Book Review/ Compte rendu

Jonathan Fox. *The Unfree Exercise of Religion: A World Survey of Discrimination against Religious Minorities*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 236 pp., **(**978110713306-8).

Religious discrimination is on the rise. As Jonathan Fox demonstrates in his new book on religious minorities, "*unfree exercise* of religion is the norm for religious minorities across the world" (1-2). Yet, there are striking differences with respect to not only which religions, regions, and countries discriminate more but also which types of religious minorities are discriminated against. In other words, religious discrimination is *not* homogenous, either in terms of who discriminates or who gets discriminated against. The task of the present book, which its author accomplishes brilliantly, is to wade through current worldwide instances of religious discrimination in order to identify distinct patterns and trends.

Fox is very precise in defining religious discrimination: "*restrictions placed by the state on the religious practices, clergy, or institutions of minority religions that are not placed on the majority religion*" (11). The study is based on a rich survey of discrimination against religious minorities in all countries of the world. Drawing on the Religion and State-Minorities (RASM) dataset, Fox collects information on twenty-nine types of religious discrimination on a yearly basis from 1990 to 2008. These include a wide array of restrictions, including on observing religious rites and rituals; forced observance of religious laws of another group; mandatory education in the majority religion; restrictions on the observance of religious laws concerning personal status; restrictions on proselytizing, wearing religious symbols or clothing; and state surveillance not placed on activities of other religious groups (among others). In short, the criteria for religious discrimination are detailed, thorough and universal.

The most distinctive component of the the RASM dataset is that unlike previous studies that deploy the state as the unit of analysis, the RASM dataset uses religious minorities within a state as its unit of analysis. There are two criteria for inclusion in the pool of discriminated religious minorities: the religious minority must be at least 0.25% of the country's population, or it must be a Christian minority in a Muslim ma-

jority state or a Muslim minority in a Christian majority state. Based on these criteria, 597 minorities are included in the analysis.

Fox divides the world's nations into distinct groups. Two chapters (four and five) are devoted to identifying trends in Christian majority states, which are further divided into distinct subgroupings: Western democracies, former Soviet Bloc countries, and Christian majority states of the Third World. Fox presents a number of striking findings. Within Christian majority states in the West, religious discrimination is present and increasing. Among these countries, the most discriminatory states are those with Orthodox Christian majorities. Fox shows that this divide cannot be attributed to the divide between the West and the former Soviet Bloc since non-Orthodox states in the former Soviet Bloc discriminate far less than their Orthodox counterparts, while an Orthodox majority Western state—Greece—discriminates on a level similar to Orthodox majority states in the former Soviet Bloc.

With respect to Christian majority states of the Third World, Fox demonstrates that Latin America has levels of religious discrimination that resemble Western democracies while those in Africa and Asia have less discrimination against religious minorities than Western democracies. Thus, some of the most tolerant states in the world are found in the Third World (e.g. Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Burundi, South Africa). Fox rightly emphasizes this point to throw attention to the supposed correlation between secularization and West's tolerance that is routinely touted in academic literature on the subject. Another interesting finding that emerges is that among Christian majority states in the West and sub-Saharan Africa, Catholic states are more tolerant than non-Catholic states. In Latin America and Asia on the other hand, non-Catholic majority states tend to be the most tolerant.

In chapter six, Fox delineates trends and patterns in Muslim majority countries, finding that on average, Muslim majority countries engage in highest levels of religious discrimination in the world. However, there are considerable variations based on world region and minority in question. For example, in Muslim majority states of sub-Saharan Africa, "levels of religious discrimination are only slightly higher than those of Christian majority states as a whole" and lower than Orthodox Christian majority states and the Christian majority states of the former Soviet Bloc (122). The Persian Gulf states in the Middle East, however, have some of the highest level of discrimination in the world, thanks in large part to the very high discrimination present in Saudi Arabia, Iran and UAE. The rest of the Middle East and Asia has lower levels of religious discrimination than the Persian Gulf States but still scores significantly high in religious discrimination. The striking finding once again comes

from sub-Saharan Africa, where nine of the thirteen Muslim majority states engage in little to no religious discrimination.

Fox devotes his last empirically driven chapter (seven) to all remaining countries in the world that have non-Christian and non-Muslim majorities. Fox divides these countries into three categories: Buddhist majority states, states with no majority religion, and all other states. With respect to the first, Fox finds that despite pacific doctrines that are the hallmark of Buddhism, Buddhist majority states engage in levels of religious discrimination that are only slightly lower than the average Muslim majority state. Predictably, religious discrimination is low in mixed majority states with some, such as Botswana, Cameroon, Liberia and South Korea, engaging in no religious discrimination.

The main strength of the book indisputably lies in its identification of global trends and patterns for the time period under consideration. Second, although not discussed in the present review, Fox also highlights patterns with respect to which minorities get discriminated against. A highly interesting and relevant finding of the book is that states do not discriminate homogenously across their religious minorities. Furthermore, there are patterns with respect to which type of minority gets discriminated in different world regions and religious traditions. For example, Western democracies tend to discriminate against their Muslim minorities while Muslim countries tend to discriminate against non-Muslim and non-Christian minorities. On aggregate, Christian minorities are the most discriminated against the world while Muslim minorities are the least discriminated.

Third, Fox also describes which types of religious discrimination are prevalent in different parts of the world. The concluding chapter presents a nice discussion of the twelve most common types of religious discrimination across the world. Here, Fox clearly lays out that burdensome registration practices; limitations on building, maintaining or repairing places of worship; restrictions on proselytizing; restrictions on publishing religious materials; and requirements related to taking religious education in a religion other than their own form the five most prevalent types of discriminatory practices.

Finally, it should also be noted that the book is interspersed with highly accessible tables that present the various findings noted above. These tables provide data on individual countries and world regions along with aggregate data replete with statistical tests on significance of the results. These carefully crafted tables are an invaluable source for scholars working on questions of religious minorities.

Overall, *The Unfree Exercise of Religion* is both an original and timely intervention in the scholarly literature on religious minorities. It

provides comprehensive original and comparative data, and draws on this data to identify shifting trends about discrimination against religious minorities across the world. Its findings are poised to open novel lines of inquiry for scholars engaged in the social scientific study of religion. Furthermore, given the clarity with which the book is written, it will be an invaluable resource for both graduate and undergraduate courses on religion and politics, nationalism, and minorities.

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