

As a whole, the book undoubtedly is a precious resource of knowledge, both for academics and officials dealing with international terrorism. It is particularly effective in avoiding both the broad and scarcely operable descriptions that characterize too many works in this area of scholarship and the journalistic features of many others, carrying out a rigorous and detailed, but never trivial, analysis of the jihadist phenomenon. The only exception is probably the introductory chapter, in which the short paragraphs dealing with Islamist homelands and thinkers often prove too synthetic and sketchy.

One necessary criticism of the book, however, is its apparent over-reliance on sources written almost exclusively in English. In the bibliography of the book I counted only three titles in Arabic; the language of the Internet sources used is not always specified, but several seem to be English translations. On the whole, though, this book constitutes an excellent high-level handbook, and I recommend it wholeheartedly.

***The Religious Left and Church-State Relations.* By Steven H. Shiffrin. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. xi + 241 pp. \$35.00, cloth**

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This is a confident, clearly argued, and fascinating book. It is also breathtakingly efficient: thrifty readers can get an outrageous return on a fourteen-page investment (Introduction, Overview of Part I, and Conclusion). Even misers will emerge the richer from reading all 136 pages (the remaining 100+ pages are endnotes). What Shiffrin promises — and very nearly delivers — are decisive reasons for thinking that “the religious Left’s position on church-state relations is superior to and more politically attractive than that of the religious Right or the secular Left” (2). He contends that the United States Constitution’s religion clauses have pluralistic foundations, that the Supreme Court has oversimplified these values by stressing religious equality, that tight relations between church and state are inimical to religion, that the fulcrum of church-state relations will shift from judicial to electoral contests, and that the Religious Left can make winning public

arguments that keep American politics in-step with growing religious diversity.

Shiffrin presents this ambitious argument in three well-organized parts. In Part One, he explains why neither of the religion clauses of the First Amendment should be reduced to a mandate for formal equality. Both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause, says Shiffrin, depend on multiple values — seven each, in fact. Weighing them in specific cases is the heart of religion clause jurisprudence. Neither current conservative nor secular liberal nor communitarian approaches handle the pluralistic foundations of the religion clauses well. In Part Two, he applies his basic interpretive premises to vexing (but also interesting) questions about compulsory public education and school vouchers. He argues, nimbly, that the former is sometimes constitutional, but is not, overall, a wise policy; and that the latter should be resisted, because it encourages enclaves. Part Three turns from court to democratic politics. Shiffrin here insists that theological arguments — inappropriate in courts — are appropriate and vital in public forums. He respectfully disagrees with theological tenets of the Right, but not with its using these to ground reasonable political positions. Shiffrin asks the secular Left to make alliance with the religious Left, which can oppose “bad” theology from the Right with “good” theology that is broadly consonant with liberalism.

Shiffrin could dispel what little conceptual confusion there is in this book by clarifying, in future work, (1) what standing pragmatic reasons have in his arguments, and (2) whether he believes that religious claims are essentially different from other claims. One could argue, says Shiffrin, that public anger over a court decision to remove the motto *In God We Trust* from coins would lead to legislative counter-moves and thus an unintended erosion of religious liberty. Shiffrin thinks this argument reaches the correct conclusion — namely, the court should not declare the motto unconstitutional — by the wrong path. He wants those who prize religious liberty to eschew this pragmatic reasoning. He worries that a habit of relying on pragmatic concern would erode the court’s will to enforce civil liberties against significant public resistance (e.g., blowback from decisions to “desegregate schools, outlaw prayer in schools, or recognize the burning of flags to be protected freedom of speech” (49)). It is therefore surprising when, after deploring the insensitivity that scheduling Friday night football games shows to Jews, Shiffrin seems to give a *pragmatic* reason for accepting the judicial *status quo*: “attempting to change it would trigger enormous anti-Semitism” (50). The same difficulty re-appears at the end of Shiffrin’s discussion of

rulings on compulsory public education, where he seems to say that however desirable such compulsion might be, the “firestorm” it would “unleash” makes it a bad court decision (81). Again, if Shiffrin thinks steely judicial nerve for enforcing civil liberties is weakened by the “pragmatic path,” then his urging the secular Left to accept *pragmatic* reasons for making alliance with the religious Left seems dissonant. He does say — with respect to judicial nerve — that his “concern about the pragmatic approach is pragmatic” (49); but readers will want a clearer explanation of just how far Shiffrin’s pragmatism goes, and whether, and in what ways, for example, judicial and legislative versions may differ.

A second question, related to the status of pragmatic reasoning, is about the function of theological claims that Shiffrin would like the religious Left to make. He agrees with Jürgen Habermas’ conclusion that theological claims advanced in public discussions must be “translated” into secular terms if they are taken up by non-religious discussants or used to form public policy. If this is so (and I do think it is), then how much is gained by marshaling theological arguments? For Shiffrin’s purposes, the answer will boil down to a claim about their *pragmatic* value for mobilizing religiously minded voters away from the Right and toward the Left. There must then be metrics for the effectiveness of leftward theological arguments in democratic politics, and Shiffrin could strengthen his case by employing them, or by referring to political scientists who do.

Readers will hope, in Shiffrin’s future work, for his rebuttal to the objection that theological arguments look useful but conceptually redundant in his view — especially to those religious folk and sympathetic secularists who do the work of “translation.” If Shiffrin wants to avoid a reductive view about religious claims, then he has (at least) two options: he could argue that in the public square, theology contributes desirable values or ideas that do not emerge as strongly or as readily from other sources in the American context, but that truly unique benefits of theological claims appear only in the religious communities that generate them (which seems plausible, given Shiffrin’s pragmatic approach); or he could argue that theology contributes key values or ideas that do not or simply cannot come from other sources (which seems less plausible).

Hearing Shiffrin on these questions about the status of pragmatic reasoning and the nature of religious claims would be a delight, because he has already given us a fantastic gift with *The Religious Left and Church-state Relations*. Any intellectual who takes interest in politics and religion in general, or church-state relations in particular, can understand, enjoy, and learn from this book.