

Editors' Introduction

This issue represents the first of an occasional series of issues of *Politics and Religion* devoted to a special thematic topic. Our first “special issue” focuses on the role of Islam in contemporary politics in the United States. From time to time, we plan to produce similar special issues, but such issues will not interfere with the publication of individual manuscripts.

This particular issue was not proposed as a single entity by any contributor; nor was it planned in advance by the editors. Rather, each of the articles was submitted independently. We decided to put together a special issue on Muslim politics in the United States due to the high number of submissions in this area. Apparently, there is a great deal of scholarly interest in American-Muslims in the post-September 11 era.

Two of the articles in this issue deal directly with the political behavior of Muslims in the United States. Farida Jalalzai uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to show that American-Muslims exhibit considerable volatility in their voting behavior, and largely switched from support of George W. Bush in 2000 to John Kerry in 2004. Jalalzai also shows that ethnic identification is an important component of the political choices made by adherents of Islam in the United States. Matt Barreto and Dino Bozonelos report similar findings, but note that religiosity among American-Muslims is not directly related to identification with either major political party. Rather, the actions of party elites appear to have occasioned partisan independence among Muslim voters.

The focus of the other three articles in this issue is on reactions to Muslim-Americans on the part of non-Muslims. Shane Martin shows that Congressional votes on certain issues are related to the presence of Muslims among Congressional constituencies, and that the representation of Muslim interests among members of Congress appears to be directly related to the numerical strength of Muslims in the district. Contrary to work on other minority groups (e.g., African-Americans), Martin finds no evidence of representational “backlash” toward adherents of Islam. Eileen Braman and Abdulkader Sinno use experimental methods (increasingly common in our discipline) to show that voters do not generally perceive Muslim candidates differently from others, except with

respect to the issue of terrorism. Here, the sophistication of the voter seems to matter. Finally, James Penning compares attitudes of Americans toward Muslims and Mormons (another group that has historically been the object of discrimination). Penning finds considerable overlap in negative affect toward these two religious minorities, and shows that religious variables largely account for attitudes toward members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints and adherents of Islam.

As always, Andrew Murphy and Laura Olson have provided their usual fine collection of book reviews. The book review section of *Politics and Religion* has attracted favorable comment among readers of the journal, and we appreciate the excellent work of Andy and Laura.

More generally, we are gratified by the strong positive response to *Politics and Religion*. We are approaching the end of our second year, and are most impressed by the number and quality of submissions. We encourage scholars in all disciplines in which the political aspects of religion are considered to submit their work to the journal

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(co-editors)

In addition to “regular” reviews, this issue of *Politics and Religion* contains several exciting features: a critical dialogue on Michael Lindsay’s *Faith in the Halls of Power*; an extended review essay of Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* and Remi Brague’s *The Law of God*, by Jean Elshtain, one of this nation’s leading voices in the study of religion and politics; and a paired review of two volumes in the Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics (in which the editors of volumes on Confucian and Christian political ethics review each other’s books). We continue to look for new and creative ways to keep *Politics and Religion*’s readers up to date on cutting-edge work being done in the field. Enjoy.

Andrew Murphy
Laura Olson
(Book Review Editors)