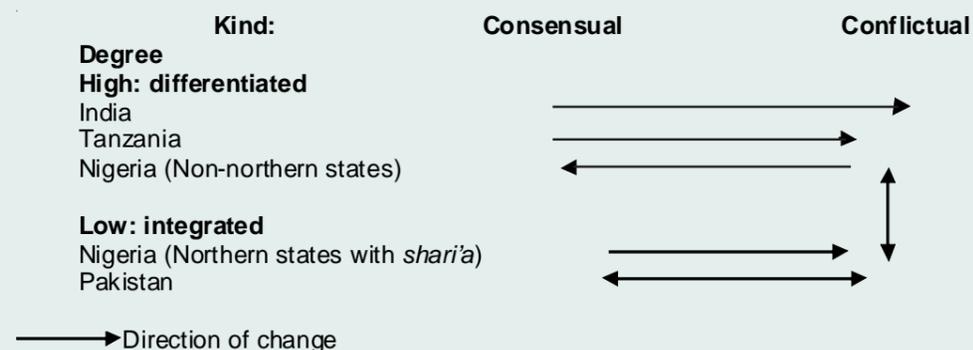


## Box 2: Trends in state-religion relationships from independence to today



Traditionally, religious actors in the public sphere have been viewed by their critics as obstacles to progressive social change and inclusive citizenship. Political liberalization has opened up spaces for new political actors, leading to both greater political inclusion and increased rivalry and conflict. While religious actors have a long history of political engagement, this increased political space has enabled them to increase their influence and launch new political initiatives.

However, democracy undercuts the ability of religious extremists to take over political power. In addition, the 'good governance' agenda has impelled states to be more accommodating of cultural and religious diversity.

The studies in India and Pakistan demonstrate that regimes in which religion is integrated with politics (through the establishment of an Islamic state or control by religious political parties) appear to have a poor record in improving governance and achieving human development objectives, undermining trends towards greater equality and social inclusion. However, few studies are available and further assessments are needed.

Some implications of this research are

- Religion has become 'de-privatized' in the last thirty years, and we can expect this to continue.
- Deepened democracy can accommodate the entry or renewed involvement of religious actors in politics, enabling disadvantaged groups to increase their political influence and providing safeguards against political actors who mobilize religion to further their own interests.
- Measures to improve interaction between religious groups and ensure their proportional representation are needed, to counter the increased conflict between religious actors that may accompany political actors' mobilization of religious identity for political purposes.



## Religions and Development Research Programme

### Religion, politics and governance in India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania since independence

#### Introduction

In developed and developing societies alike, the last thirty years have witnessed the 'return of religion' to public life, marked by the mobilization of religiously-based identities in politics, virulent anti-secularism and vocal claims for a greater role for religion in the public sphere. Radical Islamic political movements, fundamentalist Christianity in the US and militant Hinduism in India have emerged and challenged existing state-religion relationships, influencing government policies and provoking violent conflicts.

Governments and development agencies are urged to recognize the contribution of religion and religious organizations to the achievement of development objectives and the potential for collaboration. However, despite the attempts of organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme to promote religious and cultural liberty as part of the quest for human development, there has been little systematic and comparative research on religious communities' and organizations' relationships with politics and governance or their potential to contribute to the development process.

This study

- examines the nature of state-religion relationships in India, Nigeria, Tanzania and Pakistan at independence
- analyses the 'crisis of governance' that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s, creating new spaces for the 'return of religion' to the public sphere, and identifies significant features of these recent developments
- assesses the meaning of engagement in the political process for religious actors (religious communities, faith-based organizations and religious political parties), to identify their roles as levers of or obstacles to change and potential entry points for pro-poor governance and development.

#### Background and approach

The religious composition and dynamics of the countries under study vary.

- In India, about 80 per cent of the population are Hindus, although the absolute numbers of many religious minorities (Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists etc) are significant.
- In highly religious Nigeria and Tanzania, most people are Muslim or Christian, very roughly half and half overall, although the exact

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#### Further information

The four country studies drew from reviews of existing material and selected case studies of recent state-religion interactions based on semi-structured interviews with selected state, political and religious informants. The research was coordinated by the University of Birmingham and carried out by local research teams in 2007-8. This brief draws on a series of Religions and Development Working Papers and unpublished research reports: see Mahajan, G. and Jodhka, S. S. (2009) *Religions, Democracy and Governance: Spaces for the Marginalized in Contemporary India* (WP 26), Waseem, M. and Mufti, M. (2009) *Religion, Politics and Governance in Pakistan* (WP 27), Nolte, M.I. with Danjibo, N. and Oladeji, A. (2010) *Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria* (WP 39) and Singh, G. (2011) *Religion, Politics and Governance in India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania: An Overview* (WP55).

<http://www.religionsanddevelopment.org/index.php?section=47>

Research on the relationships between religion, politics and governance in India, Nigeria, Tanzania and Pakistan indicates that

- Religion has become 'de-privatized', and we can expect this to continue.
- Deepened democracy can accommodate the involvement of religious actors in politics, enabling disadvantaged groups to increase their political influence.
- Measures to improve interaction between religious groups and ensure their proportional representation in governance are needed, to counter the increased conflict between religious actors that can accompany the mobilization of religious identity for political purposes.



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proportions of each are unknown and contested. The proportion claiming traditional beliefs as their primary religious identity has declined substantially since independence.

- In Pakistan, over 90 per cent of the population is Muslim.

The research draws on available material to provide historical evaluations of state-religion relationships since independence.

- In Punjab and Maharashtra in India, the case studies examined religiously marginal Dalit communities amongst Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, which have been mobilized by political parties seeking to extend their support base. In Pakistan, the research focused on a single electoral term in which an alliance of religious political parties held power: the Muttahida-Majlise-e-Amal (MMA) in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) from 2002 to 2007.
- In Nigeria and Tanzania, the case studies were of Muslim and Christian religious organizations of various types, including those engaged in development activities such as service delivery. Because of the size of Nigeria, the research was undertaken in three States with different religious compositions: Muslim-majority Kano in the north, Christian-majority Anambra in the south-east and religiously mixed Oyo in the south-west.

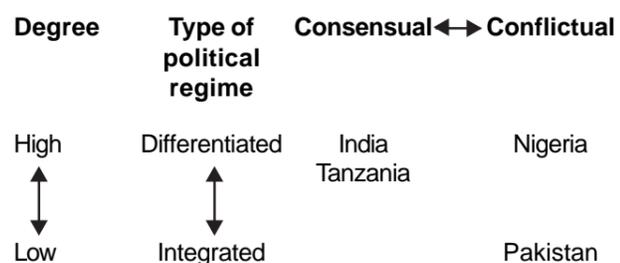
Countries' political regimes may be distinguished according to how closely integrated religion is with the state (from a clear differentiation between the political and religious realms, often labelled secularism, to close integration) and the extent of support for the arrangement (from wide agreement to varying degrees of contention). Over time, the extent of differentiation/integration and consensus/conflict that characterize relationships between religion and the state are likely to change, in response to international, national and local events and influences.

### The 'secular' state at independence

The constitutional settlement achieved by the nationalist movements in India, Nigeria, Tanzania and Pakistan at independence was, in three of the cases, secular. However, the political settlement was the product of historical and political compromises and its features varied. Colonial history, religious composition, the circumstances under which independence was achieved, and the configuration of political forces at the time the independence constitution was drafted all influenced its provisions. In India, Nigeria and Tanzania, a clear separation between the state and religion was desired by the key

actors, in particular to manage religious diversity and competition. However, in Nigeria, although secularism was dominant, it was highly contested because of the desire of northern Muslim-dominated states for greater integration between the state and religion. In Pakistan, tensions between key actors about whether the new state would be secular or Islamic resulted in an uneasy compromise and ongoing contestation over the constitutional basis for politics and government.

### Box 1: State-religion relationships at independence



The countries under study can thus be located on a continuum from differentiated to integrated relationships between religion and the state, as well as according to the extent of acceptance of the independence constitutional settlement (Box 1).

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, post-colonial political settlements were under severe strain. Internal and external developments had eroded confidence in the secular nationalist project, giving rise to a crisis of governance that created new spaces for religions in public life. The crisis was triggered, among other things, by

- weakening of the coalitions of political forces that had come to power at independence, because of failed policies, growing authoritarianism (including periods of military rule in Nigeria and Pakistan) and disillusion with political power holders
- economic crisis, followed by the imposition of liberalization policies, resulting in economic hardship and increased political competition.

### The return of religion

#### ■ The electoral mobilization of religious identities

In India, Nigeria and Tanzania, religious identities were mobilized by both religious and non-religious political parties. In democratic polities, the ability of religious political parties (for example, the Bharatiya Janata Party in India) to obtain majority support is constrained by conflicting interests within religious traditions. Moreover, especially where religious political

parties are banned (Tanzania, Nigeria), parties' need to maximize their electoral support ensures that they have to obtain multi-religious support.

#### ■ Co-option of religious groups and demands by elements in the state

Demands for religion to be more closely integrated with the state have arisen mainly from Islamist groups in Pakistan and northern Nigeria. In these contexts, the demands have been met by programmes that have embedded Islam in law, state structures and policies, reinforcing the power of the 'Islamic establishment' and undermining religious freedom.

#### ■ Resistance by radical elements within religious groups

Attacks on the prevailing political order by radical religious groups have sought to change the secular state (the demand by some Sikhs for secession in India) or even the religious establishment (movements to radicalize Islam). Some have been crushed (India, Nigeria) while others continue to threaten the very viability of the state (Pakistan).

#### ■ New discourses and policy innovations centred on religious identity post 9/11

Demands that discrimination associated with religion be addressed by governments have increased, in part because of the political space opened up by discourses of human rights and 'good governance' but also because religious assertiveness has been encouraged by international developments post-9/11. Attempts to respond have been most apparent in India, in particular by recognizing and addressing Muslim disadvantage. However, even in Pakistan and Nigeria, international discourses on gender equality and minority rights have influenced government policies.

### The engagement of religious actors in politics

The case studies of religious actors engaged in contemporary politics reveal both changes in the nature of governance and transformations in the religious traditions:

- Democracy, even in religiously homogeneous societies like Pakistan, operates to undercut the mobilization of religious identities in politics. Conversely, because authoritarian regimes may seek to co-opt religious groups to increase their legitimacy, non-democratic politics (e.g. under military rule) seems to increase the political influence of religious groups. This seems to lead to pressure to further integrate religion and the state.

- The interests of the poor within religious traditions are more likely to be articulated if:
  - because of their numbers, political parties are motivated to seek their support
  - they can use their religious identity to gain increased political representation and/or take advantage of measures designed to reduce poverty, such as affirmative action programmes.

- Engagement with the political process may lead to changes in the self-perception, religious identity and organizational basis of poor groups within religious traditions.
- The record on good governance and achieving development objectives by religious actors that gain political power is mixed. Most religious actors share a critique of underdevelopment, but their conceptions of the meaning and purpose of development are divergent. Some are enthusiastic about the 'good governance' agenda, while others articulate ideas of 'development' that foreground religious ideals. Sometimes, the latter accept and reinforce gender inequality, religious discrimination and social exclusion in everyday practices and public policies.

### Conclusions and policy implications

Encounters between the state and religion are changeable. 'Religion' cannot be treated as an independent variable affecting politics and governance, and there is little to be gained from focusing exclusively on the role and performance of religious actors themselves. Rather, religion is a complex social phenomenon that is embedded in different ways in political, social and economic systems.

Shifting political alliances are reflected in political arrangements and policies, and interact with inter- and intra-religious differences to produce complex and fluid relationships. The most striking change in the post-colonial period has been a shift from the predominantly secular constitutional settlements agreed at independence to political arenas in which religious organizations play active roles. Today, relationships between religion and the state are

- becoming more conflictual in the secular countries studied (India, Tanzania) (see Box 2)
- still conflictual in Nigeria, where the southern and central States have remained secular and religion has become more closely integrated with politics in the northern States
- are characterized by both consensus and conflict amongst religious and political actors in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, where religion and politics remain integrated.