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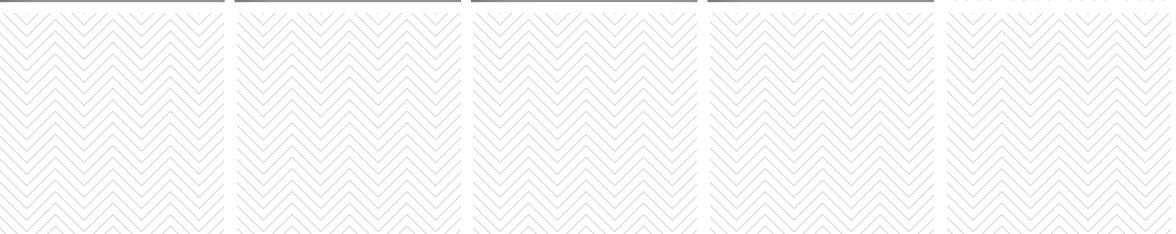
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RELIGIOWEST

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

A Resource Book

Edited by:

AURÉLIA BARDON
MARIA BIRNBAUM
LOIS LEE
KRISTINA STOECKL

Responsible
principal investigator:

OLIVIER ROY

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LUCA OZZANO
ALBERTA GIORGI

1. INTRODUCTION: RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION

For most of the twentieth century, the role of religion and especially religious values in politics has been neglected by political science and political sociology. This was largely a consequence of the adoption of the so-called 'secularization paradigm'[1], as well as the fact that most analysis of religion in society was typically a field for specialists[2]. Only since the 1980s has religion 'returned' into the public sphere and been framed as an issue for discussion[3].

A growing scholarship, besides the specialist field, has developed on a number of topics, such as: religion and democratization[4] religiously-oriented political parties[5], religion in international

1 William H. Swatos and Kevin J. Christiano, "Introduction — Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept". *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 209–28; Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.", *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 249–73; Steve Bruce, "Did Protestantism Create Democracy?" *Democratization* 11, no. 4 (2004): 3–20.

2 James A. Beckford, "'Start Together and Finish Together': Shifts in the Premises and Paradigms Underlying the Scientific Study of Religion". *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 4 (2000): 481–95.

3 Gilles Kepel, *La Revanche de Dieu : Chrétiens, juifs et musulmans à la reconquête du monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1991); José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

4 Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations'" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): 37–57; Alfred C. Stepan and Graeme B. Robertson, "Arab, Not Muslim, Exceptionalism," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (2004): 140–46; Carsten Anckar, *Religion and Democracy: A Worldwide Comparison* (Routledge, 2011); Luca Ozzano, "Religion, Political Actors, and Democratization: The Turkish Case," *Politics and Religion* 7, no. 03 (2014): 590–612; Francesco Cavatorta and Fabio Merone, "Moderation through Exclusion? The Journey of the Tunisian Ennahda from Fundamentalist to Conservative Party," *Democratization* 20, no. 5 (2013): 857–75; Mirjam Künkler and Julia Leininger, "The Multi-Faceted Role of Religious Actors in Democratization Processes: Empirical Evidence from Five Young Democracies," *Democratization* 16, no. 6 (2009): 1058–92; Manfred Brocker and Mirjam Künkler, "Religious Parties Revisiting the Inclusion-Moderation hypothesis – Introduction," *Party Politics* 19, no. 2 (2013): 171–86; Olivier Roy, *La laïcité face à l'islam* (Paris: Stock, 2005).

5 Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Religious Parties, Religious Political Identity, and the Cold Shoulder of Liberal Democratic Thought", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 6, no. 1 (2003): 23–53; M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Luca Ozzano, "The Many Faces of the Political God: A Typology of Religiously Oriented Parties", *Democratization* 20, no. 5 (2013): 807–30; Luca Ozzano and Francesco Cavatorta, eds., *Religiously Oriented Parties and Democratization* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2014); Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Cornell University Press, 1996); Stathis N. Kalyvas, "From Pulpit to Party: Party Formation and the Christian Democratic Phenomenon", *Comparative Politics* 30, no. 3 (1998): 293–312; Asher Cohen, "The Religious Parties in the 2006 Election", *Israel Affairs* 13, no. 2 (2007): 325–45; Payam Mohseni and Clyde Wilcox, "Religion and Political Parties", in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, by Jeffrey Haynes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 211–30.

relations[6], or the public debate on ethical-religious issues, variously approached[7]: this latter is the specific focus of this short paper.

6 Jeffrey Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007); Jeffrey Haynes, "Transnational Religious Actors and International Politics", *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2001), 143-158; Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion Into International Relations* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Jonathan Fox, "Integrating Religion into International Relations Theory", in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, edited by Jeffrey Haynes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 273–92; Giorgio Shani, "Transnational Religious Actors and International Relations", in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, edited by Jeffrey Haynes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 308–22; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon and Schuster, 1996); Pavlos Hatzopoulos and Fabio Petito, eds., *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

7 Jean-Paul Baubérot and Micheline Milot, *Laïcités sans Frontières* (Parigi: Seuil, 2011); Isabelle Engeli, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, and Lars Thorup Larsen, *Morality Politics in Western Europe: Parties, Agendas and Policy Choices* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford ; Cambridge, Mass: John Wiley & Sons, 1994); Isabelle Engeli, "The Challenges of Abortion and Assisted Reproductive Technologies Policies in Europe", *Comparative European Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 56–74; Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on Post-Secular Society", *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 17–29; Jeff Haynes and Anja Hennig, eds., *Religious Actors in the Public Sphere: Means, Objectives, and Effects* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2013); Eugenio Lecaldano, *Bioetica. Le scelte morali* (Roma; Bari: Laterza, 2005); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005); Claudia Mancina, "Laicità e politica", in *Laicità. Una Geografia Delle Nostre Radici*, ed. Giovanni Boniolo (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 5–26; Michael Minkenberg, "Religion and Public Policy Institutional, Cultural, and Political Impact on the Shaping of Abortion Policies in Western Democracies", *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 2 (2002): 221–47; Michael Minkenberg, "The Policy Impact of Church–state Relations: Family Policy and Abortion in Britain, France, and Germany", *West European Politics* 26, no. 1 (2003): 195–217; Linda Woodhead, "Gendering Secularization Theory", *Social Compass* 55, no. 2 (2008): 187–93; Robert Wuthnow, *Rediscovering the Sacred: Perspectives on Religion in Contemporary Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992).

In Italy, as in other European countries, the last decades have been characterized by deep controversies around religion-related issues. Among these, some have revolved around how to deal with non-Catholic religions: being Italy a religious quasi-monopoly, the debate is indeed intertwined with the debate about migration. Other discussions were instead focused on issues related to the role of Christian values in the secular public sphere, and particularly on religious symbols, bioethics and sexuality [8].

The analysis of the controversies shows that in the political sphere 'religious pluralism' has neither a single definition, nor acknowledged and stable characters. For example, during the controversy on the role of religious teaching in the public education system, non-Catholic religions were acknowledged as possible actors in the debate, thus taking into account Italian society's religious plurality. On the other side, in dealing with medically-assisted procreation, religious pluralism only concerned the differences between Catholic and secular attitudes toward the issue. Besides being a meaningful social reality thus, religious pluralism also plays an important role as a socio-political construction. Among the many possible scientific perspectives, therefore, we chose to adopt a socio-constructivist approach, focusing on what actors mean by religious pluralism and how they argue for, or against, its role in the political sphere.

8 Stefano Allievi and Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and Across Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Luca Diotallevi, "Internal Competition in a National Religious Monopoly: The Catholic Effect and the Italian Case", *Sociology of Religion* 63, no. 2 (2002): 137–55; Garelli, Franco. *Religione all'italiana*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011); Garelli, Franco. "Religion and Politics: The Italian Case". *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion*, 2 (2011a): 216–244; Lecaldano, *Bioetica*; Mancina, *Laicità*; Pace, Enzo. *Vecchi e Nuovi Dei. La geografia religiosa dell'Italia che cambia*. (Milano: Edizioni Paoline, 2011); Pace, Enzo. "Achilles and the Tortoise. A Society Monopolized by Catholicism Faced with an Unexpected Religious Pluralism". *Social Compass* 60, 3 (2013): 315-331; Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Come se Dio non ci fosse: i laici, i cattolici e la democrazia* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000).

In this short paper we focus on how 'religious pluralism' is constructed by political actors by comparatively analyzing controversies around religion-related issues that took place in Italy between 2001 and 2013. The paper draws on the results of four years of research on the Italian ethical-religious debates, based on the analysis of a wide database of printed media[9]. It pays particular attention to how the debates have been framed by the different actors and how their coalitions changed over time and according to the various issues. In relation to the meaning of religious pluralism in contemporary Italy, the research shows on the one hand that political actors have different views of issues related to pluralism according to the values founding their worldview; on the other, they are ready to shift their allegiances and seek a compromise or rather frame the debates as struggles between non-negotiable values according to their perception of short-term political interests. In other words, it is clear that the setting influences the forms of political debates and their outcomes. In addition, we identify three meanings of religious pluralism that emerge in the Italian public sphere: pluralism within the majority religious tradition; pluralism in relation to the dichotomy religion v secular; and pluralism in relation to the growing pluralization and hybridization of the religious landscape.

2. THREE DIMENSIONS OF ITALIAN RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

The meanings of religious pluralism in the Italian political debate are grounded on three dimensions of religious diversity. A first dimension of Italian religious diversity is related to the heterogeneity of the Italian Catholic tradition. Although Italy can be categorized as a religious quasi-monopoly[10], many scholars have pointed out that, far from being homogeneous, Italian Catholicism has always been characterized by a high degree of internal and geographical difference[11]. Catholicism's internal differences have increased in the last decades, affecting, for example, the identity of the Catholic Church, whose contemporary image has been described as a "sectarian Church"[12].

The second dimension of Italian religious pluralism concerns the role of religion and religious values in a secular and democratic public sphere. Recent studies show that Italian society is increasingly secularized[13]. While Catholicism has maintained its importance in Italian society, as an 'influential

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9 Luca Ozzano and Alberta Giorgi, *European Culture Wars and the Italian Case: Which Side Are You On?* (London: Routledge, 2015, forthcoming).

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10 Diotallevi, "Internal Competition in a National Religious Monopoly".

11 Roberto Cartocci, *Geografia dell'Italia cattolica*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011); Ivo Colozzi and Stefano Martelli. *L'arcipelago Cattolico. Analisi sociologica dell'associazionismo ecclesiale a Bologna*. (Bologna: EDB, 1988); Diotallevi, "Internal Competition in a National Religious Monopoly"; Enzo Pace, *L'unità dei cattolici in Italia*. (Milano: Guerini e Associati, 1995); Paolo Segatti "Religiosità e territorio nel voto alla Democrazia Cristiana dal 1948 al 1992". *Polis* 13, 1 (1999): 45-65.

12 Marco Marzano. "The 'sectarian' Church. Catholicism in Italy since John Paul II". *Social Compass* 60, 3 (2013a): 302-314

13 Cartocci, *Geografia*; Garelli, Religione all'Italiana; Marco Marzano. *Quel che resta dei cattolici*. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2013); Marco Marzano. *Il cattolicesimo magico. Un'indagine etnografica*. (Milano: Bompiani, 2009); Paolo Segatti, and Gianfranco Brunelli "L'Italia religiosa. Da cattolica a genericamente cristiana". *Il Regno* 10 (2010): 337–351.

minority'[14], its role is highly controversial. Indeed, in the last decades the Italian public and political spheres have been marked by heated debates about the role of religion in the secular public sphere, particularly in relation to religious symbols, bioethics and sexuality.

The third dimension of Italian religious pluralism is related to the increased presence of non-Catholic religions in Italy, both in terms of numbers and public visibility. The pluralization of the Italian religious landscape[15] is driven, as it is in the rest of Europe, by ongoing secularization and migration processes. Non-Catholic religions are nowadays involved in Italian society, and make public claim for gaining acknowledgement and visibility. At the same time, public visibility increased the political attention towards this latter form of religious pluralism[16].

Given these three dimensions of Italian religious pluralism, Pace advises that scholars must go "beyond the ethno-centrism (or Catholic-centrism that has inevitably characterized our research on our predominantly Catholic society)"[17]. Despite increasing religious pluralism, Catholicism maintains a crucial symbolic role in Italian public and political debates, both as an actor and cultural reference. In fact, the religious cleavage between the Catholic Church and the Italian State had a crucial role in shaping the Italian political system

until the early Nineties[18]. The changes affecting the political system and cultural landscape of contemporary Italy placed religious pluralism among the discussion topics in the public sphere, and different political actors variously mobilized different understandings of religious pluralism in the country.

3. RELIGIOUS PLURALISMS

Scholars have analyzed different aspects of Italian religious pluralism, including how it is represented by the mass media and in the public and political spheres. In our research, we specifically focused on political controversies that have taken place around religion-related issues. We used a qualitative (frame-analysis) approach, collecting, coding, and analyzing texts from 7,134 articles from a wide range of Italian daily newspapers. The objective of this work was to question the binary image of Italy, often represented as being stuck in a war between secular and religious factions. This work, therefore, analyzed controversies around this dynamic, drew attention to the processes of constructing the discursive space and norms for public discussion, and showed the variety in frames and counter-frames around religion and religion-related issues.

Our research shows several interesting features of Italy's religious pluralism, not only in relation to the identity of actors engaged in the public sphere and their perception of religious pluralism, but also (and often especially) in relation to the way identities and images of pluralism are constructed by the different actors in different times and in relation to different debates[19]. We focused on the national printed press: newspapers usually present

14 Luigi Ceccarini and Ilvo Diamanti, "Catholics and Politics after the Christian Democrats: The Influential Minority", *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 12, no. 1 (2007): 37–59.

15 See the maps of Italian religious diversity in Pace "Achilles and the Tortoise"; see also Pace *Vecchi e Nuovi Dei*.

16 Renzo Guolo, *Chi Impugna La Croce. Lega e Chiesa* (Roma/Bari: Laterza, 2011); Anna Triandafyllidou, "Religious Diversity and Multiculturalism in Southern Europe: The Italian Mosque Debate", in *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship. A European Approach*, edited by Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 117–42.

17 Pace, Achilles and the Tortoise, 330.

18 Ceccarini and Diamanti, "Catholics and Politics after the Christian Democrats".

19 Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen, eds. *After Pluralism. Reimagining Religious Engagement.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

the mainstream discourse and dominant frames[20], and are the arenas in which public visibility, resonance, and legitimacy must be gained[21]. More specifically, we focused on the political discourses as reported by print media. Indeed, the Italian media sphere is mostly not an independent actor, but rather strictly intertwined with politics: the national mainstream newspapers are connected to powerful economic groups, while political newspapers are financed by political parties or groups addressing different political audiences. Therefore, we divided print media according to political ideology [22].

Firstly, our research shows that while most actors seem to fully accept religious pluralism, others do not. This is the case with Italy's Radical Party and some fringes of the Marxist left, whose idea of state secularism often seems to go beyond the separation of Church and State to reject any presence of religion (also in terms of values) in the public sphere. However, it is especially the case of the Lega Nord party, which – despite its adoption of neo-pagan symbols and rituals in the 1980s and 1990s – in recent years has been increasingly marked by an identity-based, civilizational and intolerant agenda based on a peculiar vision of Christian identity[23].–According to this view, Catholic values, symbols and places of worship – strongly intertwined with Italian and Western

ethno-cultural identity – are the only legitimate religious presence in the public sphere.

In general, other actors accept religious pluralism, although they range in terms of a concomitant preference for Catholicism. What is striking, in this case, is the paradoxically-shrinking number of political actors who clearly embrace the state's neutrality towards religions: this is shown particularly by the debate concerning the presence of the crucifix in public schools which was rejected by only a minority of actors, even in the center-left. On the other hand, in relation to other issues, the center-right was apparently often uncertain between the adoption of a Lega Nord-style identity approach and a 'republican', more secularly-oriented view of citizenship and pluralism.

If we look instead at religious actors, there are at least two relevant features to point out. On the one hand, non-Catholic religious actors are afforded virtually no voice in the debates, even when the discussion is related to their presence in the public sphere, as in the cases of the veil and localization of mosques. On the other hand, we see that the Catholic Church itself is torn between an exclusivist identity-based approach and a pluralist one emphasizing the absolute right to freedom of worship and belief. This is particularly evident in the debate relating to Muslim places of worship, the visible presence of which in the Italian physical and symbolic landscapes is accepted by some and rejected by others among both the Vatican's hierarchies and the grassroots clergy.

This complex scenario is further enriched if we take into account the process of the debate (in which the positions of actors are not fixed, but rather constructed in relation to the stances of others) and the strategic attitudes of many actors. A striking example of the changing construction of problems is the debate on the veil. In the early 2000s, when the discussion was constructed in

20 Gerlinde Mautner. "Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines, and Other Print Media." In *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski: 30-53.London; (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

21 Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham eds. *The Making of a European Public Sphere. Media Discourse and Political Contention*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

22 Ozzano and Giorgi, *European Culture Wars and the Italian Case.*

23 This emerges even while debating issues apparently unrelated to ethno-cultural identity, such as abortion which is often stigmatized by the Lega Nord, not out of theological concerns but in relation to Italian population decline and immigration flows

relation to the Middle-East, the debate in the center-left was dominated by a secular approach rejecting the veil as an instrument of male domination, while the center-right appeared much more supportive of tradition. On the other hand, in the second half of the decade when the debate revolved around the presence of the veil in the Italian public sphere and educational institutions, the center-right adopted a pro-ban approach, while for the center-left multiculturalist concerns became predominant, in opposition to the Lega Nord's xenophobic stances. There are, however, other cases in which changes are not related to different constructions of a problem, but are clearly strategic in nature. This is the case, for example, of the discussion on the legalization of same-sex partnerships: while in the second half of the 2000s, the center-right was very firm in its emphasis on traditional Catholic-based values which implied a rejection of any official recognition of same-sex couples, in the early 2010s, facing the competition of Mario Monti's centrist coalition, center-right leaders signaled their willingness to a compromise on the issue.

Broadly speaking, we can observe that at least two major problems related to religious pluralism emerge from our analysis. First, in relation to bioethics and sexuality, the alignment of the Catholic Church and the political center-right encourages the construction of the debate as a zero-sum struggle in which both religiously- and secularly-oriented actors present their values as non-negotiable. This, in turn, means that a compromise is less easy to reach. On the other hand, when the discussion revolves around non-Catholic religious minorities, especially Muslims, they are often implicitly regarded as second-class citizens without the right to voice in a debate dominated by political actors. This is not only the case of organizations mainly representing immigrants without Italian citizenship, but also of groups such as the COREIS whose members are Italian converts: which precisely shows that

this discrimination has a religious, and not ethno-cultural, grounding.

Our analysis also proves, however, that such cleavages and discriminations can change, or at least be circumvented, as a consequence of the strategic face of actors, and the interactional dynamics of the debate which can alter the construction of religious pluralism in the public debate. Thus, for example, the center-right's emphasis on 'non-negotiable values' has softened in the early 2010s, mainly as a consequence of party system changes, alleviating the intensity and tone of some debates; while in some local contexts, religious minorities have been able to break free from exclusion and stigmatization thanks to organizational change and participative processes enhanced by local administrations.

CONCLUSION

Broadly speaking, this research addresses religious diversity and pluralism from a socio-constructivist perspective. We have argued that political actors variously frame the different dimensions of religious diversity in a wide variety of ways, and propose different meanings of 'religious pluralism' in the public sphere. On the whole, our results show that there is a broad agreement on the importance of religious pluralism in Italian politics. Nonetheless, our results also show that despite this political support, controversies emerge especially in relation to the actual *meaning* of religious pluralism and its policy implications in relation to different issues. Finally, we showed how the discourse on religious pluralism is clearly influenced by changes in the political sphere and the strategic behavior of actors within it. Our general conclusion from this study is that, when addressing religious pluralism, social scientific analysis must reckon with the multiplicity of meanings which actors attach to terms that, at first glance, appear unequivocal.

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