embodiment of Judaism. Early on, the Societies organized study trips to Israel, and from the beginning have regularly taken positions on domestic issues, such as anti-Semitism and xenophobia, and international questions, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁶ They also are involved in public affairs

through lectures and publications. Commitment to Israel sometimes causes the Societies to differ with other religious organizations like the Pax-Christi community in its views on the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example over Pax-Christi's decision to honor (together with Anna Lind) Hamas leaders Yassin and Rantisi as victims of violence, after they were killed by Israel.¹⁷

The Societies, whose Brotherhood Week (*Woche der Brüderlichkeit*) is a feature of German political life, are given prominence by the support of leading politicians. Germany's first president, Theodor Heuss, a highly engaged participant in both Franco-German and German-Israeli reconciliation, was actively involved with the Societies. President Köhler is the honorary president of the organization.

Like the churches and the Societies for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, Action Reconciliation's departure point is the recognition of guilt (again the word has less frequent usage among officials) for World War II and the Holocaust, as expressed during the synod of the Protestant church in 1958 at the organization's founding:

We Germans began World War II and for this reason alone, more than others, we are guilty for bringing immeasurable suffering to humankind. Germans have murdered millions of Jews in an outrageous rebellion against God. Those of us who did not want this annihilation did not do enough to prevent it. For this reason, we are still not at peace. There has not been true reconciliation ... We are requesting all peoples who suffered violence at our hands to allow us to perform good deeds in their countries ... To carry out this symbol of reconciliation.¹⁸

In going beyond apology to "good deeds," Action Reconciliation's activities represent the most complete sense of a religious approach to the outside world. Israel, Poland, and Russia were designated as the first foci of Action Reconciliation's work, as their peoples had suffered most under Nazism.¹⁹ After the erection of the Berlin Wall, work in the latter two countries and in Czechoslovakia was extremely difficult, and only expanded fully after 1989. Therefore, in addition to Israel, where work began already in 1961, after

the Eichmann trial, Action Reconciliation turned its attention to the West, particularly France, but also the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Norway. The widespread commitment of the organization is lauded at the official level.²⁰

Action Reconciliation volunteers work abroad in three main areas, all designed to further remembrance and understanding: 1) at memorials, whether concentration camps, museums and research facilities or cemeteries; 2) with Holocaust survivors, whether dealing with the physical and psychological consequences of their victimization or tapping their knowledge as witnesses; and 3) with the physically and mentally challenged members of society.

A fourth arena, particularly evident in Israel, is furthering peaceful coexistence. In both Jerusalem and Auschwitz, Action Reconciliation acts as a facilitator in its meeting houses. These efforts have sometimes mired the organization in controversy, as in the mid-1970s when volunteers in Israel championed Palestinian rights and were highly critical of Israeli policy. More recently, in a self-evaluation the organization noted an overemphasis on the Middle East conflict, sometimes to the detriment of helping Holocaust victims.²¹

Consistent with the profile of other non-governmental actors in international relations, Action Reconciliation in general does not shy away from controversial issues, for example its clear stand against the proposal, launched by *Bundestag* member Erika Steinbach, for a Center for the Study of Expulsion in Berlin with the goal of featuring Germans as victims.²²

Conclusion

Religion per se does not play a dominant role in official German foreign policy, but a historically-based ethical approach that seeks reconciliation and forgiveness does. Religious societal actors in a highly institutionalized and significant manner have conducted their own foreign policy of reconciliation as a complement to government activity. At times these civil society actors have also served as both catalyst and conduit for official policy, preceding official relations or defusing state-to-state tensions.

NOTES

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- 2 Johannes Rau, "Zur Einigung über die Höhe des Stiftungsvermögens zur Entschädigung von Zwangsarbeitern," <http://www.bundespraesident.de/Die-deutschen-Bundespraesident/Johannes-Rau/Reden-1070.11990/Zur-Einigung-ueber>.
- 3 Auswärtiges Amt, "There is no 'Moral Closure' for the Holocaust Remembrance and Responsibility: Speech by FM Fischer on the Occasion of the 'Partners in History' Dinner of the World Jewish Congress," New York, 11 September 2000, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=1250.
- 4 Silvan Shalom and Joschka Fischer, "Israel and Germany, a 40-year Friendship," *Haaretz*, 18 May 2005, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/577294.html>.
- 5 Willy Brandt, *People and Politics. The Years 1960-1975* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 457.
- 6 See, for example, Walter L. Bühl, "Gesellschaftliche Grundlagen der deutschen Außenpolitik," in Karl Kaiser und Hanns W. Maull, eds., *Deutschlands neue Außenpolitik. Band 1: Grundlagen* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994); Karl Kaiser and Markus Mildener, "Gesellschaftliche Mittlerorganisationen," in Wolf-Dieter Eberwein and Karl Kaiser, eds., *Deutschlands neue Außenpolitik. Band 4: Institutionen und Ressourcen* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998); John Duffield, *World Power Forsaken: Political Culture, International Institutions, and German Security Policy After Unification* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Sebastian Harnisch and Hanns W. Maull, eds., *Germany as a Civilian Power? The Foreign Policy of the Berlin Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Jeffrey S. Lantis, *Strategic Dilemmas and the Evolution of German Foreign Policy Since Unification* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002); Scott Erb, *German Foreign Policy: Navigating a New Era* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003).
- 7 See, for example, Mariano Delgado, "Kirchliche Versöhnungsarbeit im lateinamerikanischen Kontext. Drei Versöhnungsmodelle in Geschichte und Gegenwart" in Gerhard Beestermöller and Hans-Richard Reuter, eds., *Politik der Versöhnung* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2002); Lynn S. Graybill, *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).
- 8 On the role of Islam in official and societal foreign policy, see: Universität Trier, "German Foreign Cultural Policy After 11 September – A Shift of Priorities and Resources?" www.deutsche-aussenpolitik.de/newsletter/issue11.pdf. On the differences over religion and politics in the transatlantic relationship, see the interview with Karsten Voigt in the *Berliner Zeitung*, 4 November 2004, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/ausgabe_archiv?archiv_id=6386. On churches and Iraq, see: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, "Informationen in Internet über Friedensinitiativen in den einzelnen Bistümern," at: http://dbk.de/stichwoerter/in_sw_irak-04.html.
- 9 For details of these four relationships of reconciliation see Lily Gardner Feldman, "The Principle and Practice of 'Reconciliation' in German Foreign Policy: Relations with France, Israel, Poland and the Czech Republic," *International Affairs*, 75, no. 2, (April 1999).
- 10 Johannes Rau, "Address to the Knesset," op. cit. Fischer, see, for example, his speech to the "Global Anti-Semitism" Conference of the Anti-Defamation League, New York, 1 November 2002, http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/infuse.../index_html?bereich_id=17&type_id=0&archiv_id=3701&detail=. See Köhler's address to the *Bundestag* on the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II <http://www.bundespraesident.de/Reden-und-Interviews-;11057623709/Begabung-zur-Freiheit-Rede-von.htm?>.
- 11 See the speech by Adenauer to the *Bundestag* on 27 September 1951 in Rolf Vogel, *The German Path to Israel* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1969), 32-33. For a recent statement see Schröder's 25 January 2005 speech on the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz <http://www.bundeskanzler.de/Reden-;7715.778370/a.htm?printView=y>.
- 12 A recent example is found in Ariel Sharon's 2 February 2005 speech to the Knesset at the time of President Köhler's visit to Israel, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2005/PM+Sharon+Knesset+speech+on+visit>.
- 13 Universität Bielefeld/Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung, "Texte zu Ergebnissen der Umfrage 2004 des Projektes 'Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit' mit Schwerpunkten zum Antisemitismus," www.honestly-concerned.org/Temporary/Heitmeyer-Studie.doc.
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- 15 See Köhler's statement to the *Bundestag* on 8 May 2005, <http://www.bundespraesident.de/Reden-und-Interviews-;11057623709/Begabung-zur-Freiheit-Rede-von.htm?>.
- 16 For details of the Societies' work, see: <http://www.deutscher-kordinierungsrat.de>.
- 17 Deutscher Koordinierungsrat, "Offener Brief betr.: Pax-Christi-Gemeinde ehrt Jassin und Rantisi als Opfer der Gewalt," <http://www.deutscher-kordinierungsrat.de/de/displayItem.php?id=232>.
- 18 Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, "The Work of ASF in Israel," <http://www.asf-ev.de.il>.

19 Details of the organization's work are available at the website:
<http://www.asf-ev.de>. The annual reports are particularly useful.

20 See, for example, the statement of Foreign Minister Fischer in Aktion
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21 For the 1970s controversy, see Lily Gardner Feldman, *The Special
Relationship between West Germany and Israel* (Winchester, MA: George
Allen & Unwin: 1984), 225-26. For the more recent self-criticism, see:
Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, Jahresbericht 2002, [http://www.asf-
ev.de/index.php?id=408](http://www.asf-ev.de/index.php?id=408), 4.

22 For Action Reconciliation's statement, see: Aktion Sühnezeichen
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RELIGION AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

DOUGLAS M. JOHNSTON

As made clear by the experience of September 11 and its aftermath, the United States is operating at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to dealing with conflict that involves a significant religious component. Indeed, the principal reason religious terrorism poses such a difficult challenge is because we as a nation state have virtually no capability to understand this phenomenon, let alone deal with it. For most of our country's existence, religion has effectively been off the policymakers' radar screens—a victim of enlightenment prejudice and its accompanying assumption that religion would have a declining influence in the affairs of state. Tied closely to this has been our ongoing commitment to the rational-actor model of decision-making, which effectively excludes religion as an irrational factor. As a result and as made abundantly clear by our experience in Iraq, the United States has little, if any, ability to deal with religious differences in a hostile setting. Nor does it have any ability to counter demagogues like Bin Laden or Milosevic, who manipulate religion for their own purposes.

This lack of capability is not merely a function of purposeful neglect. It also relates to very real operational constraints imposed by our legal separation of church and state. For example, there were instances early on in Iraq where investments in the religious arena could have helped enormously with the security challenge, but the establishment clause relating to church/state considerations got in the way ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof").

It is also sadly the case that we have let our commitment to the separation of church and state serve as a crutch for not doing the necessary homework to understand how religion informs the world views and

political aspirations of others (many of whom do not similarly subscribe to the idea of separation). With the wake-up call of September 11, however, religion is finally moving into our policy calculations as a defining element of national security and with it accompanying concerns about the prospective marriage of religious extremism with weapons of mass destruction.

In confronting the challenge of religious terrorism, it first becomes necessary to understand how it works. After all, most religions at their core subscribe to laudable principles of neighborly concern, the betterment of humanity, and one's relationship with one's Creator (for those religions that profess a Creator). So, why is it that religion is so easily co-opted by power politics or the forces of nationalism? In most instances,

co-option takes the form of a badge of identity or a mobilizing vehicle for nationalist or ethnic passions. At times, though, it assumes a more central role, more often than not as a result of manipulating scripture. For example, how is it that Bin Laden can claim religious legitimacy for suicidal attacks against civilians when the Qur'an specifically prohibits both suicide and attacks against innocents? Bin Laden answers this question by noting that:

It is commanded by our religion and intellect that the oppressed have a right to return the aggression ... Is it in any way rational to expect that after America has attacked us for more than half a century, we will then leave her in security and peace? You may then dispute that all the above does not justify aggression against civilians, for crimes they did not commit and offenses in which they did not partake.

Bin Laden justifies such attacks on the basis that the American people choose their government through their own free will—a choice that stems from their agreement with its policies—and that they pay the taxes which “fund the planes that bomb us in Afghanistan, the tanks that strike and destroy our homes in Palestine, the armies which occupy our lands in the Arabian Gulf and the fleets which ensure the blockade of Iraq. So the American people are the ones who fund the attacks against us.”

On a related note and in his self-appointed role as a religious spokesman, Bin Laden cites verse 89 of Surah 4 in the Qur'an as a call to violence: “Slay the enemy wherever you find them.” In isolation, this verse seemingly promotes a spirit of violence. However, if one continues on to verse 90, one finds the opposite to be the case: “If they leave you alone and offer to make peace with you, God does not allow you to harm them.” Muslim extremists purposely overlook this second half of the admonition, and in so doing compromise Qur'anic intent.

There is no end to the verses al Qaeda can find to meet its ends, just as officials of the Dutch Reformed Church were able to do in justifying apartheid in South Africa or Jewish zealots do today in justifying their misdeeds in the West Bank. Sadly, the task of

perversion is made all the easier by the impoverished circumstances that prevail in most Muslim countries. In South Asia, for example, where the Washington-based International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) is teamed up with an Islamic policy studies institute in reforming the *madrasas* (religious schools), including those that gave rise to the Taliban, it is not unusual to find students who attend these schools solely because they are provided free room and board. Nor is it unusual to find students who have memorized the Qur'an from cover to cover but who have no idea what any of it means. Because their first language is Urdu or Pashto (or some equivalent) and the Qur'an is in Arabic, it often becomes a matter of mindlessly memorizing what are no more than a medley of strange sounds to the students. (Although students typically receive some exposure to Arabic, it is by no means sufficient to provide Qur'anic understanding.) Then when the local militant comes along and misappropriates a few verses of scripture to enlist new recruits, the student, who has no ability to question or challenge, becomes easy prey.

When religious scripture is retrieved selectively and applied situationally, it thus becomes a powerful tool for justifying the unjustifiable. This is crucial for religious terrorists where religious legitimacy trumps all other considerations. If they can point to a “precedent” in sacred scripture or tradition, opponents will find it difficult to dispute the morality of their actions, despite their obvious contradiction with the overarching spirit of the religion. This is true of all major world religions, as illustrated by the bitter twenty-year conflict in Sri Lanka, where the peaceful tenets of Buddhism have been perverted to justify an endless stream of military atrocities.

So why does someone not set the record straight? Though long overdue, there are signs that this is finally beginning to happen. A poignant example recently cited in the *Christian Science Monitor* involves a development that has taken place over the past several years in Yemen, one of the most ignored, yet important fronts in the war on terrorism. In late 2002, a Yemeni judge, Hamoud al-Hitar, announced to five captured al Qaeda members that, if they could convince him and four other scholars that their (the

captives') ideas were justified by the Qur'an, the judge and his colleagues would join their struggle. If they, however, could convince the captured terrorists otherwise, then the terrorists would have to renounce violence.

This high-stakes theological poker game was readily accepted by the prisoners, who were supremely confident in the soundness of their interpretations. With the help of Judge Hitar and his team, however, they came to see just how wrong they had been. Two years later, those five prisoners, and more than three hundred others like them, have been released after engaging in such a dialogue. According to the judge, and as affirmed by European diplomats, the approach has been highly successful, with a relative calm falling over the once unruly (and largely failed) Yemeni state.

To be sure, this approach, which was largely criticized in the West before its success became apparent, is no panacea. The Yemeni government has also taken a harder line with the extremists, from shutting down certain *madrasas* to deporting foreign militants. But the Judge's program, coupled with vocational training and job placement assistance, is proving to be an effective antidote to the hopelessness that often feeds the resort to violence. And its impact operationally has been dramatic. Some of the former militants have led authorities to weapons caches and even provided advice on tracking militants. In one astounding example, a reformed militant provided the tip to authorities that resulted in the death of the top al Qaeda commander in Yemen by a U.S. airstrike.

As evidenced by the Yemeni experiment, these sorts of organic approaches may well hold the key to dealing with the plague of religious terrorism. At the same time, though, there are steps that can be taken institutionally to enhance our national effectiveness in dealing with this problem. First, one needs to bring to bear any existing assets that are relevant to this new challenge. Foremost among such assets is the chaplain corps of the U.S. military services. Historically, the role of military chaplains has been one of addressing the spiritual needs of the men and women of their respective commands. With additional training and expanded rules of engagement, however, they could

also significantly enhance their command's ability to deal with the religious dimensions of military operations.

Through greater and more effective interaction with local religious communities and nongovernmental organizations, chaplains could develop an improved understanding of the religious and cultural nuances at play and help identify incipient threats to stability posed by religious frictions or ethno-religious demagogues. At times, they might also be able to provide a reconciling influence in addressing misunderstandings or difficulties that may arise between their commands and the local communities. Finally, they could provide informed and politically sensitive advice to their commanders on the religious and cultural implications of operational decisions that are about to be taken or that should be taken. In other words, in addition to their ongoing function of addressing human casualties after conflict has erupted, chaplains could and should be viewed as important tools for preventing its eruption in the first instance.

In 2001, the previously mentioned International Center for Religion and Diplomacy led an effort to train all U.S. Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard chaplains in a nuanced examination of religion and statecraft, with an eye toward playing the kinds of roles suggested above. The purpose was to enhance the conflict prevention capabilities of the sea-service commands (i.e. those commands that are typically at the cutting edge of U.S. involvements overseas). As might be predicted, about a third of the chaplains were enthused about the possibility of enhancing their role, and another third were quite willing to give it a try. Although the remaining third were not very interested at all, the fact remains that the colleagues who were interested constitute a formidable capability that could be brought to bear to good effect. All that is required is for the military services to expand the chaplains' rules of engagement to encompass these kinds of activities (in addition to what they are already doing). As a resource already-in-being, the only costs involved would be those associated with the additional training that would be required. Moreover, any constraints relating to separation of church and state would largely be finessed, since the chaplains already deal with both.

A second asset that can be brought to bear in situations where political considerations may (or may not) preclude effective government intervention is the transnational capability of NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Illustrative of the potential these NGOs have is the role that ICRD has played in the Sudan over the past five years. At a time when U.S. policy toward Sudan was one of isolation and demonization, the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy set out to establish relationships of trust with Sudanese religious and political leaders on both sides of the conflict (with a special focus on the Islamic regime in the North) and from that vantage point inspire them to take steps toward peace that they would not otherwise take.

In addition to assisting behind the scenes to bring an end to Sudan's long-running civil war between the Islamic North and the Christian/African Traditionalist South, ICRD undertook a couple of complementary institutional initiatives designed to ensure that any peace that eventually materialized would be lasting in nature. (More than two million people paid with their lives because an earlier peace brokered in 1972 subsequently broke down.) Chief among these was the establishment in 2003 of the Sudan Inter-religious Council (SIRC), which for the first time in that country's history provides a forum where key Muslim and Christian religious leaders can come together on a regular basis to work out their problems. As an independent body, the SIRC has as one of its principal objectives the task of influencing Sudan government policies on human rights, education, employment, media access, and the like. In just the first few months of its existence, the Council was able to advance the interests of non-Muslims well beyond what the churches had been able to achieve working on their own over the previous ten years.

The second institutional initiative involved the creation this past year of a Committee to Protect Religious Freedom (CPRF), which serves under the Council's auspices. Until this Committee's establishment, there was no mechanism for investigating alleged violations of religious freedom to determine the truth of what had actually taken place. Nor was there any capability to rectify a problem if the facts ever became known. The CPRF is now bringing accountability to this highly

sensitive area through the use of fact-finding teams and follow-through recommendations for the concerned parties and governmental authorities.

It is significant that these two independent bodies were formed in a totalitarian context. Not only did the Islamic regime permit their establishment, but it also agreed to give serious consideration to their recommendations. To date, the government has honored that commitment, even though doing so has required a significant expenditure of funds. All of this is notwithstanding the intra-Muslim conflict that continues to rage in the western state of Darfur. Even there, however, the SIRC in its capacity as a reputable reconciling body recently convened a major conference on Darfur (a conflict that some would say is beyond its purview); and they did it against the wishes of the government.

The above undertaking in Sudan is illustrative of the extensive maneuverability that NGOs often enjoy, especially when more traditional approaches are precluded. Because the efforts of NGOs involved in this kind of work are typically constrained by inadequate resources, economic (and other) incentives should be created to facilitate the development of a private funding base that would enable these NGOs to take their effective programs to scale.

Beyond strategically redeploying existing assets to counter religious terrorism, another step that could be taken would involve the creation of a religion attaché position within the U.S. Foreign Service for assignment to diplomatic missions in those countries where religion has particular salience. These attachés could help U.S. missions deal more effectively with complex religious issues that typically get pushed aside by more pressing business. It is the neglect of such issues that has led to uninformed foreign policy choices in such places as Iran, Lebanon, and Iraq.

A cadre of thirty such attachés could cover the globe and greatly enhance the United States' ability to anticipate religious developments and their prospective impact on the conduct of international relations. It would cost approximately ten million dollars annually to train, deploy, and maintain such a cadre; and while that may sound like a great deal of money, it pales in

comparison to the billions that are currently being spent to address the symptoms of the problem, such as baggage inspectors and the like.

In much the same manner that setting a counter-fire is often the best antidote for a blaze that is raging out of control, so too does religious reconciliation offer a potential counter to religious terrorism. Incorporating religion as part of the solution, however, is not without its challenges. Beyond requiring a special set of skills, the work itself is physically, emotionally, and psychologically draining. And it is by no means risk-free. Most conflicts are accompanied by vested sets of interests that want to see them continue, and more than a few spiritually-motivated peacemakers have paid the ultimate price for their efforts. Despite such risks and whatever other discomfort one may feel in navigating the uncharted waters of spiritual engagement, the stakes are simply too high to refuse the challenge. Only time will tell if we are up to the task.

RELIGION IN GERMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING?¹

CATHLEEN S. FISHER

Religion appears to be back on the political agenda, not only in “religious” America but in “secular” Europe as well. From the “end of life” issues so painfully evident in the Terri Schiavo case, to the regulation of abortion and stem cell research, to prayer in public schools or evangelicals at the U.S. Air Force academy, Americans today are debating, in some form or another, the balance between church and state in a country both of increasing religious pluralism and an assertive and politically mobilized evangelicalism. Across the Atlantic, in a demonstrably secular Germany and Europe, questions about the relationship among religion, state, nation, and identity lie just beneath the surface of divisive political debates on Turkey’s potential membership in the European Union and the integration of growing Muslim minorities into European political, economic, and social life. New ethical dilemmas posed by scientific advances confound Germans and Europeans as well, often leading them to embrace policy solutions that, surprisingly for many Americans, are actually more restrictive than U.S. laws and regulations.

In the fractious and fragile state of German-American relations after the Iraq war debate, it seems that our differences preoccupy us, not only our public policy approaches but our societal and attitudinal disparities—and the values that underpin them. Particularly following the November 2004 U.S. presidential elections, in which “values voters” played a significant role, American religiosity has been added to the lengthening catalogue of differences that purportedly divide the United States from Germany and Europe.

Tales of difference may make for good media headlines and riveting television spots—witness the international media circus that descended on Florida at the height of the debate about Terri Schiavo’s fate.

But do our disparate traditions and approaches to religion in public and political life, in fact, really matter to German-American or transatlantic relations? How fundamental are the differences and are they more significant than those within the United States or across Europe? How, if at all, are our disparate approaches to religion and (or in) politics relevant to the German-American relationship?

Religion in America: Realities and Paradoxes

In a June 2005 speech to American lawmakers, industrialists and other guests at a celebration in Washington, D.C. of DaimlerChrysler’s American connections, Jürgen Schrempp, Chairman of the

Board of Management, ended his remarks by saying: “God bless you and God bless America.”² Schrempf’s words may have surprised listeners knowledgeable of Germany, where it is hard to conceive of a German corporate leader ending with a similar sign-off. Yet, the use of this phrase, so familiar to the hometown audience, reflected a sophisticated understanding of American expectations when it comes to the space accorded to religion in public speech.

Yet, while frequent German visitors to the United States—and particularly representatives of German businesses that operate in the transatlantic marketplace—have become more attuned to American cultural preferences and peculiarities, many more Germans and Europeans appear to find it difficult to understand, let alone, engage American religiosity. A sense of alienation, or oddity and abnormality, persists. Americans’ embrace of religion in public life appears, at a minimum, anachronistically quaint for a technologically advanced country founded in the traditions of the Enlightenment or, at worst, an irrational insertion of religious views and agendas into politics that can lead to divisive and/or bad policy, at home and abroad.

But if Germans and other Europeans are often surprised—or put off—by American religiosity, it is because they have confused constitutional checks on government promotion of religion with the relationship between religion and politics more generally. As Professor Michael Sandel points out, the two are not identical: “One way of looking at the American public is to see a very strong commitment to the constitutional separation of church and state. But that doesn’t require a separation of religion and politics.”³

It is the larger relationship between religion and politics that is often ill understood outside or even within U.S. borders. As well documented by Ronald Inglehart and others, the United States is an anomaly among advanced industrial societies, because it retains its traditional religiosity. In the United States, the constitutional separation of church and state coexists with a pervasive civil religion and a robust religiosity, reflected in strong church attendance, self-

professed religious beliefs, and the widespread conviction that religion can exert positive influences on personal morality, citizenship, and leadership.⁴ At the same time, advancing secularism is particularly evident in American popular culture. And while the Christian Right may dominate media coverage of religious matters, the United States over the last several decades has become an ever more pluralistic society in matters of faith, belief, and spirituality, as immigration has brought increasing numbers of non-Christians to the United States, many of whom are now laying claim to some share of the public space accorded religion in American life.

There is, in short, more than immediately meets the eye in Americans’ relationship to religion. An analysis of American attitudes by the Pew Charitable Trusts summarized these contradictions: “Americans cherish their own faith, but the vast majority also consider freedom of religion a uniquely important value. People may call for more religion to counter social ills, but they also put their faith in science and technology. Americans may value spirituality, but money, power and fame seem to garner more attention.”⁵

The careful balance between private religiosity, a secular popular culture, and an expansively defined civil religion appears increasingly tenuous, however. The influence of religion on public life is now hotly debated in books, on the op-ed pages of American newspapers, and in public fora.

In a contribution to the *New York Times*, former Senator Gary Hart, after first establishing his evangelical credentials, went on to declare: “I believe that one’s religious beliefs—though they will and should affect one’s outlook on public policy and life—are personal and that America is a secular, not a theocratic, republic. Because of this, it should concern us that declarations of ‘faith’ are quickly becoming a condition for seeking public office.”⁶ Speaking from across the aisle, former Republican Senator, U.S. Ambassador, and ordained Episcopal minister John C. Danforth stated bluntly: “Republicans have transformed our party into the political arm of conservative Christians.” While affirming the right of all Americans, including religiously-motivated peoples, to try to influ-

ence political issues, Danforth criticized his party for going “so far in adopting a sectarian agenda that it has become the political extension of a religious movement,” a trend that would be inherently divisive in American politics. Danforth underscored the dangers of division in a second opinion piece in June 2005. Suggesting that there could well be a relationship between the increased activism of the Christian Right and the collapse of bipartisan collegiality in the U.S. Senate, Danforth pleaded for moderate Christians to act as moderators in American politics.⁷

A critical question for the future is whether the increasing activism of the Christian Right and its strategic mobilization by mainstream conservative political leaders will at some point cross an invisible line in terms of public tolerance. For the time being, a majority of Americans appear accepting and indeed even welcoming of religious influences on their political leaders and in public life more generally. But Americans’ acceptance of a greater role for religion in public policy debates and political campaigns may yet be limited if it means deepening polarization. As a Pew study noted: “Living side by side with Americans’ conviction that more religion is needed is a deeply ingrained norm of tolerance and appreciation for diversity—and it is a norm that has a powerful hold on the American ethos.”⁸ Conservative Christians acknowledge that they are less willing to compromise on core social issues (sexual morality, education, the family, and a public space for religion) in service of their religious ideals;⁹ this could bode ill for American democracy, national cohesion and social peace. For the foreseeable future, the complex relationship between religion and public life in the United States will remain contested and in flux.

Religion in Germany: Realities and Paradoxes

Signs of change are evident across the Atlantic as well.

Germany is facing its own set of dilemmas related to religion and politics, most particularly, the practical challenges of integrating a sizeable, yet still relatively fragmented, Muslim population into German political,

economic, and social life. The impetus for much debate has been the practical issues surrounding religion and education in public schools. In September 24, 2003, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the wearing of a head scarf (*hijab*) by a Muslim teacher or other civil servant could not be banned unless prohibited by state (*Länder*) laws, a decision that prompted several *Länder* to proceed with drafting legislation to bar civil servants from wearing religious symbols.

The issue of religious expression in public life remains contentious, however. In his 2004 New Year’s address to the German people, former German President Johannes Rau made a plea to eschew any regulation of the headscarf so as to uphold the principle of equal treatment for all religions. Christian Democratic leaders quickly responded that Germany should not call into question its own identity “as a country shaped by Christianity.” Proponents of the ban have argued that Germany must protect its Christian heritage; others see the *hijab* as a tool for the oppression of women and therefore an unconstitutional challenge to Western notions of human rights and the rule of law. Others counter that individuals should be free to express their respective religious beliefs and voice understanding for the desire of Muslim women to protect their modesty and traditions. For others, the *hijab* is a symbol of a desire among Muslims to define their identity and create a community apart from mainstream German society, which has largely failed to integrate its Muslim population.

The debate over the *hijab*, in many ways, is a proxy debate about cultural and national identity at a time in which Germany is becoming home to a population of greater ethnic and religious diversity and national origin. And while most attention is focused on the problems of integrating the Muslim population, the Jewish community in Germany is the fastest growing in Europe. Its expansion and higher profile, largely through immigration from the former Soviet Union, is yet another sign of the country’s religious pluralism. Still, in light of Germany’s history, what it means to “be Jewish in the new Germany” remains an ambivalent matter.¹⁰ The growing Jewish community, and its

increased recognition by the state, is further evidence of and impetus for change in the relationship between church, nation, and identity in Germany.

In this context, religion at times appears to be embraced by the German mainstream, not only or even primarily as a spiritual matter, but as a cultural marker vis-à-vis a Muslim “other” that is often ill-understood. The election of a German-born pope, former Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, over time might perhaps lead to revived interest in religion and spirituality per se. It is too soon to tell.

In the meantime, against the backdrop of a history in which religion too often has been the source of inter-confessional strife and conflict, religious expressions in public life remain the exception rather than the rule. Federal German President Horst Köhler has demonstrated greater comfort and confidence in personal expressions of religiosity in public addresses, for example, ending his inaugural speech to the *Bundestag* following his election with the words “God bless our country.”¹¹ Appearing before the 2005 Evangelischer Kirchentag, Köhler spoke openly of the German Protestant church as his “spiritual home,” even though some might see such an expression as violating the president’s responsibility, as the head of pluralistic state, to represent all religious confessions and communities as well as non-believers.¹²

The German debate about religion, the state, and national and cultural identity comes at a time of growing uncertainty about the country’s future. Chancellor Schröder’s call in May 2005 for early national elections unleashed debates about the sustainability of the German “social market” economy in the face of growing global competition, immigration, and EU expansion. A pervasive sense of insecurity appears to have taken hold of large swaths of the population, with 73 percent of Germans expressing dissatisfaction with conditions at home in the Pew Global Attitudes 2005 survey. Immigration, particularly from the Middle East and North Africa, is viewed with particular concern, with 57 percent of German respondents to the survey expressing a negative view of further inflows of population from these regions.¹³

Public discussion over the economic and political future, and cultural identity of Germany and Europe,

is likely to intensify in coming years. Although the European Union is committed to begin negotiations with Turkey over eventual membership in the European Union, the outcome of this process is uncertain in light of the French and Dutch rejection of the European constitutional treaty, which, among many other things, reflected popular concern over EU expansion and even opposition to Turkey’s eventual membership in the Union. The role of religion in determining Europe’s identity and cultural and political boundaries is likely to remain an important, if often unarticulated, element of public debate as Europe’s political leaders and populations consider the EU’s future.

Does Religion Matter?

Developments in both the United States and Germany are reminders that the relationship among religion, the state, and the nation, is not static but rather constantly subject to change. The question nevertheless remains: Do our divergent perspectives on religion and public life really matter to German-American relations?

Religion is relevant to German-American relations in a number ways.

First, religion affects German-American relations indirectly, through its role (or absence) in our respective domestic political debates, which are difficult to isolate in an interconnected world and often intersect, overlap, or collide. Whether the issue is abortion, stem cell research, environmental protection, or the bounds of religious expression for those in public service, our public policy debates reflect our societal schisms, concerns, and values. Religion, as it relates to our respective values, culture, and identity, in turn helps to shape our mutual perceptions of one another and to frame thinking about our respective similarities and differences—and whether these are to be viewed positively or unfavorably.

Second, to the degree that religion influences, either directly or indirectly, the framework of American foreign policy or our respective world views, religion is relevant to German-American relations. Particularly in the United States, ideas from the United States’ religious past have influenced how Americans view,

analyze and act in the world, infusing American foreign policy with a belief in the United States as an exceptional, "chosen nation" with a special mission to "transform" the world. The impact of this mental framework, John Judis argues, has been particularly influential in the Bush administration's foreign policy and world view.¹⁴ For a German audience, Bush's use of religious language or imagery in statements of U.S. foreign policy is not only culturally foreign; it may also strengthen the considerable mistrust with which Germans and Europeans view the U.S. president, by awakening fears that "irrational" religious elements are at play in American foreign policy. German and European history, after all, is a cautionary tale of the potentially irrational or destructive effects of religion when it mixes too forcefully with politics.

Third, beyond German-American bilateral relations, religion, understood broadly as a cultural influence, is increasingly a factor that must be taken into account in our interaction with countries in the world in which religion remains a salient factor. This is particularly true with regard to relations with Muslim countries, which may depend critically on acquiring a better understanding of the religious component as it relates to modernization and democratization, as well as to conflicts and terrorism, as Doug Johnston reminds us. Religion also figures into German and American views of and approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Additionally, religion is at the nexus of German domestic policy and American (and German) foreign policy as it relates to transnational terrorism. The relative failure of Germany and other European countries to integrate their growing Muslim populations is not only a matter of domestic concern, but potentially a transatlantic foreign policy problem for the future, if segments of these populations were to become radicalized and engage in violent or terrorist acts. At the very least, an alienated and excluded population of Muslims in Europe is hardly a recipe for social stability.

Unfortunately, transatlantic communication about religion as it relates either to domestic or foreign policy is almost always fragmentary and lacking historical context. For many Germans and Americans, information on religion is often filtered through the media, which, either intentionally or as a consequence of

fiscal and other pressures, may oversimplify what are in fact very complex balances in each society. In a climate of heightened mistrust, an oversimplified view of religion and public life in both countries serves to highlight our differences rather than commonalities, and further justify and strengthen the belief in the necessity and wisdom of a transatlantic divorce.

Awareness of a "God gap" is already evident. When the Pew Global Attitudes project in April/May 2005 asked Germans whether the United States was too religious, 39 percent responded affirmatively; in contrast, some 58 percent of American respondents believe that the United States is not religious enough. Although few German respondents perceived significant religious influences (defined as the Christian Right and Jews) on American foreign policy, what is less clear from the Pew survey is whether Germans perceive religious influences on U.S. domestic policies in ways that deepen a sense of alienation and belief in a transatlantic "values gap."¹⁵

An enhanced understanding of the contested boundary between religion and public life is particularly important in light of the considerable uncertainties surrounding the future of the German-American relationship. Geo-political shifts, fractious policy debates, and domestic political and societal trends have changed the German-American relationship, fundamentally and irrevocably. While both countries continue to have important common interests, the foundation of trust and assumption of commonality has eroded. As is well documented in repeated public opinion polls, American policies in Iraq and on other issues have taken a heavy toll on the standing of the United States and U.S. leadership in Germany and in many other countries around the world. Perhaps even more troubling, the all-important "mental frame" for evaluating American policy, American culture, and American values—or even for making sense of developments in the world that may in some way be linked to American policies—may be shifting fundamentally, in a way that makes the United States appear negative per se and alien to German values and identity. In the context of this mental frame, American religiosity, alien and misunderstood, strengthens the sense that the United States is no longer a country with which Germany and Europe can or should identify. Of course, the sense of alienation is not pervasive and

the predisposition in much public discourse to evaluate all things American in a negative way may not prevail in the long term. There are still competing frames of reference for interpreting and evaluating German-American differences. The risk nevertheless exists.

Our significant differences should not blind us to the fact that our societies are both struggling with common challenges.

Though our debates about religion and culture, values and identity, are very different, they have some common roots. In the United States, many Americans are profoundly unsettled by the new threats to their economic and physical security that globalization has brought. Added to the list of insecurities are concerns about “values” in an America that is seen to have lost its moral compass in the face of global relativism. Both the effective political mobilization of Christian conservatives and the broader resonance some of their concerns find among a part of the American electorate may be manifestations of what Dr. Luis Lugo of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has termed “cultural insecurity”¹⁶ in a changing and diverse America. Across the Atlantic, the manifestations of cultural insecurity are different but no less evident: opposition to the European constitution and the EU’s further expansion; growing concerns about immigration and Muslim minorities; and the fear of losing the cultural certainties and ways of life that have defined European societies but now appear threatened by globalization.

In these times of insecurity and change both Germany and the United States face a critical question, namely, to paraphrase Professor Rolf Schieder, how much religion can Germany or the United States tolerate?¹⁷ In a pluralistic democracy, politics after all ultimately relies on a measure of tolerance of difference, and both the opportunity and willingness of those with different beliefs and opinions to compromise for the greater social good. In the more secular Germany and Europe, in which a majority of the population may nevertheless cling in some measure to the notion of a “Christian” European identity, what public space will be available to the growing numbers of Muslims or other religious minorities living within Europe’s

borders—numbers that seem bound to increase as a result of immigration and/or demographic trends? In the United States, the assertively vocal claim of the Christian Right to define religiosity in American life exclusively could be dangerously polarizing in a country of significant diversity. American citizens and leaders might do well to ask how much religion, defined not a broad expanse of pluralistic faiths, beliefs, spiritualities, but as Christian evangelism, the nation and American democracy can bear.

Despite their significant—and some would say, growing—differences, the United States and Germany continue to share many common interests and face common dilemmas. For this reason, German-American relations would benefit from a more nuanced understanding of our differences when it comes to questions of faith, religion, and spirituality—but also acknowledgement of shared challenges. A better understanding of religious influences and elements is also needed if the United States and Germany are to navigate not only transatlantic policy debates but also the religious elements in conflicts around the world.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank the authors of the essays in this volume and participants in the May 2005 conference for their comments and insights, upon which this essay draws.

2 Quoted in Jeffrey Birnbaum, “DaimlerChrysler, as American as Apple Strudel,” *Washington Post*, 13 June 2005.

3 Quoted in The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *Lift Every Voice: A Report on Religion in American Public Life* (Washington, DC, 2002), 13.

4 *Ibid.*, 42. Despite the traditionally strict separation of government and church, for example, a plurality of Americans (40 percent) in a 2002 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life expressed the belief that religions organizations can be more effective than non-religious groups or government agencies in providing some social services—as has been advocated under the Bush Administration’s “faith-based initiative.” See *Lift Every Voice*, 14.

5 Steve Farkas, et al., *For Goodness Sake: Why So Many Want Religion to Play a Greater Role in American Life*, A Report from Public Agenda for The Pew Charitable Trusts (New York: 2001), 7.

6 Hart noted that he was raised in The Church of the Nazarene, an evangelical denomination, graduated from Bethany Nazarene College, and later attended Yale Divinity School. See Gary Hart, "When the Personal Shouldn't Be Political," *New York Times*, 8 November 2004.

7 John C. Danforth, "In the Name of Politics," *New York Times*, 30 March 2005; John C. Danforth, "Onward, Moderate Christian Soldiers," *New York Times*, 17 June 2005.

8 *For Goodness' Sake*, 13.

9 See the essay by Clyde Wilcox in this volume on the Christian Right's social agenda.

10 Jeffrey M. Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, forthcoming).

11 Ansprache von Horst Köhler vor der Bundesversammlung nach seiner Wahl zum Bundespräsidenten im Reichstagsgebäude in Berlin am 23. Mai 2004," <http://www.bundespraesident.de/Anlage620405/23.05.2004-Wahl.pdf>.

12 "Grußwort von Bundespräsidenten Horst Köhler zur Eröffnung des 30. Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentags in Hannover," 25 May 2005, http://eng.bundespraesident.de/Reden-und-Interviews-11057624162/Grusswort-von-Bundespraesident.htm?global.back=-%2c11057%2c0/Reden-und-Interviews.htm%3fmlink%3dbpr_liste.

13 The Pew Global Attitudes Project, "American Character Gets Mixed Reviews: U.S. Image Up Slightly, But Still Negative," 23 June 2005, 34, 36.

14 John Judis, "The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy," *Policy Brief* 37, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2005. The influence of religion on U.S. foreign policy is also the subject of a program at the Council on Foreign Relations, directed by Walter Russell Mead.

15 When asked what factors influenced U.S. foreign policy, German respondents pointed first to the influence of the news media and business (24 percent each) and the military (14 percent). Four percent identified the influence of Christian conservatives, with 12 percent citing the influence of Jews. See The Pew Global Attitudes Project, "American Character Gets Mixed Reviews" 6, 26.

16 I am grateful to Dr. Lugo for this insight and his related comments at the May 2005 conference.

17 Rolf Schieder, *Wieviel Religion verträgt Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001).



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