Chapter 177
Are High Levels of Existential Security Conducive to Secularization? A Response to Our Critics

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart

177.1 Introduction

During recent decades, religion became increasingly prominent in politics around the world. The persistence of church-going in the United States, the growing importance of liberation theology in Latin America, and the resurgence of identity politics in the Balkans—all suggest that religion remains a potent force in contemporary politics. These observations were reinforced by the events of 9/11 in the United States, growing European tensions over religious identities, and sporadic outbursts of violent conflict dividing faith-based communities in Nigeria, Sudan, and India (Klausen 2009).

What links these disparate events? One popular assumption is that they reflect a new worldwide religious revival (Berger 1999: Thomas 2005). Hence Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (2000) claim that it is time to bury the secularization thesis: *"After nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophesies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories, and there to whisper 'requiescat in pace.'*" But Sacred and Secular (Norris and Inglehart 2004) presented a theory of existential security, backed by empirical evidence from scores of societies, demonstrating a more complex picture; religious values remain strong in many developing societies, which also have rapidly growing populations, yet secularization is occurring in most advanced industrial

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societies. The erosion of church attendance, religious values, and beliefs has been most clearly established in Scandinavia and Western Europe (Aarts et al. 2008). But this development is not simply confined to this region, as similar developments are evident in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and Canada; even in the U.S., there has been a trend toward secularization, partly masked by large scale immigration of people with traditional worldviews. Norris and Inglehart (2004) argued that *existential security* explained these divergent trends. This account emphasizes that the public's *demand* for transcendent religion varies systematically with levels of vulnerabilities to societal and personal risks and threats.

Nevertheless, with the evidence available at the time, *Sacred and Secular* was unable to address certain important issues. In particular, critics have argued that despite the wealth of indirect cross-national macro-level indicators, Norris and Inglehart did not establish a *direct* individual-level link between religiosity and either perceptual or experiential measures of existential insecurity. In addition, commentators have also often pointed to the apparent anomaly of the U.S., as one of the world's richest nation which, nevertheless, has relatively high levels of religious participation and values. Accordingly this chapter seeks to address these issues. *Part II* of this chapter summarizes the theory of existential security and reviews what we know about this from the previous research literature. *Part III* summarizes the data sources and methods used in this study. We draw upon new evidence concerning from the 2005–2007 World Values Survey conducted in 55 nations, as well as from the 2007 Gallup World Poll conducted in 132 nations. *Part IV* presents the results of the analysis examining the impact of experiential security on religiosity, utilizing the Gallup Lived Poverty index. Building upon this foundation, *Part V* pays particular attention to perceptual or subjective measures of security and risk, from the 5th wave WVS. The conclusion in *Part VI* suggests that the dynamics of secularization is much more complex than the simple decline of religion proposed by some early theories, or a universal revival of religion worldwide, as suggested by many contemporary commentators. Instead, as we will demonstrate, rising existential security brings declining emphasis on religion in many postindustrial societies worldwide, and thus a growing religiosity gap worldwide.

177.2 The Theory of Existential Security

One of the most popular contemporary approaches to explaining the strength of religiosity in any society draws upon rational choice theories which emphasize the 'supply-side' of religious markets (Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 1987; Finke and Stark 1992; Finke and Iannaccone 1993; Warner 1993; Stark and Finke 2000). These accounts posit that religious institutions can be regarded as equivalent to firms competing in the economic marketplace. Mass religious participation depends in this view upon the degree of pluralist competition among diverse religious organizations. This process actively recruits members of mass congregations, at least in types of faith based on communal forms of worship. Hence the strength of religiosity in the United States is explained by the rich diversity of churches, sects, temples, synagogues and mosques actively striving to attract members.

Yet this approach assumes that the mass demand for religion is constant. To develop an alternative perspective, *Sacred and Secular* developed a revised version of secularization theory that emphasizes variations in the "demand-side" of the equation. Norris and Inglehart (2004: 5–6) argued, in particular:

1. The publics of virtually all advanced industrial societies have been moving toward more secular orientations during the past 50 years. Nevertheless,
2. The world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before—and they constitute a growing proportion of the world's population.

Though these two propositions may initially seem contradictory, they are not. As we will show, the fact that the first proposition is true helps account for the second—because secularization and human development have a powerful negative impact on human fertility rates.

The book theorized that transcendent religion is usually weakened by a sense of existential security—that is, the feeling that survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted. We argue that feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal and personal risks are a key factor directly driving religiosity and we demonstrate that the process of secularization—understood as a systematic erosion of religious values and practices—has occurred most clearly among the most prosperous social sectors living in affluent and secure post-industrial nations. By "values" we mean the importance of religiosity in people's everyday lives. By "practices," we mean the common rituals which express religious values in different faiths, such as prayer and attendance at churches, synagogues, mosques and temples. The term "secularization" can refer to many developments. In this regard, we do not examine other forms of secularization (Casanova 1994), such as any decline in the authority of religious leaders and ecclesiastical institutions in social life and the public sphere.

As illustrated schematically in Fig. 177.1, our parsimonious model assumes a simple sequential pathway where human development and societal modernization gradually reduces exposure to both socio-tropic (societal) and ego-tropic (personal) risks. In turn, this process diminishes anxiety and stress, promoting feelings of psychological well-being and existential security. And in turn, this process usually reduces the central importance of religion in people's lives. The first steps in this model are widely established; inhabitants in poor nations often remain highly susceptible to unpredictable socio-tropic risks, exemplified by subsistence farmers

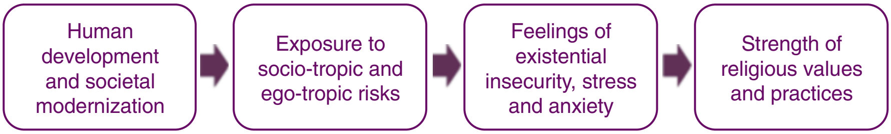
Human development and societal modernization
Exposure to socio-tropic and ego-tropic risks
Feelings of existential insecurity, stress and anxiety
Strength of religious values and practices

Fig. 177.1 Model of existential security and religiosity (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart)

facing sudden disasters from drought or flood, disease or landslides, crop failure or weather-related emergencies. Poor nations have limited access to the basic conditions of survival, including the provision of uncontaminated water and adequate food, access to effective public services offering basic healthcare, literacy, and schooling, and an adequate income. These societies also often have weak defense against external invasion, threats of internal coup d'état, and, in extreme cases, state failure. The final link in the model remains controversial, however we reason that virtually all of the world's major transcendent religions provide reassurance that, even though the individual alone cannot understand or predict what lies ahead, a higher power will ensure that things work out. This belief reduces stress, enabling people to shut out anxiety and focus on coping with their immediate problems. Without such a belief system, extreme stress tends to produce withdrawal reactions. Under conditions of insecurity, people have a powerful need to see authority as both strong and benevolent—even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

Through strengthening feelings of security, the processes of human development and societal modernization therefore have significant consequences for religiosity; as societies transition from agrarian to industrial economies, and then develop into postindustrial societies, the conditions of growing security that usually accompany this process commonly reduces the importance of religious values. The main reason, we believe, is that the need for religious reassurance becomes less pressing under conditions of greater security. These effects operate at both societal-level (socio-tropic) and at personal level (ego-tropic), although we suspect that the former is more important. Greater protection and control, longevity and health found in postindustrial nations mean that fewer people in these societies regard traditional spiritual values, beliefs and practices as vital to their lives, or to the lives of their community. This does not imply that all forms of transcendent religion necessarily disappear as societies develop; residual and symbolic elements often remain, such as formal adherence to religious identities and beliefs, even when their substantive meaning has faded away. But we expect that people living in secure advanced industrial societies tend to become less obedient to traditional religious leaders and institutions, and become less willing to engage in conventional religious practices. Contrary to the religious markets school, we, therefore, assume that the 'demand' for spirituality is far from constant; instead striking variations are evident due to experience of the basic living conditions common in rich and poor nations.

We can draw a further distinction in Western societies between transcendent religions and post-Christian forms of spirituality (Silver 2006). *Transcendent* religions acknowledge some supernatural forces or other-worldly powers, and emphasize belief in the existence of an afterlife or reincarnation. The way that faith provides reassurance against life-threatening risks is expected to be particularly important for these forms of religion. A wide range of post-Christian "New Age" alternative beliefs and practices, which have become popular in Western societies, promise spiritual or material improvement in this world, such as yoga, astrology, healing rituals, channeling, and self-awareness meditation (Pike 2006; Houtman and Aupers 2007). Theoretically these diverse forms of spirituality may also serve as a way to alleviate stress and anxiety arising from worldly suffering (Silver 2006). We suspect that similar orientations may lie behind both, although this chapter will not attempt to confirm whether motivations for transcendent religiosity and post-Christian forms of spirituality are indeed similar.

177.2.1 Previous Empirical Studies

What evidence from previous studies in the empirical literature helps to evaluate the existential security theory? *Sacred and Secular* presented a wide range of data drawn in particular from the first four waves of the World Values Survey 1981–2001. The analysis of the evidence demonstrated that the importance of religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks. Yet in the original study much of the macro-level evidence demonstrating the links between existential security and religiosity was indirect, such as the significant correlations consistently linking objective macro-level indices of human development, societal modernization and economic inequality with the strength of religious values and practices in any society (see, for example, *Sacred and Secular, 2004,* Table 3.2).

Secondary evidence for the security thesis is also available from a wide range of studies published in social psychology, health care, and welfare studies which have demonstrated the final step in the model, confirming that religiosity helps individuals cope with stress and anxiety arising from uncontrollable life events. One thorough review of this literature by Pargament (1997) found that three-quarters of all empirical studies based on survey and experimental methods reported that religion usually serves to reduce life stresses, at least partially. Another meta-analysis comparing almost fifty published research studies concluded that people often turn to religion when coping with stressful events, such as severe ill-health and death, and this coping strategy proves effective in reducing anxiety and psychological well-being (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005). At the same time despite the wealth of empirical studies, most previous psychological research has examined religiosity within predominately Roman Catholic and Protestant communities, notably in the United States. Yet any effects may well prove situational; at the most extreme, for example, tensions among bitterly divided religious communities in countries emerging from deep-rooted conflict may be expected to exacerbate anxiety and stress (Pargament 2002). Although religious ties may bond adherents together within ethnic communities, such as the Bangladesh and Hindu communities in Manchester and Bradford, nevertheless, minorities often experience discrimination and prejudice in society at large. The effects of religion on psychological well-being may also vary by type of faith (Pargament 1997). Further systematic cross-national evidence is, therefore, needed to sort out whether competing claims for the effects of religiosity on psychological well-being hold in many different societal contexts, and across diverse social risks and types of religion.

Sociologists and economists have also reported similar research findings. Hence comparative survey research by Ruiter and van Tubergen (2009) used multilevel analysis to examine contextual and individual factors contributing towards religious attendance in 60 countries. The study concluded that religious attendance is strongly affected by personal and societal insecurities; in particular, financial insecurities at individual level (measured by household income and unemployment status) are associated with greater religious attendance. Another study by Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) examined the link between macro-level welfare state spending and religious attendance in almost two dozen nations, confirming a strong relationship, even after controlling for per capita GDP. The research concluded that the most secure European welfare states with well-developed social safety-nets, exemplified by Scandinavian societies, tend to have the emptiest churches.

177.3 Evidence and Measures

Therefore a growing body of literature, drawing upon diverse disciplines, methods and approaches, has generated a large body of findings which are consistent with the existential security thesis. This lends further confidence in the core claims but, nevertheless, further work is needed to persuade doubters. In particular, this chapter will demonstrate more precisely the way that both attitudes towards existential security, and the experience of lived poverty, encourage faith in transcendent religiosity—and thus the search for security and reassurance in the after-life.

177.3.1 Measuring Religiosity

Fortunately both the 2005 wave of the World Values Survey (WVS), as well as the 2007 Gallup World Poll (GWP), contain suitable indicators of religiosity and security, allowing us to investigate these questions with individual-level evidence about cultural values in many different societies around the globe. The use of two independent surveys also strengthens replicability—and thus tests the robustness of the findings—as well as expanding the cross-national comparative framework.

The longest time-series coverage is available from the pooled World Values Survey/European Values Survey (WVS), a global investigation of socio-cultural and political change conducted in five waves from 1981 to 2007. This project has carried out representative national surveys of the basic values and beliefs of the publics in more than 90 independent countries, containing over 88 of the world's population and covering all six inhabited continents. It builds on the European Values Survey, first carried out in 22 countries in 1981. A second wave of surveys was completed in 43 countries 1990–1991. A third wave was carried out in 55 nations in 1995–1996, and a fourth wave, in 59 countries, took place in 1999–2001. The fifth wave covering 55 countries was conducted in 2005–2007.[1]

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[1] Full methodological details about the World Values Surveys, including the questionnaires, sampling procedures, fieldwork procedures, principle investigators, and organization can be found at: www.worldvaluessurvey.com

The heart of our theory relates to religious *values*, understood as general motivational goals which transcend specific situations and which can be ordered in their relative importance. These are measured in the WVS survey by the importance of religion in people's lives, as monitored by the question: *"How important is God in your life?"* where responses use a scale ranging from not important (0) to very important (10).[2] The primary indicator of religious *practices* analyzed in this study is measured by the standard behavioral question that is widely used in the literature: *"Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, how often do you attend religious services?"* Responses in the World Values Survey ranged on a 7-point scale from "*never"* (scored 1) to "*more than once a week"* (scored 7). Based on this item, "*regular"* religious participation is understood to denote at least weekly attendance (that is, combining either "once a week" or "more than once a week").

The 2007 Gallup World Poll also provides data on living standards, social deprivation, exposure to societal risks, and religiosity among the publics living in 132 societies worldwide.[3] The GWP survey is conducted using probability-based nationally-representative samples among at least 1,000 respondents of the adult population in each country, using a standard set of core questions. The total sample included 142,671 respondents. In developing societies, Gallup use face-to-face interviews, and they employ telephone interviews in countries where telephone coverage reaches 80 % of the population. Two items contained in the Gallup World Poll are most useful to gauge religiosity. Hence religious values are monitored by: *"Is religion an important part of your daily life?"* (measured as a dichotomous 'yes/no' response). Since this does not refer to any specific concept, meaning, or definition of "religion," or to any particular practices and beliefs, this item is the most suitable for cross-faith comparisons. In addition, religious practices are monitored by Gallup: *"Have you attended a place of worship or religious service within the last seven days?"* (also measured as a dichotomous "yes/no" response). This is the conventional measure of religious participation used in studies of religions involving communal forms of worship in churches, temples, synagogues and mosques, although it is less useful when comparing types of faith which do not follow these collective practices, such as Confucian and Shinto religions.

177.4 Experiential Security and Religiosity

To go further, we need to clarify and operationalize the core concept of "existential security" needs. *Sacred and Secular* compared the impact of objective developmental indices, such as those concerning health and wealth, but these are relatively blunt and imprecise instruments of human security (Silver 2006). It could be argued that many social changes are associated with societal modernization—including growing individualism, and the expanded cognitive skills associated with the spread of education—which could provide alternative explanations to account for the decline of religious values and practices observed in post-industrial societies. Even at the individual level, levels of income are only proxy measures for personal feelings of security; low income households with close support networks from extended families and the local community may have informal means of coping with humanitarian catastrophes and personal risks which are unavailable to more affluent but isolated individuals. As the conclusion of *Sacred and Secular* acknowledged, psychological perceptions of risk and insecurity needed further analysis as the intermediary variables (see Fig. 177.1).

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[2] To test whether this is item suitable for use in non-monotheistic societies, we examined its national-level correlations with responses to the question, "How important is religion in your society?" which does not refer to God. The two tap essentially the same dimension, correlating at .92. Because the question about the importance of God has a longer time series, we use it here.

[3] More details about the methodology, fieldwork and sampling practices, and questionnaire can be found at https://www.gallup.com

Yet the empirical challenges of operationalizing the concept of existential security remain challenging, especially for cross-national research. The core notion is complex, relating to multiple forms of vulnerability, whether arising from extreme poverty, hunger, disease, armed conflict, criminal violence, environmental degradation, state repression, natural disasters, or many other causes (UNDP 1994; King and Murray 2001; Newman 2010). The threat of extreme poverty, ill-health and malnourishment are most severe and widespread in the world's poorest societies. This is most commonly measured by the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), combining life expectancy, income, and educational attainment.[4] Yet this index may fail to capture exposure to varied societal risks arising from natural or humanitarian disasters, and even affluent post-industrial societies are not immune from certain terrifying forms of insecurity, exemplified by the perceived or actual threat of terrorist violence (Kinnvall 2004). We use two distinct indices; the Gallup lived poverty index can be understood as a summary objective measure of experiential insecurity, while the WVS measures attitudes towards security and risk, which reflects more subjective notions of perceived security.

177.4.1 Experiential Security: The Lived Poverty Index

One way to operationalize the experience of insecurity is by monitoring vulnerability to multiple risks and forms of social deprivation. Since cash income is only a poor proxy, especially in subsistence economies, the Afro-Barometer pioneered the use of a Lived Poverty scale which measures how far people go without a range of basic necessities during the course of a year (Mattes 2008). To construct a similar objective scale, the Gallup World Poll contains eight items which ask respondents to report how far they have enough money to buy food or shelter in the previous year, how far they are satisfied with their standard of living and state of health, whether their home has basic facilities such as running water, electricity and a

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[4] UNDP. Human Development Reports. http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/hdi/

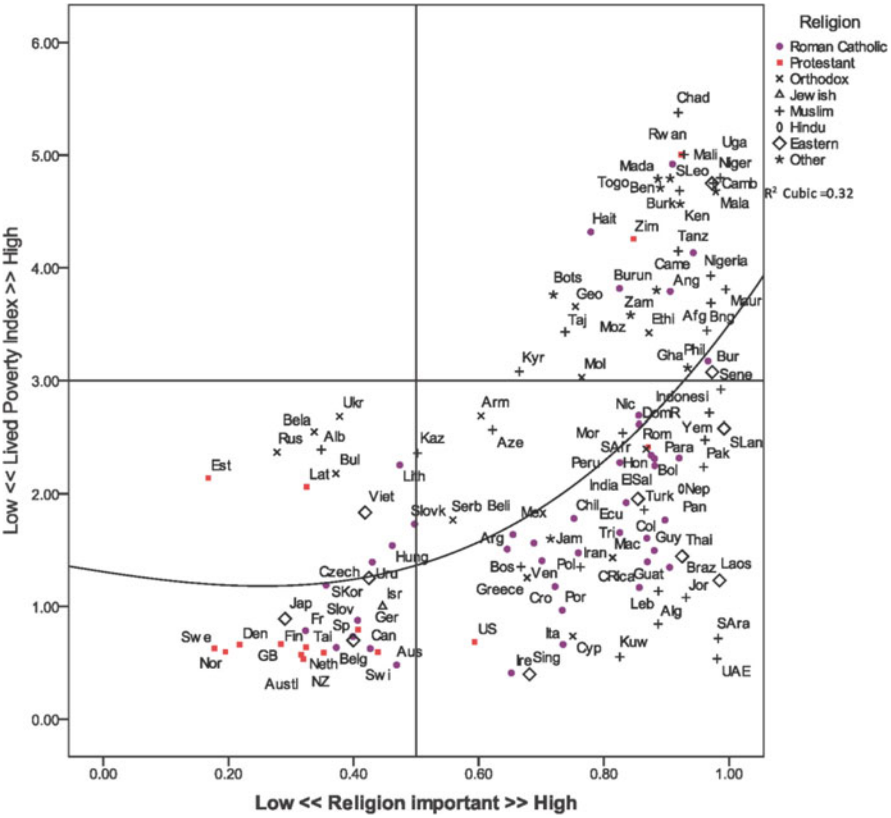

Fig. 177.2 Lived poverty and religious values (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, data from Gallup World Poll 2007)

landline telephone, and whether they have experienced health problems.[5] These multidimensional items were summed and these proved to form a consistent scale of Lived Poverty (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.70), thus demonstrating a high level of internal consistency. The index it is also strongly correlated at macro-level with both per capita GDP (in PPP) (Pearson R = 0.884, P = 000 N = 120) and the UNDP Human Development Index (R = 0.673 P = 000 N = 123), suggesting high levels of external validity.

The scatter-plots presented in Figs. 177.2 and 177.3 illustrate the macro-level relationship between the Lived Poverty index and the distribution of religious values and practices across the nations where complete data are available. The results

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[5] The Gallup Lived Poverty index is constructed from the following items: "Have there been times in the past 12 months when you did not have enough money… To buy food that you or your family needed? To provide adequate shelter or housing for you and your family?" "Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your standard of living?" "Home has no running water, no electricity and no landline telephone."

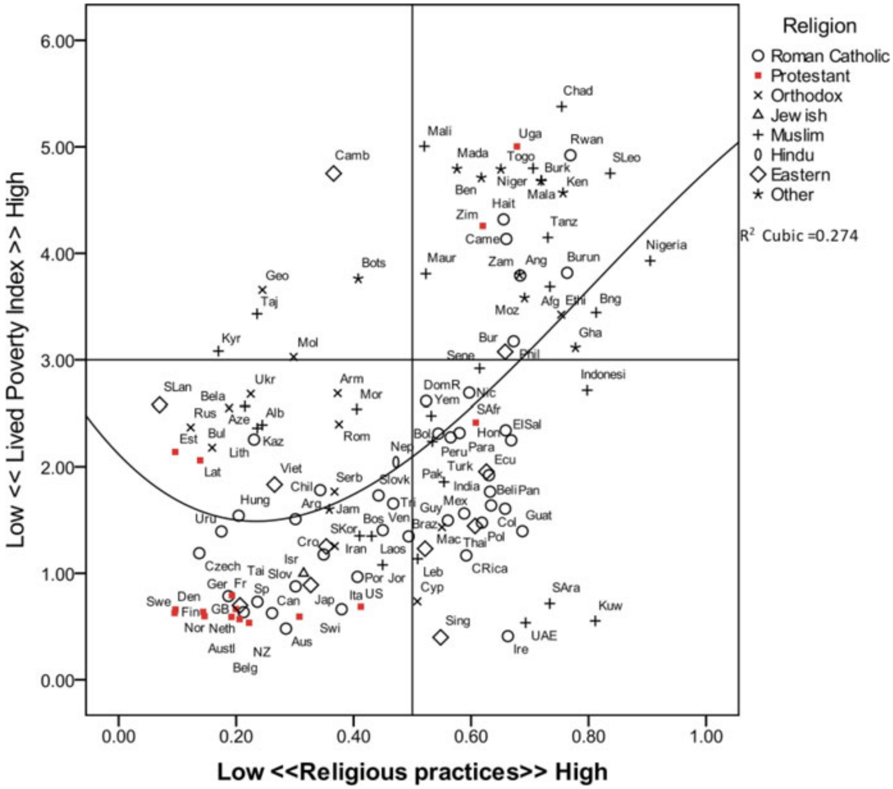

Fig. 177.3 Lived poverty and religious practices (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, data from Gallup World Poll 2007)

confirm that the Lived Poverty Index was strongly correlated with religious values (R = 0.541 P = 000 N = 128); hence some of the poorest developing societies, such as Chad, Rwanda and Mali gave the greatest priority to religious values, while, by contrast some of the most affluent post-industrial societies in the world, led by Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Britain, proved the most secular. At the same time, the cubic fit shows that there remain many moderate-income countries in the bottom right-hand quadrant with low levels of lived poverty which are also highly religious in their values, notably the oil-rich Gulf states and some other countries with predominately Muslim cultures.

The comparison with religious practices (see Fig. 177.2) shows a similar almost equally strong relationship; thus the lived poverty index proved to be a significant predictor of participation in religious services (R = 0.497, P = .000, N = 127). Again the least developed nations such as Chad and Rwanda clustered together in the top right-hand quadrant, being the most religious and the poorest, while Scandinavian and West European Protestant societies were the least engaged in church-attendance. But there was also a cluster of countries which were outliers to these general

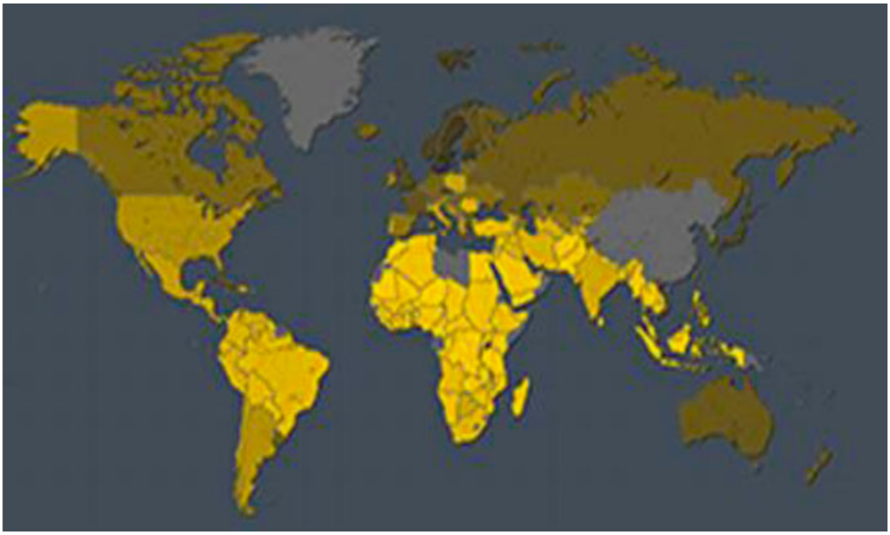

Fig. 177.4 The world map of religious values (*light color* indicates religious, *dark* nonreligious) (Map from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irreligion; Gallup World Poll 2007 data)

patterns; interestingly among the more affluent societies, although the U.S. is commonly regarded as a deviant case, it ranks high on religiosity in comparison with other rich countries, but much lower than most low-income societies. Religious market theory explains the relatively high levels of found in the U.S. in terms of religious pluralism—but, seen in a broader global perspective, the U.S. is considerably less religious than such countries as Ireland, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—all of which have minimal religious pluralism.

The geographic world map illustrated in Fig. 177.4 presents the comparison in an alternative way visually, showing the strength of religious values across the African continent, as well as in South East Asia and Latin America. By contrast post-industrial societies are uniformly secular, including Scandinavia, Western and post-Communist Europe, and Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Another way to examine the data is to consider the way in which both religious values and practices rise steadily across the Lived Poverty index, as shown in Fig. 177.5, where the trends show a remarkably uniform pattern. To make sense of these, they suggest that roughly nine out of ten people who lack the most basic necessities of life report that religion is an important part of their daily lives, but this proportion drops to just six out of ten people who have these basic needs met. Similar disparities can be observed for at least weekly religious participation, although behavioral indicators are always lower than the expression of religious values (see Fig. 177.5).

Moreover important debate continues to consider the reasons for the growing transatlantic rift dividing secular Western Europe from church-going Americans (Bellin 2008). One of the strongest challenge to secularization theory arises from

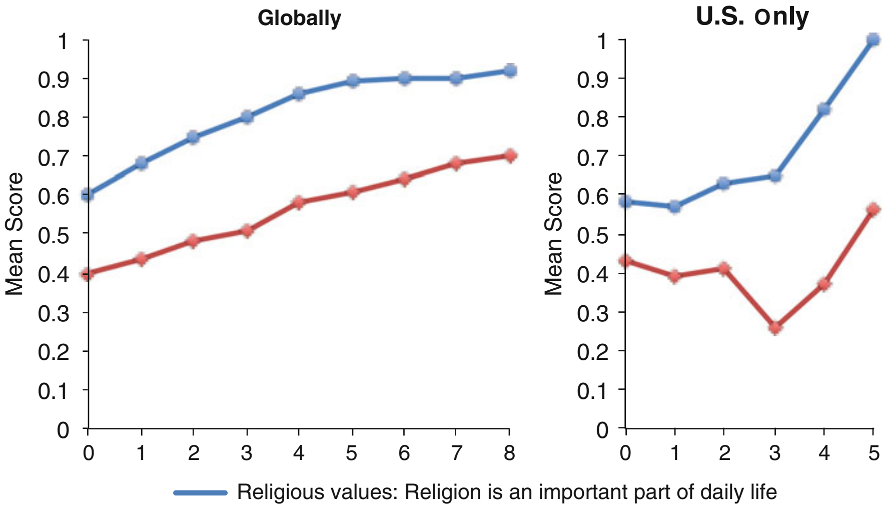

Fig. 177.5 Relationship between religious importance and poverty, globally and U.S. only (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, data from Gallup World Poll 2007)

observers who commonly point out that claims of steadily diminishing congregations in Western Europe are sharply at odds with American trends, at least until the early 1990s (Berger 1999; Greeley 2003). The theory of existential security is probabilistic, seeking to explain cross-national patterns and to predict long-term trajectories of societal value change, although inevitably there are both leaders and laggards in any social processes. Particular anomalies in survey results can be attributed to many well-established issues associated with measurement error—such as the equivalence and translation of cross-national survey questions, national differences of field-work and sampling practices, and levels of freedom of expression across diverse societies. Nevertheless, we do not believe that religiosity in the United States is an anomaly; there is far too much cumulative evidence documenting the contrasts between America and Western Europe. Among affluent post-industrial societies, the theory of existential security can provide insights to account for certain important outliers, notably the persistence of relatively strong religious participation in Italy and Ireland, as well as the United States. What matters for societal vulnerability, insecurity, and risk, that we believe drives religiosity, are not simply levels of national economic resources, but also their distribution. The growth of the welfare state in industrialized nations insures large segments of the public against the worst risks of ill health and old age, penury and destitution, while private insurance schemes, the work of nonprofit charitable foundations, and access to financial resources have transformed security in postindustrial nations and also reduced the vital role of religion in people's lives. Even relatively affluent nations have multiple pockets of long-term poverty and economic inequality. Populations typically most at risk in industrialized nations, capable of falling through the welfare safety-net, include the elderly and children, single-parent female-headed households, the long-term disabled, homeless and unemployed, and ethnic minorities. As Gill and Lundsgaarde (2004) demonstrate, cross-national patterns of welfare spending are significantly linked with religiosity. If feelings of vulnerability are driving religiosity, even in rich nations, then this should be evident by comparing levels of economic inequality and feelings of security within societies, for example to see whether religiosity is strongest among the poorer and least secure sectors of American society.

Figure 177.5 illustrates that the patterns already observed globally, where Lived Poverty helps to predict religious values and practices, also hold consistently in the United States quite well; far from an anomaly, the existential security thesis fits America as well. Hence, among the poorest segments of American society almost everyone reports that religion is important to their lives, but among the most affluent segment, only six out of ten do so. Patterns of church-going are less linear, but, nevertheless, the poorest group of Americans, according to the Lived Poverty Index, are also the most likely to fill the Sunday pews. Milanovic (2005) demonstrates that the U.S. has a remarkably skewed income distribution compared with most OECD countries. These sharp inequalities in American society help to explain its relatively high religiosity. Household income inequality, representing disposable income after taxes and transfers, is most simply compared by the Gini coefficient, ranging from 0 (the most equal) to 1.0 (the most unequal).[6] In the mid-2000s, for example, the OECD estimates that after taking account of taxes and transfers, the United States had a Gini coefficient of 0.38, (and 0.35 in both Italy and Ireland) compared with 0.23 for secular Sweden and Denmark, 0.27 for the Netherlands, and 0.28 for France.[7]

To subject these descriptive observations to more rigorous analysis, Table 177.1 presents the results of binary logistic regression models where the Lived Poverty Index is regressed on both religious values and practices (coded 0/1), controlling parsimoniously for some of the most common demographic characteristics which have commonly been found to predict religiosity, namely age and gender. Further controls for macro-level economic development (per capita GDP or HDI) and micro-level socioeconomic status were considered but rejected for inclusion due to issues of multicollinearity, since the aggregate factors and individual-level measures of education and income were strong correlated with the Lived Poverty index. The models were run both for all countries included in the Gallup World Poll, as well as just for the U.S., to see whether similar patterns held, as predicted, in the American case as well. It is well established that women tend to be more religious, and this is indeed what the results confirmed in the pooled model with all countries and concerning religious values (but not church-going) in just the U.S. case. We see this as a natural extension of the security thesis, since women

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[6] The Gini coefficient is based on equivalised household disposable income, after taxes and transfers. The Gini coefficient is defined as the area between the Lorenz curve (which plots cumulative shares of the population, from the poorest to the richest, against the cumulative share of income that they receive) and the 45° line, taken as a ratio of the whole triangle. The values of the Gini coefficient range between 0, in the case of "perfect equality" (i.e. each share of the population gets the same share of income), and 1, in the case of "perfect inequality" (i.e. all income goes to the individual with the highest income).

[7] OECD Stats Extracts. http://stats.oecd.org/. Accessed November 2010.

Table 177.1 Models predicting religious values and practices

		All nations		U.S. only	
	Individual level	Religious values (A)	Religious practices (B)	Religious values (A)	Religious practices (B)
Demographic controls	Age (in years)	−.005†	−.002†	.013†	.008*
		(.000)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
	Sex (male = 1)	−.308†	−.037†	−.561†	−.115
		(.013)	(.012)	(.120)	(.118)
Socioeconomic resources	Lived Poverty 8-pt index	.272†	.146†	.129*	.114*
		(.004)	(.001)	(.014)	(.059)
	Constant (intercept)	.708	.362	.115	.663
	Nagelkerke R^2	.078	.028	.048	.011
	Number of respondents	121,658	120,394	1,198	1,203
	Number of nations	120	120	1	1
Percentage correctly predicted:		71.2	57.3	59.2	59.4

Data source: Gallup World Poll 2007

Note: Models present the results of the binary logistic regression models predicting religious values and practices including the beta coefficient (the standard error shown in parenthesis), and the significance. *p = .05 and †p = .001. (A) Religious values: *"Is religion an important part of your daily life?"* (B) Religious participation: *"Have you attended a place of worship or religious service within the last seven days?"*

tend to be disproportionately vulnerable to problems of poverty arising from child-care, old age and lower wages, as well as other security threats arising for victims from violence. The age profile in the pooled model for all countries proved more unexpected, with older generations more religious by both indicators in America, although this appears to reverse in the pooled model, a pattern which requires further exploration. After controlling for these demographic characteristics, the Lived Poverty Index remained strong and statistically significant as a predictor of religious values and practices, in the pooled model for all countries as well as in just the American sample.

It could be argued, however, that the patterns observed so far are actually confined to Catholic and Protestant Christianity, as the form of religion characteristic of most post-industrial societies, rather than a consistent trend across all forms of religion (Silver 2006). To examine this issue further we can also break patterns down by the individual's religious faith, and those without any religious beliefs at all. As illustrated in Fig. 177.6, the results demonstrate that the Lived Poverty Index predicts religious values across nearly all categories, including Muslims as well as Catholics, Buddhists and Confucian/Taoists, as well as Protestants and those of Orthodox faith. Therefore, across many comparisons, using an independent Gallup World Poll survey to corroborate the findings in *Sacred and Secular* based on the first four waves of the WVS, and across multiple nations and types of faith

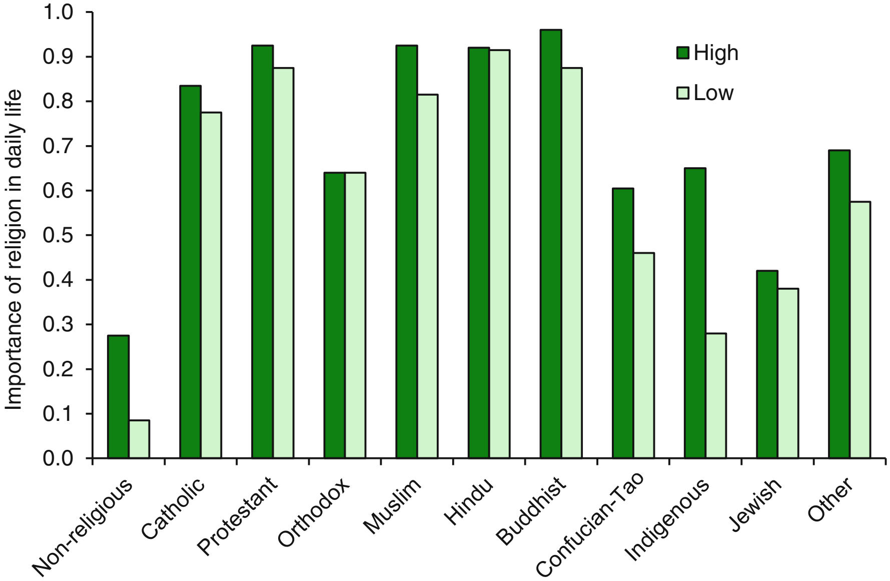


Fig. 177.6 Lived poverty and religious values by faith (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, data from Gallup World Poll 2007)

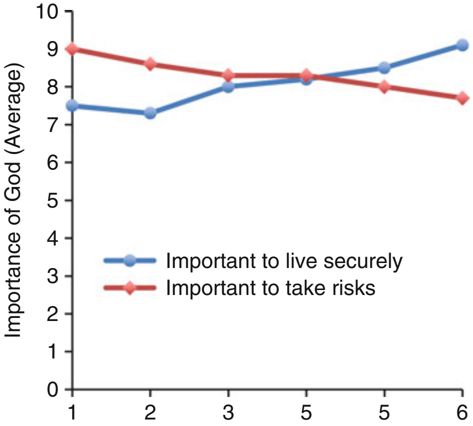
worldwide, the results prove consistent and robust; the most vulnerable populations in the world—who lack the basic necessities of life such as food, running water and electricity—are also far more likely to feel that religion is important to their lives, as well as engaging more fully in religious practices.

177.5 Perceptual Security: Attitudes Towards Security and Risk

Still it could be argued that notions of lived poverty, while closer to capturing many important dimensions of human vulnerability than cash income or wealth, still do not tap fully into more subjective or psychological orientations towards threats. Do people believe that they live in a predictable and safe environment, or do they feel that the world is often a dangerous place? To examine these issues, we can analyze perceptual security, monitored by attitudes towards security and risk. This was measured in the 2005–2007 wave of the World Values Survey as part of the Schwartz (2001) value scales. These used the following questions:

> Now I will briefly describe some people. Using this card, would you please indicate for each description whether that person is very much like you, like you, somewhat like you, not like you, or not at all like you? V82: Living in secure surroundings is important to this person; to avoid anything that might be dangerous. V86. Adventure and taking risks are important to this person; to have an exciting life.

Fig. 177.7 Relationship between religious importance and security/risk-taking (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, data from World Values Survey 2005–2007)



The results presented visually in Fig. 177.7 for the 55 nations included in this wave of the WVS show the remarkably linear relationship; religious values (monitored by the 10-point important of God scale) rise sharply with attitudes towards security values; those who give the greatest priority to living in secure surroundings and avoiding danger also regard religion as important to their lives. By contrast, those who feel that it is important to take risks and experience adventure are the least likely to see religion as important to themselves.

177.6 Conclusions and Implications

In recent decades public interest in religious differences around the world has grown tremendously, and the debate about secularization theory and its recent critiques has become increasingly relevant to contemporary concerns. The idea of secularization has a long and distinguished history in the social sciences with many seminal thinkers arguing that religiosity was declining throughout Western societies. Yet the precise reasons for this erosion of spirituality were never entirely clear. Weber attributed secularization to the spread of education and scientific knowledge; our own interpretation emphasizes the role of existential security. But by the mid-1960s the claim that religion was in a state of terminal decline rested upon flimsy evidence. Its proponents cited empirical evidence of declining churchgoing in Western Europe, and a handful of case studies that fit the thesis, rather than a systematic examination of empirical evidence from many countries (Hadden 1987).

It was not surprising, therefore, that during the last decade some American sociologists have mounted a sustained counterattack on the basic premises of secularization theory (Stark 1999; Stark and Finke 2000). This critique threw many former proponents on the defensive; Peter Berger recanted former claims, noting that many exceptions had accumulated that appeared to challenge the basic prophesies of Weber and Durkheim—pointing to the continuing vitality of the Christian Right in the United States, the evangelical revival in Latin America, the new freedom of religion in post-Communist Europe, the reported resurgence of Islam in the Middle East, or evidence that religious practices and beliefs continued to thrive throughout most of Africa and Asia (Berger 1999). Some of these reported phenomena may have been over-stated, but the simplistic assumption that religion was everywhere in decline, common in earlier decades, had become implausible to even the casual observer. Too many counter-examples existed around the world.

The religious market argument sought to reconstruct our thinking about the primary drivers in religious faith, turning attention away from long-term sociological trends in the mass public's demand for spiritual faith, and emphasizing instead institutional factors affecting the supply of religion, including the role of church leaders and organizations, and the role of the state in maintaining established religions or restrictions on freedom of worship for certain faiths (Warner 1993). The attempt to reconstruct the early twentieth century sociology of religion was long overdue, but the religious market theory was, we believe, fundamentally mistaken in trying to generalize from the distinctive American experience to the world as a whole. It is clear that the U.S. public remains far more religious than the publics of most other postindustrial societies, but we believe that this largely reflects other causes than those cited by religious market theory.

Early versions of modernization theory, from Marx to Weber, held that religious beliefs were dying out and would disappear with the spread of education and scientific knowledge. More recently, it has become apparent that religion continues to play a prominent role, leading to claims of a "Global Resurgence of Religion" (Thomas 2005). The truth lies between these two extremes. When examined in the global longitudinal perspective provided by the World Values Survey, it becomes evident that religion has indeed become more important in many countries—but it has continued to decline in many others. And one finds a clear pattern underlying these changes. As Fig. 177.8 demonstrates, in recent decades religion has become increasingly important in two types of countries: (1) developing countries and (2) ex-communist societies, where the collapse of communism has opened up an

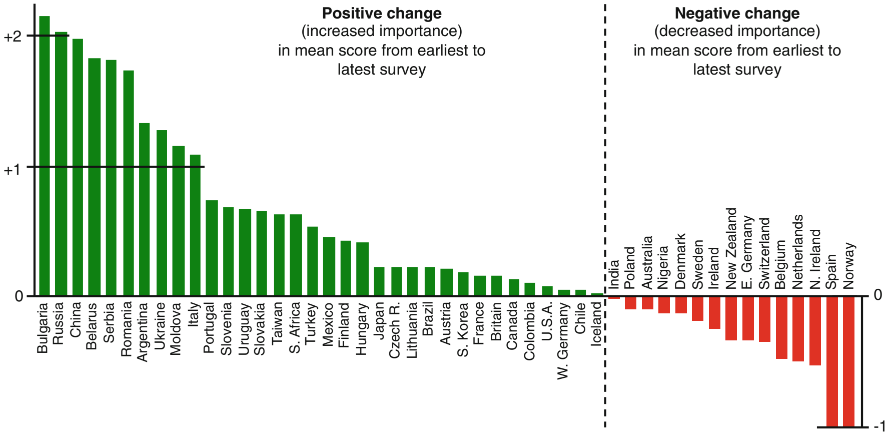


Fig. 177.8 Changes in level of religiosity from earliest to latest available survey, 1981–2007 (Source: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, data from World Values Surveys, 1981–2007)

ideological vacuum that is being filled, for many people, by increasing emphasis on religion. But this resurgence of religion is by no means universal. Among the publics of high income countries—who have grown up with high levels of existential security—the importance of religion is low and has continued to decline.

The results presented in this chapter serve to strengthen and further confirm the basic argument presented in *Sacred and Secular*, rather than modifying our initial ideas. The evidence has further demonstrated that, with rising levels of existential security, the publics of virtually all advanced industrial societies have been moving toward more secular orientations during at least the past 50 years. Earlier perceptions of this process gave rise to the mistaken assumption that religion was disappearing. "God is dead," proclaimed Nietzsche more than a century ago. A massive body of empirical evidence indicates that he was wrong. As a result of contrasting demographic trends in rich and poor countries, the world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before—and they constitute a growing proportion of the world's population. The social and political divisions between those with religious and secular values, beliefs and identities are thus growing – leading to some of the tensions observed today in contemporary Europe.

What are the broader implications of this thesis? One important issue is the growing salience of the gap between those adhering to sacred and secular values. While hardly novel, this gap has grown in prominence in many post-industrial societies due to patterns of population migration combined with the aftermath of 9/11. Migration patterns have been particularly evident in Western Europe, where diverse populations have moved in pursuit of economic opportunities and political freedoms. The OECD (2005) estimates that 70.5 million international migrants living in Europe represent almost one-tenth of the region's total population. These patterns are particularly evident in urban areas, such as the population of Turkish guest workers in Berlin, Bremen and Frankfurt; the Moroccan, Turk and Sudanese communities in Rotterdam; Franco-Maghrebis in Marseilles; and Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in the East End of London, Bradford, or Leicester. While some migrants come from relatively secular countries, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe, many other migrants are drawn from highly religious cultures in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Due to these developments, European countries which used to be relatively homogeneous in their cultural heritage, historical traditions, ethnic composition, language, lifestyles, and religious faith—such as Denmark, France, and Sweden—have become far more socially diverse today. The close proximity of residents drawn from highly secular and religious societies heightens the importance of these differences in many contemporary post-industrial societies, with important consequences for politics.

Another contemporary issue concerns the regime changes associated with the Arab uprisings which have rocked the foundations of deeply-entrenched autocracies throughout the Middle East, generating after-shocks rippling out as far as Beijing and Moscow. In Tunisia, President Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, replaced by an elected coalition government of the Islamist Ennahda and the left-wing Ettakatol parties. The Egyptian uprisings led to the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) victory in parliament, although government power remains with the military. In Yemen, President Ali Abdallah Saleh has agreed to stand down and the regime transition continues to unfold. Libya saw bloody civil war, the death of Gaddafi, and governance by the interim National Transitional Council. Seeking to prevent similar events in Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah unleashed Saudi security forces to repress Shia unrest. In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad uses even greater brutality, deploying mortar shells against civilians. For decades, authoritarian regimes in the Arab world had seemed immune from change, apparently impervious to the third wave of democratization sweeping the rest of the world, and untouched by the color revolutions in Eastern Europe. The uprisings caused seasoned observers to revise the standard perspectives in seeking to understand the causes—and forecast the consequences—of these developments. It remains too early to prognosticate upon their full implications, except to note that many predictions of democratic transitions were probably premature, and instead a process of regime change provides a more accurate way to conceptualize these events. The consequences for the balance of power among political parties will probably differ in each society; Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen differ sharply from each other, rather than providing a single model of regime change. Nevertheless it seems likely that the loosening of the grip of the old autocracies will probably facilitate the mobilization of religious forces in these states, generating new tensions between more traditional and more liberal groups.

At the same time, despite these observations, it would be mistaken to conclude that religiosity is strengthening in secure post-industrial societies, or indeed that these long-term developments will necessarily lead to growing conflict. If security is the driver of secularization, as we believe, then expanding human security through enabling the capacity for sustainable development around the world, and economic equality within societies, is also the key to reducing tensions over religious values. There is no inevitable “clash” but instead the outcome of the heightened contrasts between religious and secular values depend on our capacity for managing more diverse societies.

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