

Article

Religion, Power, and National Identity: The Dual Role of Islam in the History and Modernization of the Maldives

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Abstract: Islam in the history and modernization of the Maldives demonstrates an intrinsic tension, serving both as the foundational cornerstone of national identity and as the source of social conflict and political division. On the one hand, the narrative of being a “100% Muslim nation” has shaped a highly unified national identity, achieving legalization and institutionalization within the power structure and becoming a critical pillar of state legitimacy and social integration. On the other hand, the politicization and homogenization of religion have weakened social inclusivity, exacerbating religious extremism and social tensions in the face of globalization. The Maldivian experience not only reveals how religion undergoes self-transformation through power negotiation and legal reform but also reflects how the tension between traditional religion and the modern state shapes the dynamic framework of national governance. As a microcosm of global religious renaissance and geopolitical interaction, the Maldives offers a vital theoretical perspective and practical insights for understanding the complex interplay among religion, power, and national identity.

Keywords: Islam; national identity; identity politics; religious nationalism; Maldives

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1. Introduction

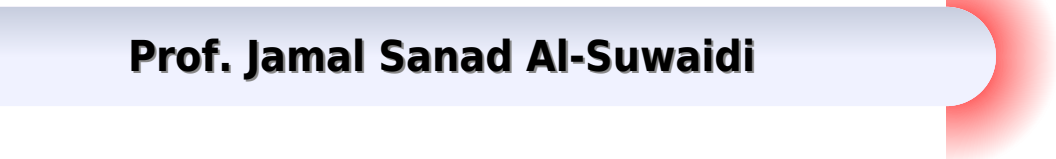
In today’s world, where globalization meets the resurgence of religion, one of the key challenges for modern societies is finding a balance between preserving traditional culture and achieving effective governance (Hovsepian 2023). For small nations deeply rooted in religious traditions, this balance becomes even more significant, as religion often goes beyond being a belief system and plays a central role in shaping national identity and state power (Issa and Yasin 2024).

The Maldives, a small island nation in South Asia known as a “100% Muslim state,” offers a compelling case for examining this dynamic (Pyraed 2010). Since the arrival of Islam in the Maldives in the 12th century, the religion has become more than just a spiritual practice—it has grown into a cultural foundation for national identity and a cornerstone of political legitimacy. On the one hand, Islam has been institutionalized and embedded into official narratives, providing a sense of unity and political stability. On the other hand, the forces of globalization and the renaissance of religious sentiment have given rise to challenges, such as the politicization and even radicalization of religion, which pose risks to social cohesion and national security (Zellman and Malji 2023).

Although previous studies have shed light on the historical influence of Islam and its role in governance, most focus on specific periods or isolated aspects (Forbes 1983; Maniku 1986; Hashemi 2009; Shama 2018; Zahur 2021, 2023a), leaving the broader dual role of

Religion And Political Modernization

Prof. Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi



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Religion and Political Modernization Donald E. P. Smith, 1974 **Religion and Political Modernization** Donald Eugene Smith, 1974 *Religion, Political Modernization, and Secularization* Parker Jay Palmer, 1970 Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World Emile F. Sahliyah, 1990-01-01 This book examines the highly politicized religious groups and movements that have surfaced since the late 1970s in the United States Central America South Africa the Philippines India and the Middle East Sahliyah and others analyze this trend toward the politicization of religious conservatism and question a number of assumptions central to concepts of modernization For example it has been assumed by development theorists that the interrelated components of modernization would enhance the trend toward secularization of societies This book shows that in many societies today religious revivalism and fundamentalism seem to be direct products of modernization A global comparative approach is utilized to formulate general explanations for religious revivalism and its implications for modernization development and politics Critical Theory and Political Modernity José Maurício Domingues, 2019-01-22 This book draws together philosophy jurisprudence political science and international relations to study the main categories of political modernity and its development trends Grounded in critical theory from Marx to later currents such as the Frankfurt School Critical Theory and Political Modernity circulates around state power and oligarchy as well as emancipatory possibilities from their foundations to the present such as radical democracy Domingues analyzes the main categories of political modernity including the juridical dimension to conceptually articulate its long term processes of development In so doing he examines rights law and citizenship state and domination abstract and concrete the political system state power freedom and autonomy scalar configurations political regimes oligarchy and democracy **Religion, Political Culture, and the Emergence of Early Modern Society** Heinz Schilling, 2022-05-09 This volume of essays by Heinz Schilling represents his three main fields of interest in early modern European history The first section of the book entitled Urban Society and Reformation deals with urban society in northern Germany and the Netherlands from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries The author discusses social structure and changes the problems of religion and mentality as well as political culture and thinking The second section confessionalization and Second Reformation treats the paradigm Confessionalization which denotes a fundamental process of social change within Old European society during the second half of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries The third section The Netherlands the Pioneer Society of Early Modern Europe deals with the Northern Netherlands as a model for early modern modernization and as a successful republican and bourgeois alternative to the aristocratic Old European society The essays collected in this book were originally written in German and published over the last fifteen years The articles have been revised and the notes have been updated This volume gives a broader English speaking audience the possibility to read Heinz Schilling s research It also provides a concise collection of the author s writings for those readers who are already familiar with his studies *The*

Routledge Handbook to Religion and Political Parties Jeffrey Haynes, 2019-11-28 As religion and politics become ever more intertwined relationships between religion and political parties are of increasing global political significance This handbook responds to that development providing important results of current research involving religion and politics focusing on democratisation democracy party platform formation party moderation and secularisation social constituency representation and interest articulation Covering core issues new debates and country case studies the handbook provides a comprehensive overview of fundamentals and new directions in the subject Adopting a comparative approach it examines the relationships between religion and political parties in a variety of contexts regions and countries with a focus on Christianity Islam Buddhism Judaism and Hinduism Contributions cover such topics as religion secularisation and modernisation religious fundamentalism and terrorism the role of religion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding religion and its connection to state democratisation and democracy and regional case studies covering Asia the Americas Europe Sub Saharan Africa the Middle East and North Africa This comprehensive handbook provides crucial information for students researchers and professionals researching the topics of politics religion comparative politics secularism religious movements political parties and interest groups and religion and sociology

After Secularism E. Wilson, 2011-11-22 Having destabilized dominant assumptions about the nature of religion there is now a need to develop new ways of thinking about this ever present phenomenon in global politics This book outlines a new approach to understanding religion and its relationship with politics in the West and globally for International Relations

Women and Development Prof. Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi, 2020-01-01 His Excellency Prof Jamal Sanad Al Suwaidi Director General of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research has published a new book titled Women and Development which addresses over four chapters major issues relevant to Arab Islamic thought regarding women and their role in development His Excellency believes that women s problems are in fact society s problems and these problems will not be solved without the involvement of government and private organizations and society as a whole Improving the status of women and promoting their participation in development is the concern of the entire country The author puts forth arguments proving the unsustainable rhetoric voiced by regressive political Islam which sought through selective interpretation of Islamic texts to impose restrictions on the freedom of women and their participation in the development process The author also provides practical responses to urgent questions regarding the status of women in Islam such as their access to education and presence in labor markets in relation to men In this regard the author refers to statistics and survey data as well as analytical readings of the circumstances involving women s rights in GCC countries In the last chapter the author explores the status of women in the United Arab Emirates as they set a role model for Gulf and Arab women This model was shaped by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan may God rest his soul in peace through his open and insightful thought and implemented through effective policies and programs

Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus Alexander Agadjanian, Ansgar Jödicke, Evert van der Zweerde, 2014-10-10 This book

explores developments in the three major societies of the South Caucasus Armenia Azerbaijan and Georgia focusing especially on religion historical traditions national consciousness and political culture and on how these factors interact It outlines how despite close geographical interlacement common historical memories and inherited structures the three countries have deep differences and it discusses how development in all three nations has differed significantly from the countries declared commitments to democratic orientation and European norms and values The book also considers how external factors and international relations continue to impact on the three countries

Unveiling the Power of Verbal Art: An Psychological Sojourn through **Religion And Political Modernization**

In a global inundated with monitors and the cacophony of fast connection, the profound power and psychological resonance of verbal art usually diminish in to obscurity, eclipsed by the constant barrage of noise and distractions. However, located within the musical pages of **Religion And Political Modernization**, a fascinating work of fictional beauty that impulses with natural thoughts, lies an memorable journey waiting to be embarked upon. Penned with a virtuoso wordsmith, this enchanting opus books visitors on a mental odyssey, softly exposing the latent possible and profound impact embedded within the intricate web of language. Within the heart-wrenching expanse of this evocative examination, we can embark upon an introspective exploration of the book is main themes, dissect their interesting writing model, and immerse ourselves in the indelible impression it leaves upon the depths of readers souls.

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Religion And Political Modernization Introduction

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