

stepped into the role of national defender and definer, often with the assistance of the Kremlin. Although Orthodox Christianity is not formally a state religion, it informally plays that role — that is, to be Russian in the post-Soviet context is also to be Orthodox. Where I differ with Professor Driessen is in suggesting that this same process is taking place in China. Beijing remains deeply committed to secularism and atheism and it is not reaching out to any religion to define national identity or Chinese-ness. Perhaps the closest parallel would be the increased role of Confucianism in the public square, but that is beyond the scope of the book. I would further add that religious groups in China tend to be tolerated so long as they do not interfere with the interests of the regime, but even those with the closest ties to those in power have far less independence, autonomy, and influence than the Russian Orthodox Church. The simple explanation for this difference is that communism did not collapse in China, therefore, making the nation-building project and the potential role for religion all the less politically pressing.

Response to Karrie Koesel

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I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to Karrie J. Koesel for her generous, insightful and fair review of my book, *Religion and Democratization: Framing Religious and Political Identities in Muslim and Catholic Societies*. She offers an efficient overview of the work, for which I am grateful, and ends her review with three suggestions on areas of the book that would benefit from greater elaboration. In this reply I will make brief responses to her first two suggestions and end with a larger response to her third, concluding comment.

Koesel begins her criticism by noting how the study of religiously friendly democratization could benefit from a deeper analysis of the transition politics framing these processes, in particular how the lead-up to religiously friendly transitions might frame a new regime's religious policies. As I note in the conclusion, I am in complete agreement here. A colleague from the University of Milan is writing on these dynamics

right now, and I am confident that more of this kind of research will yield much insight into the nature and goals of religious politics in religiously friendly regimes.

Her next comment is on the book's definition and use of the term "religious actor" to include not just theologians or institutional religious leaders but technocrats and everyday religious individuals as well. While I understand her concern about such a broad conceptualization of religious actors, I would defend the choice by arguing that we get a more comprehensive understanding of religious communities' political goals by adopting such a definition. In the book I wanted to explore how the whole composition of a religious community affects and shapes the content of religious politics. All of these actors, together, decide which political and religious goals are pursued by a religious community. What I find striking is how religiously friendly democratization processes affect this composition, and, in particular, give voice to the everyday religious citizens with dramatic consequences on the ways in which a religious community thinks about, relates with and lives democracy.

Koesel's final comment raises, I think, one of the most important questions that the book attempts to grapple with, namely whether government favoritism of religion, as attractive a solution as it might seem for any country looking to overcome a democratically-hostile religious past, could ultimately undermine the larger democratic project, especially in more religiously plural settings.

As I hoped to make clear in the book, I adopt a neutral normative stance as to whether or not religiously friendly democratization represents a "best" or "ideal" solution for any society undergoing a democratization process. This is true for relatively homogenous religious countries like Italy or Algeria, let alone a more religiously plural country. There is an important normative debate on this question in political theory today, and it is my hope that this book could serve to inform that debate. However, the aim of my book was different. Whether or not it represents a high ideal of contemporary political liberal thought, many Islamist-oriented political parties consider themselves religious and democratic actors today. The trajectories and intuitions of these parties have many parallels to those in the world of Christian Democracy and, following the conceptualization of democratization and the empirical measurement of democracy from comparative politics scholarship (see, especially, Alfred Stepan's work), there is little reason to exclude these actors' democratic potential, a priori, based solely on the religious content of their politics.

What I have tried to do in the book is to simply take these actors and these institutional processes for what they say they are and measure what sort of impact religiously friendly democratization might have on the religious and democratic life of society. The data presented in the book indicates that some types of religious favoritism, including when religious language is embedded in a constitution or religious education in public schools, do not have a negative effect on many of the measures that democracy indices use to compare democracies with each other. In other words, many states combine high levels of democracy and religious favoritism, and this does not seem to undermine their larger democratic project. In fact, there is reason to believe that some types of religious grounding might actually strengthen those democratic projects at least in some of its features. That being said, the relationship between religious politics and democratic quality remains a complex one, full of paradoxes and in need of much further research.

I thank Professor Koesel for continuing this stimulating conversation.