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Religion and World Politics: A Structural Approach

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Which religious communities and institutions are ready to participate in the new transnational European polity?

What effect do these communities have on "Europeanization"?

Can transnational religions serve as models for a European polity that transcends national identity?

It wasn't so long ago that many social scientists were convinced that religion had been consigned to the margins of politics, indeed to the margins of modern life. Viewing the vibrant religiosity of American politics as no more than an intriguing deviant case, devotees of modernization theory held that religion would recede in significance as societies became more modern. Secularism was to follow modernity as the bright sun of morning follows the bleak darkness of night. That theory, and its related expectations, are much less in vogue today among social scientists than they were just a couple of decades ago. Religion has endured as an element of global politics, and not all of that endurance can be attributed to atavistic resistance by pre (or anti)- modern dead-enders. The continued role of religion in political contexts as varied as the United States, Iran, Brazil, and yes, even Germany, has proved simply too obvious to ignore.

Jose Casanova has done as good a job as anyone in explaining how so many people got so much wrong for so long (Casanova, 1994). One of the central analytical mistakes, argues Casanova, was in assuming that the modern processes of secularization—the institutional differentiation of the sacred from the secular—would lead inevitably to the marginalization of religion, per se, in society. The two processes are not necessarily organically related to each other. But a second mistake, as important as this first in steering social science wrong, was the function of a powerful intellectual Euro-centrism. Since differentiation had led to marginalization in Europe, then European social scientists (and their North American colleagues schooled on European social theory) assumed that the European dynamic would happen in the rest of the world as well. But it didn't happen. As Casanova points out: it wasn't the U.S. that turned out to be the deviant case due to its religiosity; instead it was Europe that stood out in comparative terms because of its secularism.

This recognition (which of course is not universal among those whom Casanova and others criticized) has allowed for a more nuanced approach to the role of religion in International Relations, just as it has done in other branches of the social sciences. At the very least, there has been a significant expansion in the number of books that are published on the general theme of religion and international affairs. And among some students of International Relations, there has been a recognition of the fascinating ways in which religion and politics

are structurally linked to each other. Too often, I think, we tend to reduce our understanding of the political role of religion to an examination of the ways in which religion imposes itself on political processes that we would just as soon remain secular. But that runs the risk of missing the dynamism in the relationship, the extent to which politics and religion are both affected by what takes place in the other realm.

Religious actors have to face the challenges inherent in organizing themselves and articulating their interests in ways that are relevant to new political structures.

The political role of any given religious community, for example, is deeply shaped by the political structures in which that role is carried out. To take just one obvious instance: the Roman Catholic Church's role in Polish politics and society has been profoundly affected by the inauguration over the last twenty years of pluralist democracy within the state of Poland. The Church played an important role in the social and political processes that overturned Communism in Poland. But that role had to change significantly once the political context was so radically altered. This complex relationship between religion and politics pertains on a broader level as well. When international governing structures change, as they are in our own day, through processes like economic globalization or European integration, then religious actors have to face the challenges inherent in organizing themselves and articulating their interests in ways that are relevant to new political structures.

It has always been thus, by the way. It is a staple of western history, after all, that the development of the so-called Westphalian system of individual states defined by territorial sovereignty was accompanied by a significant change—diminution, in fact—of the role of religion in public life. Indeed, some might even want to argue that such a diminution was the intended motivation of the transformation of the international political system in the first place. But regardless of the specifics of that history, the role of Catholicism under the Roman Empire was utterly different from the role of Catholicism in the modern system of individual states. Similarly, Islam's political position under the caliphate was not the same as its role under western colonialism, just as the role played by the Orthodox churches under the Ottoman millet bore almost no resemblance to the role played by Orthodoxy within, say, Communist Yugoslavia, or for that matter within the post-Yugoslav states of the Balkan peninsula.

My intention in this Issue Brief is to apply this structural insight to the role of religion in modern day Europe. This application will be based on the conviction that Europe is undergoing a rather fundamental change in political structure in our era as the European Union holds out the possibility of at least potential membership to every state that can make a legitimate claim to being "European." As a result, definitions of "Europe" will have to be altered to accommodate the participation of countries like Poland, Romania, and (maybe) Turkey that have deep roots and enduring identifications with religious traditions. Maybe Europe is not such an exception to the enduring political significance of religion after all.

These developments raise two important and rather reciprocal questions with regard to the relationship between politics and religion. The first concerns the effect this evolution in political structure is having on the role of religion in European political life. Which religious communities and institutions are prepared to participate in this new (or renewed) transnational European polity, and which are not? Second, what effect are these religious communities and institutions likely to have, both individually and collectively, on the ongoing processes of European integration—on what is often referred to rather ambiguously as "Europeanization?" Can transnational religions serve as models for and engines of the creation of a European polity that transcends national identity? Or are these religious communities still so deeply imbedded in enduring local and national structures that they could actually serve as a drag on Europeanization?

I will examine these questions in terms of three religious traditions: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam. I have chosen this particular group for three reasons. They each have a deep transnational strain running through their histories; they each are closely tied to the cultures and societies of states that have either joined the EU recently or may be asked to do so in the future; and they are the three that were the focus of the collaborative project from which I am deriving this Issue Brief (Byrnes& Katzenstein, 2006). We will see through examination of these three traditions that transnational religion is a very complex category; included within that category is a very diverse set of political actors. Some of those actors have close historic ties to conventional definitions of European identity. For others, such connections are far more problematic and contested, in both historic and contemporary terms. Moreover, the ways in which each of these religious communities structures itself are clearly distinct, one from the other, and politically significant. Roman Catholicism embodies one very particular form of transnational interaction, but Orthodoxy manifests a very different form of transnationalism, and Islam is defined by yet another.

Philpott and Shah have argued that the postures of these various religious traditions toward European integration are functions of those religions' "characteristic ideas, institutional relationship with the state, and historical experiences of Europe" (Philpott and Shaw, 2006:59-60). While agreeing

with that claim entirely, I also want to supplement it here by pointing out another key factor in determining the variant nature of these religious communities' roles in contemporary European politics: the variant transnational structures of the communities themselves.

Roman Catholicism

Because of its institutional makeup, Roman Catholicism is generally considered the most straightforwardly transnational of the three religious communities I am considering here. Indeed, in some ways, the Catholic Church is almost paradigmatically transnational in structure. Most analysts of the Catholic Church in this regard focus appropriately on the Papacy and its authority. The heart of modern papal authority, of course, is the First Vatican Council's declaration in 1870 that when the Pope "defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church," he does so infallibly, that is to say that "such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, irreformable" (Tanner, 1990: 816). Infallibility, though very rarely exercised, grants an aura of finality to the Pope's every word, and is a kind of logical end to an ecclesiology that views one man, the Pope, as personally selected by God (the Holy Spirit) to lead the universal Church.

The Pope's role in the Church goes well beyond this aura, however. In practical terms, the Pope personally appoints each and every bishop across the globe, and those bishops must meet with the Pope every five years during what are called ad limina visits to Rome. Even more importantly, the teachings of the Catholic Church are articulated most clearly and most forcefully (even when not necessarily infallibly) in papal documents, statements, and encyclicals. All of these levers of power and modes of authority were highlighted by the centralizing instincts and peripatetic style of Pope John Paul II. Whether he was denouncing communism, warning against secularism, resisting legalized abortion, or punishing dissent within his own Church, the late Pope sought to impose a coherent voice of papal authority over a far-flung, very complex Catholic Church.

Most relevant for my purposes, he also sought to use that seat of authority to advance his own distinctively Catholic reasons for wanting his native Poland and the other formerly communist states to be a part of the European Union. Eastern enlargement, in fact, was a crucial element of the Pope's vision for the future of Europe, because he saw the institutional reunification of the continent as the historic occasion for a new evangelization flowing from East to West. The Church in the East, though shackled by communism, had retained the cultural, social, and, in an indirect sense, political authority that had been surrendered to modernity in the West. Now that the political divisions of Europe had largely been erased, the Pope hoped that a more faithful East would be able to breathe some religious life back into a secular West. The Church in the eastern half of the continent, he argued, "can offer Europe as it grows in unity, her attachment to the faith, her tradition inspired by religious devotion, the pastoral efforts of her Bishops and priests, and certainly many other values on the basis of which Europe can become a reality endowed not only with higher economic standards but also with a profound spiritual life" ("Ecclesia in Europa," 2003).

One can question the extent to which this vision is likely to be turned into a reality in modern-day Europe. But the important point here is not the practicality of implementing papal vision. Instead, the point is simply that the authoritative head of the Catholic Church had a clearly defined and forcefully articulated understanding of "Europe" as an idea, and of the values that European society should devote itself to in the post Cold War political context.

In this connection, Pope John Paul II was fond of referring to Europe as a fundamentally Christian civilization, and he tirelessly called on Europe to renew its civilizational identity through a renewed commitment to Christianity, as defined, of course, in Rome. And when he repeatedly implored Europe to be true to what he understood to be its authentic historical roots, he did so as a religious leader who believed that an authentic European identity and an authentic European unity were impossible without reference to the specific religious tradition for which he spoke authoritatively. This understanding of European history provided the

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late Pope with a powerful sense of legitimacy in terms of his and his religious community's participation in the processes of developing the political structures that will govern European society in the twenty-first century.

Besides the Pope, however, what I am calling Catholic transnationalism is also embodied in and articulated by the thousands of Catholic bishops who serve the Church in almost every corner of the globe. These men exercise fundamentally local authority over a geographic area called a "diocese." But that authority is only exercised legitimately because these bishops are members of a collegial teaching authority that, in communion with the Pope, shares authority as a collective body over the entire global Church. This collegial body, along with each bishop's individual relationship with the Bishop of Rome (the Pope), renders Catholic bishops the central players in a kind of global/local dynamic that absolutely defines transnational Catholicism.

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At the same time, these bishops are also members of what are called national episcopal conferences, groups of bishops within each country that "form an association and meet together at fixed times" in order to "fulfill their office suitably and fruitfully" (Abbott and Gallagher, 1966: 424-25). What this means is that episcopal conferences are the specific vehicles for articulating and disseminating the social and theological teachings of today's Catholic Church. These conferences have the effect of nationalizing the day-to-day activities of an otherwise transnational Church, but they also provide institutionalized avenues of communication and interaction for bishops from different, and especially neighboring, countries.

For our purposes, a particularly relevant element of this communication and interaction is the creation in recent years of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community. This body is made up of bishops who are delegated by their individual national episcopal conferences to a kind of supranational Catholic organization that is served by an administrative secretariat based in Brussels.

Interestingly, the bishops' conferences of many of the countries who were candidates for admission to the EU were counted as "associate members" of the Commission before their formal accession to the EU. And not surprisingly, given the position articulated at the Vatican, this body consistently and explicitly favored the expansion of the EU to include the formerly communist countries of central and eastern Europe.

I am not making any extravagant claims, by the way, as to the influence that the Catholic hierarchy exercises within the institutions of the European Union. What I am saying is that the bishops' presence in Brussels is emblematic of the extent to which the Catholic Church is prepared for transnational cooperation on the issue of Europeanization. Europe's bishops, like all Catholic bishops, are trained to view themselves as part of a broadly based college of Catholic leaders. The structural levers of communication and influence that can bring that vision to life already exist as elements of the basic institutional structure of the Church itself. Put another way, discussions among Catholic bishops over the expansion of the EU, and over the role of the Church in that process, are regularized and institutionalized.

Less regular and less institutional, but perhaps in the end just as important is the fact that the "people of God" also serve as a layer of Catholic transnationalism in Europe and in European politics. This has, of course, been true throughout European history to one extent or another. The original notion of Christendom, after all, was a Catholic notion. In more modern terms, it is worth pointing out again that some of the most prominent founding architects of the modern European movement in the 1950s, men such as Adenauer and De Gasperi, were Christian Democrats, animated in part by echoes of Europe's Christian unity. Indeed, Douglas Holmes has argued in his recent book on Integral Europe that the whole project of European integration was powerfully shaped from the very beginning by Catholic social teaching (Holmes, 2000). He pays particular attention in this regard to the key concept of subsidiarity, the traditional Catholic notion ostensibly transferred to the project of European integration, that governing authority should only be passed on to a "higher" authority when it is impractical to have it carried out at a lower level (2000: 52). In any event, the important point here is that like their bishops, though admittedly in very different ways, the Catholic peoples of Europe are also prepared by their shared religious identity to conceive of themselves as a European people.

Orthodoxy

If Roman Catholicism is the most transnational of the three religious traditions I am examining here, then Orthodoxy would appear to be the least. The Orthodox Church, unified on doctrine and ritual, is institutionally structured around what are known as "autocephalous" national churches. John Meyendorff has defined autocephaly, "on the strictly canonical plain," as "the right granted to a diocese or group of dioceses to elect its own bishop or bishops" (Meyendorff, 1966: 42). But Meyendorff also recognized that over time the term came to refer to "the absolute independence of … national churches" (1966: 42). Today this concept of autocephaly denotes the great depth of connection between church and state, or perhaps better put between church and nation, in the Orthodox tradition. Unlike Roman Catholicism and its well-developed system of transnational authority, and its well-defined understanding of the global "people of God," the very close ties between individual churches and individual nations within Orthodoxy make any movement toward transnational or supranational authority structures (whether religious or political) an uphill struggle, to say the least.

That said, the relationship within Orthodoxy between transnational unity and national autocephaly has always been a complex one. It is interesting to note, for example, that whereas western imperialism dragged Islam reluctantly into the particularities of the state system, Islamic imperialism, in the form of the Ottoman Empire, actually had the opposite effect on the Orthodox Church. Under the millet system operated by the sultan, the patriarch of Constantinople was seen as the legitimate spiritual, and in some ways political, leader of all Orthodox believers living in the Ottoman Empire. The patriarch was never a pope, that is true, but the patriarch was the dominant figure of an unmistakably transnational Church, even if that transnationalism was imposed from outside the tradition.

The pendulum swung back away from the transnationalism of the millet, of course, when the rise of nationalism and the breakup of the empire led to the creation of independent sovereign states in the Balkans, most of which were defined in part by their autocephalous Orthodox Churches. In fact, according to Ramet, "the autocephalous church figures [in the Orthodox tradition] as an authentication of national identity" in the first place (Ramet, 1988: 7). "To be a nation," she has said, "meant to have a church of one's own, and to be entitled to one's own state" (1988: 4). The patriarch in Constantinople retained what is called "initiative," including the right to recognize autocephaly in specific national settings. But the center of gravity within the Orthodox world moved decisively toward the national.

Today, this relationship between national religious identity and transnational Orthodoxy continues to evolve. It is true that the autocephalous churches in places like Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia are very closely wedded to national identity and deeply implicated in shaping these societies in the post-communist era. Autocephalous national churches define Orthodoxy today, so they also define Orthodoxy's relationship to politics, in Europe and elsewhere. But that does not mean that we can just completely ignore the degree to which doctrinal unity endures within Orthodoxy and coexists alongside of institutional differentiation. Just because Patriarch Bartholomew has less power than Pope Benedict XVI (and he certainly does), does not mean that the Orthodox Churches do not conceive of themselves as a unified religious tradition (they do). John Meyendorff, for example, warns "observers from outside" not to underestimate "the power—keenly felt by the Orthodox themselves—of a common perception of basic Christian truths, expressed particularly in the liturgy but also in frequent unofficial and brotherly contacts which hold the Church together" (Meyendorff, 1996: 235-36).

The important point to be made here, however, is that any reaffirmation or public recognition of Orthodox unity would not necessarily mean that such unity would work in favor of the ready integration of "Orthodox nations" into the European Union. Indeed, Orthodox unity, such as it is, might be just as likely, if not more likely, to hinder ready accession for a nation-state such as, say, Serbia rather than to facilitate it. Echoes of the historic rivalry between Constantinople and Rome seem to underpin the hesitation expressed by so many Orthodox leaders about accepting definitions of "Europe," and how it should be politically structured, from Western sources. Byzantium, one might want to conclude, is not anxious to take lessons from Rome on what it means to be European, or what it means to structure European unity.

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This way of defining things suggests a number of potentially complicating factors that could get in the way of ready integration of Orthodox nations into the European Union. Russia's role in European politics is viewed quite differently, for example, from Belgrade or a purported Orthodox Commonwealth, than

it is from Brussels or, for that matter, from Washington. Greece's very important traditional role in transnational Orthodoxy will also have to be taken into account as the EU decides in coming years which Orthodox nations merit being invited to join "Europe," and which do not. Whatever a very uncertain future holds in this regard, however, it is hard to see at this point how Orthodox Christianity, even in its most transnational iterations could do anything but complicate the

path of Orthodox nations to EU accession. This is a self-consciously European religious tradition not very interested in undergoing Europeanization, as that process is currently defined.

Though profoundly dissimilar in numerous ways, Islam resembles Roman Catholicism in one important respect: they are both religious traditions that are fundamentally transnational in

Islam

nature, and that make universal claims for all persons, at all times, in all places. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the actual word of God, the record of the uniquely direct intervention of the divine into human history. That is not something which is true for some people at some times, or true in some countries but not in others. It is true all the time and everywhere, and Islam's overriding transnational character is derived from the fundamental universality of these basic theological claims.

Unlike the case of Roman Catholicism, however, we cannot move systematically through the institutional levels of Islam, assessing the degree to which the structures are transnational in nature. Indeed, as Carl L. Brown has put it, "Islam knows no 'church' in the sense of a corporate body whose leadership is clearly defined [and] hierarchical. . .No distinctive corporate body equivalent to the church in Christianity exists," at least not in Sunni Islam (Brown, 2000: 31).

The Shia tradition is more corporate, more analogously similar to the clergy-led communities that make up Christianity, and that find their zenith in Catholicism. Nevertheless, throughout all of Islam, the ulema, the learned men who lead local communities, are not formal authority figures and members of an officially sanctioned clerical caste. As is said so often that it barely merits repeating: there is no such thing as an Islamic pope. In almost diametric distinction from Catholicism, in fact, Islam is a basically self-governing religious community that is not tied together by the formal structure of a papacy, or national and international conferences of ordained clerics, or really by any institutional ties at all, as that term is generally understood in western Christianity. At the same time, Islam's highly decentralized institutional structure can also limit

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the coherence and cohesiveness of the Islamic community, in both religious and political terms.

That said, the Prophet Mohammed's clear intention was to found a highly unified community that would be both religious and political in nature, and that would brook no division within itself. Indeed, the original Islamic community under the Prophet, and under his immediate successors, was the very model of a tightly knit religious community, albeit one with imperial ambitions and universal claims. But within a very short time following Mohammed's death, this community divided itself in all sorts of ways. Shia split from Sunni; one Islamic empire followed after another Islamic empire in Arabia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Middle East; and the caliphate, the human symbol of Islamic unity, became subject to claims, counter-claims, and subsequent dilutions of authority until it was formally "abolished" by the post-Ottoman Turks in 1924.

These divisions, however, were not, by and large, articulated in national terms. In part, this was because the parameters of Islamic life were set before the rise of nationalism as a force in international relations, and before the division of the globe into individual legal entities called states. But in time, the creation of the international state system, and perhaps more significantly the development of Western imperialism in subsequent centuries, combined to bring about what James Piscatori has called "territorial pluralism" within Islam (Piscatori, 1986: 40-75). The founding notion of Dar al-Islam (the Muslim world) and Dar al-Harb (the non-Muslim world) had presupposed a certain degree of reflexive unity among the world's Muslims. But, albeit reluctantly in some cases, hyphenated Islam developed within Dar al-Islam as nationalism came to play such a central role in world politics. In time, phrases such as "Turkish Islam" came to denote more than geographical classifications. They also came to mean that the Islamic religion, and highly dispersed communities of Muslims, had become closely associated with individual national identities and with specific iterations of state integrity.

There always was, however, and still is, a significant and portentous disjunction between the ideal of Islamic unity, and the reality of Islamic "territorial pluralism." And that disjunction is rooted in the development of relations between the Islamic religious community and state power. From the days of the Prophet Mohammed, the notion of distance between religion and politics—or to use the Christian terminology, church and state—had always been foreign to Islam. Distinctions such as those between divine law and human law, temporal power and religious power, so central to the trajectory of western political development, had been rejected in the Islamic community. Such distinctions, in fact, had been seen as the central barriers to the realization of Islam's central goal: a godly community that could live in harmony under Islamic rule, governed by shari'a, God's law.

In times closer to our own, of course, when Muslim communities had to live under western imperialism, Islamic notions of the appropriate relationship between Islamic religion and state power changed dramatically. Forms of Islamic nationalism developed all over the world; shari'a came in many places to be seen as an appropriate basis for national legal systems; and in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini established something called an Islamic Republic. Despite all these accommodations to an international state system designed and developed outside of Islamic precepts, however, the ideal, always to be sought in theory if not in everyday practice, was a unified Islamic community, the umma, living under Islamic government, structured and articulated according to Islamic law.

Today, the European manifestation of this community is diasporic with close familial, cultural, and religious ties to places and countries that are much more closely identified with Islam than European states are. An important question, therefore, is what role this transnational or diasporic community is playing, or is likely to play, in either the expansion of the European Union, per se, or in the reconceptualization of the idea of "Europe" to include Muslims and/or states with majority Muslim populations. Can we envision the transnational umma, or the Muslim diaspora in Europe, as either a catalyst for, or barrier to, EU accession for Turkey or a deeper, more integrated relationship between the EU and the Islamic states of the so-called Mediterranean Initiative?

The crucial thing to note in this regard is that if Roman Catholicism can be seen in some way as definitional in relationship to Europe, then Islam can be seen in a similar way as oppositional. European identity, and what we tend to call western civilization, coalesced in considerable part around its relationship with, and distance from, Islam. Islam was "the other," if you will, that served as the foundation of Europe's self-definition. Clear echoes of this historical dynamic can be heard today in the renewed talk of a Christian Europe, of neo-

Christendom, and of the potential conflict between the Islamic religion and European values, however the latter are defined.

Catholicism and Orthodoxy, as we have seen, is each able to offer a definition of European identity that is derived in large part from its own religious tradition and institutional history. For Islam, however, the relationship between religion and identity in the European context, the relationship between Muslim tradition and European unity, is much more problematic. Indeed, quite often in European history, Islam has been perceived by Christian Europeans as an external imperial power seeking to export its universal religious claims to Europe—to a Europe, of course, that was already in thrall to the similarly universal claims of Christianity. Some of the trepidation expressed today about the growing presence of Muslims in Europe, or about the accession of a Muslim country like Turkey to the European Union, is derived from historical memories of the great battles that took place over European religious and cultural identity in the distant but not forgotten past.

This observation is not meant in any way as an endorsement of simplistic notions of an unbridgeable distance or an implacable opposition between Islam and the West. The relationship between these broad, diverse entities has been varied and complex, and the question of where one ends and the other begins has not always been as clear cut as some might imagine, even in historical terms. Islam was a powerful presence on the Iberian peninsula, after all, for seven centuries, and the Muslim populations of places like Bosnia or Albania are not, to put it in absurdist terms, recent immigrants from "the East." This recognition of complexity is particularly germane to any informed discussion of Turkey's relationship to Europe, by the way. The Muslim country that is a candidate for EU membership, after all, is not Pakistan, or Malaysia, or even Morocco. It is Turkey—a country with deep European roots, and the successor state to what was to a significant degree, after all, a European Ottoman Empire.

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Indeed, when viewed in terms of Turkey's place in Europe, the relationship between Islam and "the West" is confoundingly complex. Ataturk's hope for "Westernization" was not the same thing as Erdogan's pursuit of "Europeanization." But the whole span of Turkish history suggests that essentialist notions of a Christian West and an Islamic East are too simple. Such notions, in fact, are liable to hinder rather than advance our

understanding of the dynamics involved in Turkey's approach to the European Union. One of those dynamics, crucial to the kind of analysis I am suggesting here, is the role that can be played by the Islamic diaspora in affecting Turkey's relationship with Europe, as both an idea and a political structure. Is the Turkish immigrant experience in Germany, for example, easing the acceptance of European social and political norms in Turkey through transnational communication within the Islamic community? Or is a persistent ghettoization of Turkish migrants in Germany, whatever its cause and explanation, only serving to reinforce the distance and hostility between people who never question their European identity and people who have it questioned, by others and even by themselves, every day of their European lives?

These are portentous questions that will be answered in lived experience, not by academic speculation. Suffice it to say, in this context that transnational Islam is deeply implicated in all of these possibilities. Catholic transnationalism and its effect on EU expansion and the processes of Europeanization can be defined in papal, clerical, and/or popular terms. Orthodoxy, as a religion and as a political force, is defined most clearly by the concept of autocephaly. But the Islamic case has to be defined in less institutional terms and according to the ways in which Muslim experience in one place is transformed into Muslim expectations in another. This may not be as clear cut as the Catholic or Orthodox cases. It may, indeed, be much more open to analytical disputation. But surely these transnational processes of communication and influence are the proper ones to emphasize when dealing with a religious tradition so clearly defined by the umma, the Islamic people. It is through complex transnational interactions between and among Muslims themselves that Islam will have its effect on European integration.

Conclusion

I have tried to illustrate through close examination of these three religious communities that each has its own very distinct relationship with the processes of European integration. To repeat a point I made earlier, the category of transnational religion includes a very complex and diverse set of political actors. This is a simple but important point to emphasize, I think. As the field of International Relations moves slowly and reluctantly to take seriously the religious entities within its field of study, it must do so with a very clear understanding of the diversity of religion itself, and with an equally clear recognition of the very diverse ways in which religion intersects with politics. It would be a real shame, after all, if the field's response to transnational religion and its role in world affairs simply shifted from one of disinterest to one of oversimplification.

Hoping to avoid that trap, I have presented the three religious communities here in comparative terms, one after the other. I have suggested that Roman Catholicism is the best prepared institutionally for participation in these particular political processes in terms of both of the dimensions I have been emphasizing. Catholicism's traditional relationship to European identity and European unity is so clear and so long-standing that the Church's current leadership is emboldened to claim a central role in once again defining what Europe is, and laying out the values to which an authentic European union should be devoted.

At the same time, Roman Catholicism is also uniquely situated in an institutional sense to participate in European politics at all of its currently relevant levels of activity: the Holy See and its diplomatic corps; the Commission of Episcopal Conferences and its secretariat in Brussels; the national episcopal conferences resident in every European state. These are institutional resources and institutional parallels to European political structures that would be the envy of any group or institution seeking to influence the future contours of European politics.

These are institutional resources and institutional parallels to European political structures that would be the envy of any group or institution seeking to influence the future contours of European politics.

Orthodoxy, on the other hand, occupies a very different place from Catholicism on both of these dimensions. The Orthodox tradition certainly has its own definition of Europe to advance and defend. But that Europe of Constantinople, Byzantium, and Eastern Christendom seems, frankly, less directly relevant to European politics today even than did John Paul II's pipedreams of a "new evangelization." The facts of European political development are that modern notions and processes of continental unity have come overwhelmingly from the West. Talk of an Orthodox Commonwealth, of a Europe that would once again balance Constantinople and Moscow against Rome (and now Brussels) is a provocative challenge to easy and simple definitions of Europe and European identity. But in practical terms, it seems fairly distant from the debates and processes

that are shaping Europe and European unity today.

Moreover, the Orthodox devotion to autocephaly and to the close link between Orthodox Church and Orthodox nation has rendered it institutionally out of step with current European discussions of transnational civil society, the liminal space between the national and the international, and the stretching and sharing of sovereignty inherent in European integration. Orthodoxy is a tradition religiously devoted to the form of national sovereignty currently being challenged by Europeanization. Not only are its traditions at odds with these contemporary political dynamics, at least as importantly, its institutional structures are also poorly equipped for participation in these dialogues.

Orthodoxy is a tradition religiously devoted to the form of national sovereignty currently being challenged by Europeanization.

The case of Islam is the most difficult to peg with clarity and assurance. The Islamic presence in Europe today is at the very least a useful corrective to simplistic definitions of a Christian Europe. Such notions always insulted the contributions of the Jewish community as egregiously as they ignored the presence of Muslims on the European continent. Nevertheless, Islam is still today a minority faction in European society and politics. It is a religious community that challenges easy definitions of European identity, but because of its own minority status it cannot reasonably offer a religiously based alternative of its own. Instead, the Islamic presence in Europe implicitly calls for greater recognition of religious diversity within Europe, for the development of a continental identity that is based on political and legal principles rather than on shared religious experience.

In this sense, of course, the relationship between the Muslim community in Europe and the development of a modern-day European identity may be closer than one would normally be tempted to think it would be. But even recognizing that rather ironic possibility, one cannot ignore the degree to which Turkey's potential accession to the European Union, and the full integration of Muslim populations into European society, arc seen widely in European political circles as intractable problems to be delayed, rather than as provocative invitations to constructive redefinitions.

In structural terms, Islam falls into a very different category from either Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Its lack of a hierarchical structure and its diasporic character in the European context make analysis of its institutional role in European politics particularly problematic. To the degree to which European integration is a process through which European peoples come to think of themselves as Europeans as opposed to Germans, or Slovenes, or even Turks, then the Muslim umma and its fascinating history of religious unity within territorial pluralism might be seen as a relevant referent to the challenges of Europeanization. But when it comes to formal religious participation in the institutional politics of contemporary Europe, the Muslim community is at a kind of structural disadvantage that will not easily be overcome.

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Having discussed these religious communities once again one by one, and having thus emphasized their very different structural and contextual approaches to European politics, the final task is to turn to a brief assessment of the role that religion, per se, is playing as the continent undergoes the historic restructuring of integration. A definitive answer to that important question, of course, must await future events that we can only see the outlines of now. Nevertheless, it is surely not too early to conclude tentatively that religion, as a political force, will be more likely to hinder the further integration of the European continent than to advance it.

Roman Catholicism, after all, is the religious community most straightforwardly supportive of the prospect of European unity. But the leadership of Catholicism is supportive of greater European integration only because those leaders want to define that integrated Europe through their own teachings and values, and only because they want to challenge today's Europe to return to the ostensibly Christian unity of its past. It is important to keep in mind in this connection that the Polish Pope and the Polish bishops were only willing to have Poland "rejoin Europe" because they hoped that eventuality would lead in time to secular Europe coming to look more like Catholic Poland!

The Orthodox Church is at its very foundation wary of any effort to diminish the status and role of nations and states, particularly if that effort is perceived as coming from western Christendom. Leaders of today's Orthodox Church see the European Union as a modern echo of a division of Europe that is over one thousand years old, and they see supranationalism and European identity as potential threats to national religious and political identities that have been forged and defended at tremendous cost.

Finally, Islam, regardless of the intentions of individual Muslims or even of the Islamic community in Europe as a whole, still stands as a challenge to the ready integration of the European continent, not as a spur towards it. Admittedly, this is the case where the future role of a religious community is unclear and uncertain. It is possible, of course, to envision Islam being accommodated more readily within the European Union than it is now. But it is also possible to envision this religious factor as a long-term point of contention and faction within an integrating Europe.

Religion is retaking a role in European politics in part because the European Union has opened its doors to a number of states that cling tenaciously to deeply rooted religious identities. To return to the example with which I began: just as the role of the Catholic Church in Poland was changed by the return of democracy, so the role of Catholicism in Europe will be altered by Poland's "return to Europe." And the fascinating possibility is that religion, in all its diversity, will bring to European politics notions of European identity, of European union (small case "u"), and even of modernity itself, that challenge the definitions of European unity to which "secular Europe" has grown so accustomed over the last half century.

What is even more striking, however, is that these challenges posed by religious conceptions of European union and European identity will be reinforced in the coming years by European religion's embodiment of a form of social and political diversity that may not succumb readily to the unifying effects of Europeanization. The fractious implications of that diversity are real, and they are likely to be recognized as an increasingly prominent element of European politics in the coming years.

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Transatlantic Dialogue on Religion, Values, and Politics

This Issue Brief follows an AICGS workshop entitled "Transatlantic Perspectives on Religion and Politics in Global Affairs" that took place in Berlin in April 2007. This day-long workshop looked at religion in global politics; the West and the Muslim Diaspora; religion and politics in the media; and how to build a global dialogue. AICGS is grateful to the Bosch Foundation for its generous support of this project.

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