

events without going deeper into these problems. For example, it is still unclear what the dynamics of power behind the relationship between the local notables and the governors of the province of Beirut in governing the city of Beirut were.

Despite these remarks, Malek Sharif's book on the municipality of Beirut represents one of the few studies that address the question of municipalities and should be of interest of those studying not only the municipalities but also the local elites, the centre-periphery relationship and more generally the Tanzimat. From his approach, we can draw a model that can be further developed with the purpose of understanding the complex mechanisms of politics in the municipal administration and the power struggle between the centre and periphery and as a consequence, its influence on the institutional development of the municipalities.

**Nancy J. Davis and Robert V. Robinson.**  
*Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare.*  
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*Claiming Society for God*—a gold medal winner in religion category at the 2013 Independent Publisher Awards—focuses on the strategic success of orthodox religious movements in the public sphere. Nancy J. Davis and Robert V. Robinson deal with different cases from Egypt, Israel, Italy and the United States that have substantial commonalities in terms of religious organizations. The authors seek to answer the question of how these movements survived for many years and eventually played significant roles in the formation of political and social order, notwithstanding some structural limitations. They also refer to the theory of social movements to shed light on how religious movements under consideration challenged the main postulates of the theory.

Many academic studies, especially those undertaken after 9/11, underline authoritarian practices, allegedly fundamentalist character and “terrorist” attacks of religiously orthodox movements. Such an approach

therefore codified religious movements as irrational and fed by violence. Yet, Davis and Robinson study different orthodox-religious movements in different countries and show that labeling them as irrational misses several points. It is usually ignored that religious movements have a two-sided agenda, an inflexible ideology and a communitarian face. Since they have arisen out of a reaction against secular modernity, enlightenment and materialism, those movements stand against individualistic morality. Thus, the book argues that contrary to popular belief, religious orthodoxies have their own coherent communitarian logic. As the subtitle of the book, *Religious Movements and Social Welfare*, indicates, religious orthodoxies also contribute to the redistribution of wealth among the poor often neglected by the state. Davis and Robinson use a comparative-historical method to manifest both common patterns and differentiations among their cases from Egypt, Israel, Italy and the United States.

The book's main argument concerns challenges against the social movements theory. The theory assumes that those movements, which embrace inflexible ideologies, broad-issue agendas and unwillingness to compromise, tend to fail to attain their goals. On the contrary, the authors argue, religious movements challenged the tenets of the theory by "bypassing the state" and privileging the civil society. Davis and Robinson choose the Muslim Brotherhood, the *Shas*, the *Comunione e Liberazione* and the Salvation Army as successful examples that created decentralized networks to spread their religious agendas. These cases also represent the most organized religious movements of Abrahamic religions including Islam, Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism. All four movements have cut across their countries and reached to an international level constructing new institutions abroad.

The Muslim Brotherhood and *Shas* used politics as an instrument to create religious society, while the *Comunione e Liberazione* and the Salvation Army did not attend the process of decision-making directly. All followed the same method of constituting alternative networks of institutions. They created a religiously "parallel society" in which people are interdependent to each other through social services including new institutions of education, worship centers, employment services, a low-interest loan system, food banks, health care and elderly care, dormitories for drug addicts, women's shelter etc. Indeed, by means of decentralized networks of institutions, religiously orthodox movements have survived and succeeded their goals even in the face of the violent reactions of state. It is evident that in some periods, all movements were faced with the prohibition, yet they continued to provide services thanks to dispersed institutions.

The book suggests that if religious movements, frequently seen as authoritarian and fundamentalist, do not espouse communitarian and egalitarian ethos, their chance of success would be very low. This takes us to the debate about whether religiously orthodox movements are considered right wing or not. Davis and Robinson generate an analytic moral-cosmo-

logy model to overcome traditional right-left division. Accordingly, they divide economic and cultural individualism on one side, and economic and cultural communitarianism on the other. Religious movements in question are located in cultural and economic communitarianism, whereas modernists are located on the axis of economic and cultural individualism. To create a religious society, all movements have introduced collective voluntarism, which touches on all fields neglected by the state. For this reason, the authors frequently speak of these religious movements as “state within the state.”

The book is well-organized around notable similarities in the histories of the Muslim Brotherhood, *Shas*, *Communione e Liberazione* and the Salvation Army. Considering the authors’ position against stereotyped perceptions of religiously orthodox movements, no doubt that it is a constructive contribution to the studies of political sociology and social movements. Examination of the neglected “egalitarian face” of those movements helps one to understand how religious movements spread all over the world in spite of their ideological inflexibility in the issues of divorce, abortion, homosexuality, family relations and etc.

Religious orthodoxies are reflected in the book as radically against secular, modern and material society. Authors also point out that all movements mentioned in the book have used modern technological tools such as websites to propagate their ideology even though they are against modern way of life. Thus, a clear-cut division between modernist and non-modernist religious movements makes no sense. They constituted modern institutions, used parliamentary system, which is a modern product, and founded private enterprises, which is also a consequence of modern capitalism. For example, the Salvation Army is based on the statement that “*laissez-faire* capitalism is anti-Christian,” yet it introduced the Department of American Trade to carry out sales of the Army. The Army accumulated a huge amount of capital, which was however used to help poor people. The situation is more or less the same for other religious movements. This shows that any of those movements are not independent from modern commercial institutions, even if they are considered as against modernity. This interpretation could be a result of data selection. Along with the academic studies and statistical data about those movements, Davis and Robinson use the movements’ documents, leaflets, financial reports, manifests, press releases, and media interviews headmen. Almost all sources of knowledge listed here are a product of intentional constructions to convince people and to propagate ideology. Therefore, the data appears insufficient to make those claims indicating a distinction between modernists and non-modernists.

The book does a good job to uncover “the other side of the coin.” It is useful for students of political sociology, especially the social movements theory, for it shows how religiously orthodox logic is capable of widening the spheres of organizations. Furthermore, no doubt such study focusing on social facets of religious movements would help break down the Eurocentric and security-based explanations.