

EDITED BY BENJAMIN SCHEWEL | ERIN K. WILSON

RELIGION AND EUROPEAN SOCIETY

A PRIMER

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Religion and European Society

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Edited by

Benjamin Schewel and Erin K. Wilson

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Introduction

Benjamin Schewel and Erin K. Wilson

'Religion' is a uniquely fraught subject in many European societies. Much of the public anxiety surrounding religion can be attributed to the influence of the secularist vision of history that arose amongst European intellectuals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the simplest level, this historical vision revolves around the expectation that modernizing forces will cause the general marginalization, decline and eventual disappearance of religion. Those Europeans who have become habituated to this way of viewing the world therefore tend to consider religion a topic of only secondary importance, and see it more as a problematic feature of society that ought to be actively managed and contained than as a perennially dynamic force that can be tapped and channelled towards the creation of important social goods.¹ Additionally, the secularist understanding of religion emerged during a time of European dominance in global affairs and of declining Christian influence within Europe (Eberle 2002). Secularization theory thus tends to define religion in terms of European (and American) experiences and characteristics of the Christian tradition (Casanova 1994; Ingersoll and Matthew 1983).

The secularist vision of history seemed, for a time, to be confirmed by events during the twentieth century. Within Europe, educated publics steadily turned away from religion following the Second World War as postwar welfare states began to provide many of the social services that only churches had previously offered. Attendance at religious services declined and more people declared themselves as atheist or with no religious affiliation. More broadly throughout the world, a growing number of postwar societies appeared to be following a similar secularizing course. Particularly noteworthy were the aggressively secular regimes of Russia and China, which actively undermined the public influence of religion by destroying religious infrastructures, killing and oppressing religious leaders, and actively proscribing citizens' abilities to practise. Yet also significant were the efforts of early postcolonial leaders, such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Habib Bourguiba, Gamel Abdel Nasser, and Kwame Nkrumah, to inject Western secular ideals into their newly constituted nation-states. It was therefore not without reason that many leaders of European policy and thought felt that their hopes of a looming global secular revolution were being actively confirmed.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, however, religion seemed to make something of a comeback in global public life (Petito and Hatzopoulos 2003). The 1979 Iranian Revolution, the rise of religious nationalism in India, Sri Lanka, and Israel, the

prominent involvement of Catholicism in the overthrow of Soviet Communism, the emergence of Liberation Theology in South America, the rise of Evangelical conservatism in the United States, the growing role of non-government, including faith-based, actors in global civil society and human rights campaigns, and the appearance of violent Jihadism were particularly significant in this regard. In response to such developments, academic researchers began questioning the plausibility of their broader historical vision of secularization, which Casanova (1994: 17) explains was the only academic theory to have achieved 'a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences'. Yet even within this new, critical discourse on modern secularism, religion was still regarded with suspicion and as problematic, and European secularism was presented as the constant foil to the broader global norm of public religious resurgence.

This perception began to change during the early 2000s. The spectacle of the 9/11 attacks provided the backdrop upon which Europeans interpreted the string of smaller-scale terrorist attacks that struck their own lands. Thus, when public transport systems were bombed in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005, and the Muhammad cartoon controversy erupted in Denmark in 2005, many Europeans felt as if they were being drawn into the same maelstrom of rising religious tensions that had already struck the United States.

As a result, European public debates began to address more directly the topic of religion, albeit now through the lens of Islam. Was there, many asked, something about the aggressively secular culture of European societies that contributed to the radicalization and alienation of young Muslims? Or was the problem more with Islam itself, the teachings of which might somehow be incompatible with Europe's Christian heritage, or which might need to undergo a similar Protestant-like revolution before they could find their proper place in the modern age? Or perhaps the recent spate of attacks simply confirmed the point that religion in general is a dangerous phenomenon that must be actively regulated and contained. The energy of these debates was fanned by the commencement of consultations about the inclusion of Turkey into the European Union in 2005, as well as by debates over whether a reference to God should be included in the preamble to the European Union (EU) constitution (Foret 2009).

The main lines of this largely Islam-centred conversation persisted throughout the subsequent decade. Yet other topics and perspectives began to emerge. In particular, the continued influx of migrants from regions in which religion plays a prominent public role reignited conversations about the nature and limits of religious freedom in liberal societies, while the commensurate rise of Christian ethnonationalism forced European societies to begin reconsidering the nature, origins, and reach of their political values. Additionally, though often more amongst academics, a nascent conversation took shape around the idea of developing new ways of thinking about the place of religion in public life, often under the rubric of 'post-secularism'. This conversation has been marked by a growing awareness of how 'secularism' is not neutral and universal, as has long been claimed, but rather constitutes a particular worldview with its own deep-seated assumptions and guiding ideas.

One imagines that the complexity and stakes of these wide-ranging conversations, as well as the general scope of the topics prominently considered, will only continue to expand in the years to come. Yet it also seems likely that public conversations on religion will remain plagued by the influence of prejudice, half-truth, and polarization. It is therefore of the utmost importance to find ways to elevate the quality of the burgeoning European public discourse on religion.

It is in this spirit that the present volume articulates some key developments within the increasingly vibrant academic literature that examines the changing place of religion in contemporary European society. However, the chapters that follow do so, not by rigorously analysing specific policy dilemmas that various European actors face, but rather by clarifying overarching concepts and trends. This approach, it was felt, would protect the volume against the threat of rapid irrelevance that comes from being too closely bound to quickly shifting policy debates, while also providing a greater benefit to readers by offering concepts and ideas that can be used in diverse policy, practitioner, and academic settings. Each of the chapters provides an overview of the discourse surrounding one key dilemma or theme before concluding with a list of recommendations for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners for addressing these topics moving forward.

Before summarizing each of the chapters, it may be helpful to outline a few of the overarching concepts that currently shape how 'religion', 'secularism' and 'Europe' are understood, as these are some of the key concepts that this volume seeks to problematize and address.

1.1 The Varieties of Secularism

Multiple books have been written on the concept of the secular and its many variations. As such, we will not go into immense detail about the concept here. Our purpose is only to highlight how the secular and the religious are not fixed entities, but rather categories that carry different meanings in different contexts. Generally speaking, however, secularist worldviews tend to hold that there is something called 'religion' that can be clearly defined, identified and delineated from the secular domains of public life, which encompass government, the market, education, the law, and the media (Habermas 1991). The secular, then, is often defined as everything that is not 'religion', everything that may be considered part of the immanent plane of existence, rather than the transcendent (Asad 2003; Hurd 2008; Wilson 2017).

Be that as it may, a more apt reading of secularism sees that it tends to operate in one of two ways, namely, as an ideology or as a form of statecraft (Casanova 2011). Secular ideologies come in various forms. Concerning ideological secularism, Casanova (2011) identifies what he calls 'political' secularism and 'philosophical-historical' secularism. The first refers to approaches to managing religion in public life, while the second describes views about the ultimate truth-value and historical fate of religion. Additionally, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (2008) highlights 'Judeo-Christian secularism' and 'laicite' (similar to what Kuru, 2009, refers to as 'passive secularism' and 'assertive secularism') as dominant ideological variants. Judeo-Christian secular ideologies permit and in some cases encourage the presence and participation of (particular types of) religious actors and institutions in the public sphere. Proponents of this type of secularism have what Philpott (2009) might term a neutral or positive view of religion as beneficial for the public good. In contrast, laicite or assertive secular ideologies actively police the boundaries of the public sphere in order to keep religion out and maintain its privatization. In these types of 'hostile' secularisms (Philpott 2009), religion is viewed as a (potentially) disruptive, irrational, and violent influence that potentially undermines peace and order.

These ideological secularisms often underpin forms of secularism as statecraft. Secularism as statecraft may be understood as the dominant approach to managing the relationship between the government and religious actors or institutions. Thus, within Europe, France arguably represents assertive or hostile secularism, while Italy may be said to represent passive secularism. What is important to remember, however, is that each state's approach to managing the relationship between religious and political actors can change over time, as well as on different issues and with reference to different religious actors. We would suggest that individual states within Europe are at present undergoing something of a transformation in their secular statecraft, as they grapple with demographic changes around religious observance, brought on by increasing secularization, heightened immigration, the emergence of new religious movements and transformations in more traditional, established religions. Another term for secularism as statecraft is 'secularity', and as Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt (2012) highlight, within Europe there are 'multiple secularities'. Whilst Europe is often spoken of as a homogenous, unified whole, patterns of secularity and religious adherence within Europe are extremely diverse, as is explored in more detail in Chapter 1.

1.2 Imagining 'Europe'

Dominant understandings of Europe as secular are based on assumptions about the nature of both 'Europe' and the 'secular' (as well as the 'religious'), which this volume seeks to challenge. Indeed, one of the central messages of this volume is that 'Europe' is a constantly evolving idea and that Europe's identity as secular is not fixed or even necessarily consistent. Having such a dynamic understanding of what Europe is, especially with reference to debates around religion and secularism, provides, we suggest, an approach that is more fluid, adaptable, inclusive and thus effective for dealing with the challenges that Europe is facing in the twenty-first century.

The so-called 'refugee crisis' amply demonstrates the degree to which the idea of Europe is constantly being shaped and reshaped in response to changing social and political realities. It is currently unclear whether the values of democracy, human rights, equality, pluralism, diversity, and justice, which are seen to be so embedded in European culture, can withstand a global displacement crisis, the scale and speed of which has never before been seen (UNHCR 2016). It is not just the size and speed of the contemporary movement of populations, but also their origin that contributes to raising questions about the European project. In this regard, Kenneth Roth (2016) has argued that the real source of political opposition to accepting migrants is not about jobs or about burdens on the welfare state: 'The real reason is that they are Muslim' (Roth 2016), or at least that they are perceived to be Muslim. This has led many European leaders, in particular from Eastern Europe, to openly declare that they will only accept Christian refugees, indicating that there are apparently limits on the ideal of an open inclusive European society. The so-called refugee crisis has been accompanied by rising right-wing populism, characterized by anti-immigration sentiment and particularly anti-Islam sentiment (Marzouki and McDonnell 2016; Roy 2016). The increasing influence of right-wing populism and Islamophobia was particularly visible in the success of the Brexit vote in the UK in June 2016. These developments, we suggest, raise fundamental questions about what Europe is and who is and is not included, questions that are being

contested and debated across multiple areas of policy and practice across the continent, as our contributors explore throughout the volume.

Yet these debates are not only about the meaning of Europe, but also about the place of both religion and secularism within European society as a whole. What exactly does 'religion' mean in twenty-first century Europe? Is it possible to speak of religion in the singular, or should we only speak of particular religions? Debates about religious symbols in public spaces, such as minarets, crosses, crucifixes, headscarves and burkinis also highlight how significant questions of religion are for ideas of European identity. The Dahlab v Switzerland case of 2001, the Swiss minaret ban of 2009, the European Court of Human Rights ruling in the Lautsi v Italy case, the burkini ban furore of the summer of 2016 and the ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in 2017 which found that employers could restrict the wearing of religious symbols in the workplace all demonstrate the growing salience of these issues. Yet the differences in how some of these cases were ruled, in particular differences across cases involving Christian as opposed to Islamic symbols (for example, the Lautsi case compared with the Dahlab, or minaret ban or ECJ cases), along with differences in how religious institutions and actors are at times reported in the media (Lövheim, this volume) suggest that some religions may be more equal than others in the European public sphere and may hold a privileged place within the context of European society, law, politics, and identity (Beaman 2012).

The question of religious symbols in public spaces is a fraught issue and not one that can be remedied by a generalized one-size-fits-all solution. This is indeed a general point that holds for all questions and topics where 'religion' is present within the European public sphere. A key point of this volume is that questions about religion and society within Europe are contextual, as they are everywhere. Religion, secularism and Europe mean different things for different people and in different places. Thus we need to bring more nuance into these conversations. At the same time, however, simply emphasizing the complexity and difficulty of these issues is not enough.

There is as yet no workable alternative framework to the secular as an organizing model for managing relationships amongst diverse and at times conflicting worldviews within democratic societies. Habermasian post-secularism has been explored from multiple angles by various scholars and actors, yet it does not on the whole escape the shortcomings of the secular (Birnbaum 2015; Pabst 2012). As such, the volume includes several, more conceptual pieces that consider how we can develop conceptual and policy frameworks that enable us to both address the complexity and diversity of the changing European cultural, political, and social landscape and to transcend the limits of dominant secular paradigms. These are topics and questions that are not going to go away any time soon and to which there are no easy answers. Our hope, however, is that this volume provides a useful resource for thinking and rethinking through these issues and questions into the future.

1.3 Chapter Summary

The chapters are divided into three parts. In the first part, the authors provide a conceptual overview and framework for the discussions that follow. In the second part our authors go in-depth on specific issues internally within Europe, including regulation,

media, and public discourse. In the third and final part, the authors address issues that transcend national and regional boundaries, which are significant both within and beyond Europe and their implications for European internal and foreign policy.

In the first chapter, Davie and Wilson update and expand Davie's previous work that pinpoints key factors shaping the place of religion in Europe today. Davie's original framework identified six factors:

- 1) The historic role of churches in shaping European culture and identity
- 2) The acknowledgement that these churches – and other religious actors and institutions – still perform important functions in the private lives of many Europeans
- 3) Observable changes in the religious constituency of Europe
- 4) The arrival into Europe of groups of people from different parts of the world, most recently the impact of the so-called refugee crisis
- 5) The reactions of Europe's secular elites to the continued presence of religion in public and private life in Europe
- 6) The realization that patterns of religious life in Europe are not a global prototype.

To these, two more important factors are added:

- 7) The increasing privatization of social services, resulting in faith-based actors stepping in to provide welfare that had once been the purview of the state
- 8) The so-called 'Global War on Terror' discourse, in which religion, Islam, violence and immigration become increasingly entangled in public consciousness, shaping the responses of policymakers.

Davie and Wilson address each of these factors in turn, noting historical and recent developments related to each that continue to affect the place and role of religion and religious actors and institutions in European politics and society today. Many of the issues they identify are taken up in greater detail by other contributors to this volume, such as Eghdamian on asylum and migration (Chapter 12), Rasor on patterns of regulation (Chapter 5), and Stephens and Sieckelinck on radicalization (Chapter 10).

In Chapter 2, Benjamin Schewel provides a rich and detailed overview of some of the key conceptual innovations in recent years that have attempted to make sense of the apparent failure of secularization theory and our equal failure to adequately describe and explain developments regarding public religion. Schewel terms this the 'post-secular problematic' – the fact that 'there is no clear consensus about what kind of story of modern religious change we should alternatively tell'. Schewel identifies no less than seven approaches in recent scholarship that each offer important insights on the condition in which we now find ourselves with regard to religion. Significantly, Schewel emphasizes that none of the approaches is adequate or comprehensive on its own. Each has its strengths and its flaws. As such, we must consider these, and other additional approaches, together, in order to develop more comprehensive understandings of religion in contemporary contexts, especially in Europe.

In Part II of the volume, our contributors explore how public religion is engaged across different institutions and contexts of the European public sphere. Joseph Camilleri's chapter sets the scene for this section of the volume by sketching important shifts in European public discourse with regard to religion. He notes the significant differences in legal arrangements that affect various states' respective engagement with religion, as well as the social, political, and demographic changes that have taken place in recent

years that affect perceptions of public religion and especially of Islam. Poor economic performance in recent years, combined with rapid growth of Muslim communities, has contributed to an emergence of public discourses hostile to Islam. Yet, at the same time, the role of Christian churches in providing poverty alleviation in many countries has increased their visibility and opened up new spaces for religious actors and institutions to participate in public debates about the economy, welfare, social, political and moral issues. Exploring the different dimensions of these debates in the broader context of philosophical responses to the apparent return of religion to the public sphere, Camilleri offers possibilities for how public discourse could be taken in new directions to create more egalitarian and inclusive forms of public discourse when it comes to religious and secular actors.

While Camilleri's chapter focuses on some of the ethical and philosophical considerations raised by the changing place of religion within European public discourse, in Chapter 4 Mia Lövheim explores the practical everyday consequences of these shifts in relation to media reporting and discussion of religion. Lövheim discusses the representation of religion in the European daily press, mainly focusing on studies carried out in the Nordic countries and Britain from the 1980s to 2010. She shows that, despite the differences in cultural and political context, the outcomes of the different studies demonstrate similar tendencies with regard to changes in the representation of religion in the media. Utilizing mediatization and post-secular theoretical analytical lenses, Lövheim focuses her analysis through an exploration of three emergent themes – conflict, culture, and constitutional rights – which, she argues, are dominant features of contemporary media discourses on religion in Europe. The new visibility of religion in the media over the past decades, she argues, might not mean that religious institutions become more significant as social actors, but rather that religion becomes more significant as a social and political category for public discourse.

An important factor that shapes public discourses on religion, from the social and political that Camilleri analyses to the media discourses outlined by Lövheim, are the specific and highly various constitutional legal arrangements for the regulation of religion across nation-states within Europe. In Chapter 5, Paul Rasor provides a comprehensive outline of how religion is legally regulated in six European countries – the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Poland, and Italy. As Rasor highlights, regulation of religion within Europe is best conceptualized as a spectrum of positions, ranging from states with established state churches at one end to those that observe a strict separation between religion and state at the other. Obviously, however, there are multiple points and variations along that spectrum. Rasor begins by placing the discussion within the broader European legal context, noting in particular the significant role of the margin of appreciation doctrine in deciding legal disputes at the European level. The margin of appreciation doctrine demonstrates the centrality of nation-state constitutional and legal arrangements in deciding matters of religion. Rasor then uses three key issues – state funding of religious institutions, religious education in schools, and religious symbols in public spaces – as points of comparison to explicitly highlight the synergies and challenges that arise as a result of the variations amongst the six case study states in how they deal with these issues.

While regulation deals specifically with religious institutions in the European public sphere, there are other religious actors that fall outside the boundaries of legal regulation on such issues who also contribute to shaping public discourse and policy. In Chapter 6,

Jeffrey Haynes explores the influence of faith-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) within Europe. Haynes canvasses two specific angles of this topic: the influence of faith-based NGOs on policy within the European Union and the provision of social services by faith-based NGOs in specific European countries in the wake of the increasing privatization of social services in a broader context of economic crisis and austerity. Despite recognition that Europe is a largely secular environment, Haynes argues that a broader global post-secular milieu is generating the impetus for faith-based NGOs to increasingly assert themselves and contribute to public debate on social and political issues. As such, while religion may not be as significant as it once was for Europeans on an individual level, it is becoming an increasingly salient component of policy formulation. Haynes briefly considers the role of faith-based actors in the EU, followed by a short survey of faith-based actors and social welfare provision in the UK, Sweden, and Italy. He concludes by considering these national and European-level dynamics in relation to one another and their implications for researchers and practitioners alike.

The actions and achievements of faith-based organizations are often unnoticed by the European public. Yet, there are other actors that play a prominent role in the media when it comes to the role of religion in European societies. In Chapter 7, Renée Wagenvoorde explores the religious dimensions of contemporary European populism. By noticing the parallel rise of populism and anti-Islam rhetoric in European politics over the past decades, Wagenvoorde sheds light on why and how these phenomena are related to each other. After clarifying the different ways in which populism is defined, she examines how populist parties and actors refer to religion and concludes that the importance that populists assign to religion in conceptualizing the identity of ‘the people’ is fluid and strategically deployed. However, when looking at the conceptualization of ‘the other’ (the antagonist of ‘the people’ in populist rhetoric), European populists are unified in expressing their rejection of Islam, a phenomenon that has been adopted by mainstream parties in the past years. Wagenvoorde concludes her chapter by questioning these trends as reflections of the *volunté generale* and invites scholars, policymakers and practitioners to engage in the ongoing process of political opinion formation between citizens and politicians.

In recent years, gender and sexuality have become an important terrain for controversies and conflicts that involve religion, often intersecting with other identity markers such as migration status, ethnic background, and class (e.g. headscarf debates, the burkini affair, homosexuality). When it comes to issues of women’s emancipation, gender equality and women’s empowerment, religion is often assumed to hold women back, while secularism is associated with championing women’s rights. Within scholarship on gender and religion, this dichotomy is increasingly challenged through post-secular and postcolonial approaches. In Chapter 8, Kim Knibbe and Brenda Bartelink argue that current ways of opposing religion and secularity in relation to gender produce forms of polarization between religious and secular actors that are undesirable and stand in the way of perceiving and hearing what women may need. Instead, they propose that any analysis of gender relations should take into accounts the relationships of power in which women are embedded, and in particular should take into account the majority/minority dynamics in which women find themselves whenever policymakers and politicians aim to empower women in minority groups. Concretely, this means focusing on how (religious) women themselves navigate their lives and problematize areas they

want to improve, and the agency and leadership they develop within the gendered power dynamics of their particular religious and social context.

Having focused primarily on dynamics within Europe, the third part of the volume then turns to a consideration of global issues relevant for both European domestic and foreign policy. In Chapter 9, Megan Shore and Scott T. Kline explore approaches to religion and conflict resolution amongst European states. Specifically, they note the dominant tendency amongst European states to respond with military force to violent acts committed on their soil, France's response to the Paris attacks of November 2015 being a notable example here. Instead, Shore and Kline offer 'religious conflict resolution' as an alternative framework for responding to these events. Following a brief introduction to the field of religion and conflict resolution in general, they provide a general overview of religious conflict resolution and its reception to date within the European context and European foreign policy approaches. Shore and Kline argue that this framework can and should be integral to addressing contemporary conflicts, especially those where religious affiliations, narratives, ideas and identities are clearly present as motivating factors, whether in relation to domestic or foreign acts of violence. As such, the chapter provides a useful overview of an approach that offers rich potential as an alternative policy framework for conflict resolution for EU policymakers.

Another global issue, intimately tied to questions of conflict resolution, is violent extremism or 'radicalization.' Radicalization continues to be a topic that is a central focus of both domestic and foreign EU policy. Yet the concept of radicalization and its usage in public discourse is highly problematic. In Chapter 10, Liam Stephens and Stijn Sieckelinck helpfully canvass the major themes and trends on understandings and usages of the concept of radicalization across academic literature and in public discourse. They highlight immediately the problematic association that has emerged between radicalization and religion, so that 'for many, the distinction between religious fanaticism and radicalization is thin, if not non-existent.' Added to that is the dominant assumption that Europe is largely secular, which contributes to policymakers ignoring the possible links to radicalization of so-called 'European' religions, and the assumption that radicalization is largely a problem of 'outsiders' and 'outsider religious traditions.' Numerous problematic assumptions exist across multiple levels here, as Stephens and Sieckelinck make clear. They note two main strands of research and discussion on radicalization. The first is concerned mainly with what radicalization means, problematizing its usage and highlighting logical inconsistencies in how the term is defined and deployed. The second strand focuses more on understanding the phenomenon that is covered by the term 'radicalization' and developing and assessing proposals to prevent or reverse it. Throughout the chapter, Stephens and Sieckelinck note how narrow assumptions about both radicalization and religion limit conceptualization and analysis of the issues involved, and thus also inhibit the development of effective responses. If we can broaden our understanding of both, it will open up more possibilities for addressing the underlying issues of identity and agency that are often at the heart of radicalization.

The right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is another issue that is receiving increasing attention at the global level, often in fact connected with counter-radicalization policy efforts. Using the EU Guidelines on Promoting and Protecting the Right to Freedom of Religion or Belief, in Chapter 11 Michael Wiener explores the numerous challenges, both conceptual and practical, that exist regarding FoRB throughout the

world. Focusing on six themes that are emphasized in the EU Guidelines themselves, Wiener notes specific problems with regard to each of these that the EU frequently endeavours to address in its foreign policy relationships and actions. Importantly, Wiener highlights a situation that is not often considered explicitly – the fact that numerous member states within the EU often also fail to meet the standards of the guidelines. This failure on the part of EU member states to uphold their own guidelines can contribute to a sense of double standards when endeavouring to promote FoRB abroad, consequently undermining these efforts. Recognizing the cultural, political, conceptual, legal, and practical challenges to upholding and promoting FoRB that exist both within and beyond Europe is a crucial step in more effective engagement on this issue.

A further issue that is entangled in complex ways with both radicalization and FoRB and where religion has become a key factor is immigration and asylum, highlighted acutely by the recent so-called ‘refugee crisis’. In Chapter 12, Kat Eghdamian notes the ways in which religion and religious identity are being used to justify the introduction of increasingly harsh exclusionary immigration policies. The arrival of religious ‘others’ in Europe, she notes, tests the very nature and boundaries of Europe’s and the West’s self-understanding and identity. A politics of fear, in which (mis)understandings of religion are a central component, and indeed, where religion’s importance is often over-emphasized and manipulated, provide the dominant contours of contemporary discourses, policies and practices of immigration and asylum in Europe. Key amongst the factors Eghdamian highlights as influential on contemporary European responses to immigration and asylum are: ‘(mis)assumptions held by political actors, humanitarian providers, and social commentators about religion and immigration; the role of national security and geopolitical agendas in shaping immigration debates and policies as they relate to migrant and refugee religious identities; and the ways in which religious identities are changing the nature of integration in response to increased immigration to Europe’. Eghdamian carefully maps the intricate dynamics of each of these factors within the European context and how they shape Europe’s response to this global challenge. She concludes by reiterating the importance of nuance, avoiding reductionist analyses of complex social and political issues and challenges, in particular immigration, and understandings of religion and religious identity that are a crucial part of such phenomenon. Finally, she calls for more careful and explicit consideration of the positive contribution religion can make to policies and processes of immigration and how this can be effectively and meaningfully combined with existing approaches in order to provide the most appropriate and beneficial support for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants as they begin to build new lives in Europe.

The contemporary so-called refugee crisis is hardly confined to Europe, however. In the 13th and final chapter in this volume, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Julia Parcitto explore the often underrecognized and underresearched mechanisms of South–South humanitarianism. Given that 85% of the world’s displaced population resides in countries within the Global South (UNHCR 2018), such responses are a crucial component of global humanitarian structures. Yet often these programs, initiatives and actors are not considered a part of formal humanitarian governance, for a variety of reasons that Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Parcitto unpack in their chapter. Much of the neglect or exclusion of these actors has to do with historical and colonial legacies, often intimately connected with religion. Effectively addressing current mass displacement across the globe will require responses