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RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM
AND DEMOCRACY

1. *Introduction*

In the past three decades, religious fundamentalism has been a prominent phenomenon in international politics, playing an essential role in shaping the main events of the early 21st Century. However, this subject has not been studied thoroughly enough, particularly in its interactions with domestic democratic politics. This essay will try to contribute to the understanding of the subject, by giving an answer to three questions:

1. Does religious fundamentalism play a relevant role within democratic political systems?
2. Are there similarities among the political strategies of the different fundamentalist movements?
3. What impact did the movements have on their respective political systems in terms of public policies (and quality of democracy)?

First of all, the essay will briefly summarize the main theories developed in comparative literature about the interaction between religious fundamentalism and democratic politics. Later, it will analyze four different cases of religious fundamentalist movements acting within democratic regimes: the Christian right (CR) in the United States; the Hindu religious nationalist movement (*sangh parivar*) in

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India; the Jewish religious nationalist movement in Israel; and the Islamist movement in Turkey), comparing their political strategies and assessing their public policy outcomes.

2. *The State of the Art*

Up to date, political science has mostly neglected the study of fundamentalisms: thus, relatively few works deal with the subject, especially in comparative perspective.

The most comprehensive (and most commonly cited) definition of fundamentalism is the one worked out by the editors of the Fundamentalism Project (FP – carried out in the first half of the 1990s by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, with the participation of dozens of prominent scholars). This definition includes nine points: five related to the groups' ideology, and four related to their organization:

1) *Reactivity to the marginalization of religion*. Fundamentalist movements are "concerned first with the erosion of religion and its role in society", and they therefore protect "some religious content, some set of traditional cosmological beliefs and associated norms of conduct".[2]

2) *Selectivity*. Fundamentalism is not merely defensive of the tradition, but "selects and reshapes aspects" of it, that differentiate fundamentalist ideology from the religious mainstream.[3] Similarly, fundamentalists accept some sides of modernity (particularly its technological and organizational features), but refuse others (mainly the ideological underpinnings of modernity, such as relativism, secularism, and pluralism), some of which are singled out "for special attention, usually in the form of focused opposition".[4]

3) *Moral manicheism*. The fundamentalist worldview considers reality to be "uncompromisingly divided into light [...] and darkness [...]. The world outside the group is therefore contaminated, sinful, doomed; the world inside is a pure and redeemed 'remnant'".

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[2]   This and the following quotations are from Almond Gabriel A., Sivan Emmanuel and Appleby R. Scott, Fundamentalism: Genus and Species, in: *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Marty Martin E. and Appleby R. Scott (Eds.), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, pp. 399-424.

[3]   Robertson Roland, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, Sage, London/Newbury Park/Delhi, 1992, pp. 166-180; about the concept of "invention of tradition", see: Anderson Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London/New York, 1991; and Hobsbawm Eric J. and Ranger Terence (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

[4]   See Lawrence Bruce, *Defenders of God*, Taurus, London, 1989.

4) *Absolutism and inerrancy*. Fundamentalists share a belief in the inerrancy of their sacred texts, "or its analogues (e.g., papal infallibility, a privileged school of Islamic jurisprudence, etc.)"; with a recognizable approach to sacred sources, which opposes the hermeneutical methods.[5]

5) *Millennialism and messianism*. In their view, history has a miraculous culmination, when "the good will triumph over evil"; and "the end of days, preceded by trials and tribulations, will be ushered in by the Messiah, the Savior; the Hidden Imam".

6) *Elect, chosen membership*. The militants of the fundamentalist groups tend to consider their membership as "'elect', chosen, divinely called".

7) *Sharp boundaries*. The idea of a separation between the faithful and the sinful is widespread among fundamentalist movements, with the notion "of a dividing wall and other spatial metaphors". The separation can be physical, or "implemented through audiovisual boundaries, through a distinctive vocabulary, and through control over access to the media".

8) *Authoritarian organization*. Although membership is voluntary, with frequent trends towards equalitarianism, "the typical form of fundamentalism organization is charismatic, a leader-follower re-lationship". The tension between these two features makes movements sometimes fragile. Moreover, "since there can be no loyal opposition, there is a tendency toward fragmentation".[6]

9) *Behavioral requirements*. "The member's time, space, and activity are a group resource, not an individual one". In order to create "a powerful affective dimension, an imitative, conforming dimension", groups thus have "distinctive music, [...] rules for dress [...] drinking, sexuality, appropriate speech, and the discipline of children", with censorship of reading and audio-visual material.

This definition, although authoritative and accurate, is strongly sociologically-biased, and it is not suitable for research in the field of political science. Moreover, the authors seem to think about religious fundamentalisms as arrays of (more or less small) sects, and not as wider (and often well connected) movements engaged in the political field.

In the rest of the literature dealing with the subject, we can find analyses of the political strategies of religious fundamentalist movements mostly in single-case studies. For example, Gilles Kepel, in his book about the Egyptian Islamist movement, made a distinction between a top-down strategy (aiming at the conquest of power

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[5]   See Pace Enzo and Guolo Renzo, *I fondamentalismi*, Laterza, Roma/Bari, 2002.
[6]   See Eisenstadt Shmuel, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.

as a prerequisite to the islamization of society) and a bottom-up one (aiming at the islamization of society as a prerequisite to the conquest of power).[7]

In the comparative literature, it is mostly possible to find vague remarks about the role played by religious fundamentalist groups and movements in domestic politics, their strategies and their political outcomes. Chronologically, the first interesting analysis was probably Martin Riesebrodt's *Pious Passion*, which compares the Iranian Islamic fundamentalism and the American CR. Riesebrodt distinguishes between "world fleeing" fundamentalisms (in which "adherents seek to establish an ideal community by withdrawing from the world") and "world mastering" ones (seeking "to force their ideal of a just order onto the world"). According to the author, world mastering fundamentalisms can in turn be subdivided into: reformist (respecting political institutions and acting according to the rules in order to get satisfaction of their demands) and revolutionary (regarding political institutions and rules as illegitimate and aiming at shaping a different system through the conquest of power, not ruling out violent means).[8] The FP later widened this classification, listing four categories of fundamentalism: world conqueror, world transformer, world creator and world renouncer.[9]

The FP also provides a survey of the fundamentalists' political strategies, within democratic and non-democratic regimes. In authoritarian political systems, the analysis confirms Kepel's remarks about the Egyptian Islamist movement, singling out a top-down and a bottom-up strategy. However, the authors point out that in democratic regimes, because of the opportunities provided to the movements by free speech and civil rights, they usually prefer the bottom-up (and non violent) one. Moreover, according to the FP, fundamentalists' strategy is "designed first in order to create a 'defensive perimeter' and later as a mode of enlarging the hold over civil society, with the hope of achieving hegemony there".[10] This point of view is also shared by social movement theorists, who include fundamentalisms among social defense movements, aiming at "resisting change, reacting to the State's or market's intrusion on daily life, protecting the traditional social order threatened by modernization".[11] This perspective can be connected to

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[7]   Kepel Gilles, *Le prophète et pharaon : les mouvements islamistes dans l'Egypte contemporaine*, Découverte, Paris, 1984.

[8]   Riesebrodt Martin, *Pious Passion. The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran*, University of California Press, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1993.

[9]   Almond Gabriel A., Sivan Emmanuel and Appleby R. Scott, 'Explaining Fundamentalism', in Marty Martin and Appleby R. Scott, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. 425-444.

[10] Almond Gabriel A., Sivan Emmanuel and Appleby R. Scott, 'Politics, Ethnicity, and Fundamentalism', in Marty and Appleby, 1995, *op. cit.*, pp. 483-504: 486.

[11] Belligni Silvano, *Cinque idee di politica*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003, p. 283.

the fundamentalists' reactivity, which can be turned against a change in national identity (creating fundamentalist movements with a nationalist orientation), or against a governmental attempt to expand the public sphere (creating movements primarily concerned about the role of religion in society).[12]

According to the editors of the FP, fundamentalists are also prevented from behaving assertively in politics because they "are first and foremost men and women of religion rather than of government" and they have little political experience. Thus, they "find difficult to govern without resorting to the services of professional politicians and non-fundamentalist [*sic*] allies". This fact can lead to "the politics of compromise and the distillation of the fundamentalist socio-moral message".[13]

This point of view is not shared, however, by another contributor to the project, Rhys W. Williams, who believes in a much more active role of fundamentalists in politics. According to this author, "fundamentalists who actively engage public politics seldom approach it with modest, partial agendas. The attack on the distinction between the public and the private in social life is often explicit in fundamentalist programs for change. [...] For these reasons periods of large-scale fundamentalist activity coincide with periods of generalized political instability often leading to 'regime crises'".[14]

Such remarks available in literature do not provide a framework suitable for a politological analysis of the fundamentalist phenomenon. Therefore, a new model has to be created. First of all, perspectives analyzing fundamentalism at an individual level (such as the religious economy perspective) will be neglected, to adopt the point of view defined by Silvano Belligni's "collective identities paradigm". It is based on the premise that "political behavior cannot be understood in individual perspective, but has also (and most of all) to be interpreted as opposition between rival communities whose logics of action precede and transcend those of the individuals who are part of them". Fundamentalist identities correspond, on the other hand, to the five principles singled out by Belligni to define collective identities:

1. Reflexivity (individuals participating in them feel to be part of them)
2. Recognition (they recognize each other as similar)
3. Identification (they identify themselves with the group's purposes)

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12   Garvey John H., Introduction: Fundamentalism and Politics, in: *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Polities, Economies, and Militance*, Marty Martin and Appleby R. Scott (Eds.), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993, pp. 13-27: 20.

13   Marty Martin and Appleby R. Scott, Conclusion: Remaking the State: The Limits of the Fundamentalist Imagination, in Marty and Appleby, 1993, *op. cit.*, pp. 620-633.

14   Williams Rhys H., Movement Dynamics and Social Change: Transforming Fundamentalist Ideology and Organization, in: *Accounting for Fundamentalism: the Dynamic Character of Movements*, Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Eds.), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994, pp. 785-833: 802.

4. Communitarian unselfishness or devotion (they are willing to sacrifice their individual interests)

5. Expressive participation (they cooperate with other members, enjoying a symbolic fulfillment which opposes the free-rider logic)

Moreover, they correspond to a sixth principle, which defines political identities:

6. Opposition (the members are collectively opposed to other groups, that they perceive as rivals).[15]

More specifically, this research is based on the premise that the social movement theory represents the most useful theoretical tool to analyze fundamentalisms: particularly the political opportunity structure and the resource mobilization theories.

The first one, created by Peter Eisinger and systematized by Sydney Tarrow, analyzes the political context in which mobilization takes place, trying to ascertain the factors affecting mobilization and its success or failure. These factors can be stable features of a political system (such as the strength of the State and the degree of repression), but, most importantly, changing ones:

1. An increased access to power (according to Tocqueville's classical thesis)[16]

2. The instability of political alignments, particularly at the electoral level

3. The presence or absence of influential allies

4. Conflicts within and among elites (some parts of which can seize the role of "tribunes of the people" in order to gain power).[17]

The second perspective (created by John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald) is particularly useful because it shifts the focus from the reasons of a mobilization to the way it starts, develops, succeeds and fails, taking into account variables such as organization and availability of resources. A very useful tool in the analysis of fundamentalist movements is also the authors' distinction between "social movement" (a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society) and "social movement organization" (a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a counter movement and attempts to implement these goals).[18] This distinction allows us to avoid the

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[15] Belligni, op. cit., pp. 240-241.

[16] See De Tocqueville Alexis, L'ancien régime et la révolution, Michel Lévi Frères, Paris, 1866

[17] Tarrow Sidney, Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, pp. 86-89; Eisinger Peter K., The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities, The American Political Science Review, Vol. 67, No. 1, 1973, pp. 11-28.

[18] McCarthy John D. and Zald Mayer N., Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory, The American Journal of Sociology, Vol.

deception leading several authors to consider fundamentalisms as sets of small separate sects, neglecting the whole networks the latter form.

The definition of "fundamentalist movement" used in this research (which integrates the comparative literature on fundamentalism with the social movement's theories) is the following:

> A more or less coherent array of groups and organizations which, grounding its ideology on a selective re-interpretation of sacred texts, acts in the public sphere in order to make as suitable as possible to its worldview lifestyles, laws and institutions, taking a dialectic stance towards modernity and opposing other segments of society, identified as unyielding rivals.[19]

> *The potential cases suitable for this research were not many, not because relevant fundamentalist movements lack, but because they rarely operate within fully demo-cratic regimes. A further limitation has been the choice to take into account only re-ligions which are followed by the majority of the inhabitants of a country.[20] Among the remaining cases, it was decided to choose only one per every religion and every geographic region. Four cases have eventually been chosen: the US CR; India's Reli-gious Nationalist Movement (*sangh parivar*); Israel's Nationalist Religious Move-ment; and Turkey's Islamist Movement. The chronological starting point chosen for the analysis is the year 1980 (which can conventionally represent the moment in which all the movements entered the field of national politics with a degree of re-levance). The units of analysis are thus the single legislatures, began after that date and ended before this research was completed. Within every legislature of every case the research has analyzed the political opportunity structure the movement faced, its situation in terms of resource mobilization, and the outcomes obtained in terms of public policies (taking into account the demands put forward by the movement in that legislature).*

When available, first-hand sources have been used. Otherwise, the analysis has been based on studies and other documents already available about the cases.

82, No. 6, 1977, pp. 1212-1241.

[19] Ozzano Luca, Una prospettiva politologica sul fondamentalismo, *Teoria politica*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (2007), pp. 103-117.

[20] Movements representing majoritarian religions are usually, in fact, more relevant at the political level. Those which represent religious minorities are often excluded, either implicitly or explicitly, from major national politics.

3. *The Cases*

a. *United States*

The American CR (born as Protestant, but later widened to include also Catholics and other religious affiliations) is rooted in an ideology developed at the end of the 19th Century.[21] After a short-lived mobilization in the years preceding and following the First World War, the movement re-entered the public scene only in the 1970s.[22]

Its birth, although affected by the deep social and economic changes of the 1960s and 1970s, cannot be regarded as a purely reactive phenomenon. It is also a consequence of the rise of Evangelicalism (especially after the election of Jimmy Carter as President of the United States in 1976); and of the action of political entrepreneurs belonging to the 'new right' of the Republican Party, who, in the late 1970s, worked to involve well known preachers in politics.

The organization of the CR has always been polycentric and lacking tight coordination among its different souls and organizations. Some of these latter are all-around groups, concerned about all the main issues of the movement; some others are instead devoted to specific issues, such as abortion or education. In the 1980s, the CR was marked out by the preeminence of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, relying mostly on religious networks. In the 1990s, however, the Christian Coalition and other organizations developed an autonomous network of political activists, not based on religious congregations.[23] The movement has also become, in the latest years, more and more integrated in the Republican Party.

The first, massive, cycle of mobilization of the early 1980s was marked out by maximalism and aggressiveness (with a platform including first of all the opposition to abortion, gay rights, pornography, and the Equal Rights Amendment; and support to a more religiously oriented education). After some years of crisis due to scandals and lack of funds, the movement reorganized around Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, and experienced a second period of growth in the early 1990s, with softer attitudes, a more politically correct language, and a wider set of issues (including less

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[21]   Armstrong Karen, *The Battle for God*, Ballantine Books, New York, 2001.

[22]   Marsden George, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1980; Ammerman Nancy T., North American Protestant Fundamentalism, in Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, (Eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, pp. 1-65.

[23] Moen Matthew C., From Revolution to Evolution: The Changing Nature of the Christian Right, in: *The Rapture of Politics. The Christian Right as the United States Approach the year 2000*, Bruce Steve, Kivisto Peter and Swatos William H. (Eds.), Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick/London, 1995, pp. 123-135.

strictly religious themes, such as tax cuts for families). This new season of mobilization reached its peak in the years of the Clinton Presidency, when the movement was deeply involved in the attempt to impeach the President. After the failure of these efforts, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition's crisis and subsequent downsizing marked the end of this cycle.[24] In the years of the George W. Bush Jr. administration, the CR has entered a new phase, more difficult to understand and to define. Although, at the national level, the activity of the movement is no longer as manifest as it was in the previous two decades, its close connections to political power (first of all with the President and several members of his cabinet) are undeniable.[25] The social base of the movement is formed by Southern traditionalists, but also by middle class people scattered around the country.

The CR, in the minds of the New Right politicians, had to avoid political identification with one of the major parties (in 1976 they had even contacted Ronald Reagan, in the attempt to create a 'third party')[26] in order to get a greater leverage on American politics. However, soon it became clear (especially when the preachers became more experienced in political affairs and supplanted the new right politicians) that the liberally-oriented Democratic Party could not share much of the fundamentalist worldview. Thus, during the Ronald Reagan's administration, Republicans became the only point of reference of the CR in American politics. This identification is today very stable, even in cases when moderate republican candidates do not satisfy the CR's requirements.[27]

The outcomes got by the movement, however, are to date still poor: they include mostly administrative acts in the field of education and abortion. At the state and infra-state levels, militants have been able to obtain more radical laws and administrative provisions, which have often, however, been cancelled by the Supreme Court.

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[24] Watson Justin, *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition*, St. Martin Press, New York, 1997; Bendyna Mary E. and Wilcox Clyde, The Christian Right Old and New: A Comparison of the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition, in: *Sojourners in the Wilderness: the Christian Right in Comparative Perspective*, Smidt Corwin E. and Penning James M. (Eds.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 1997, pp. 41-56; Moen Matthew C., The Changing Nature of Christian Right Activism: 1970s-1990s, in Smidt and Penning (Eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 21-37; Rozell Mark J., Growing Up Politically: The New Politics of the Christian Right, in Smidt and Penning (Eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 235-248.

[25] Andolina Molly W. and Wilcox Clyde, Stealth Politics: Religious and Moral Issues in the 2000 Election, in: *Piety, Politics and Pluralism. Religion, the Courts, and the 2000 Election*, Segers Mary C. (Ed.), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2002, pp. 105-125; Rozell Mark J., The Christian Right in the 2000 GOP Campaign, in Segers (Ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 57-74; Cizik Richard, interviewed in *Frontline: he Jesus Factor*, 2004. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/cizik.html.

[26] Oldfield Duane Murray, *The Right and the Righteous. The Christian Right Confronts the Republican Party*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 1996, p. 116.

[27] Oldfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

b. India

The Hindu national religious movement, born in the first half of the 20th Century, is the result of a complicated process, started when India was under British rule (also because of this latter's impact on inter-communitarian coexistence in the subcontinent). After some attempts at religious reform in the late 19th Century,[28] the 1900s and the 1910s witnessed the rise of a religious nationalist movement, culminated in the creation of the *hindutva* ideology[29] and of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) organization in the 1920s. This group, based on local militias, grew up constantly in the following decades, creating several other organizations (as a whole, usually referred to as *sangh parivar*). Some of these have a clear fundamentalist orientation, as in the case of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, which directly involves Hindu holy men in politics (and is provided with a strong and often violent youth branch, the Bajrang Dal). The movement entered national politics between the 1970s and the 1980s: a turning point in this process was represented by the creation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980.[30]

The *sangh parivar*, a strong and well connected network of groups coordinated by the RSS men, went through a massive cycle of mobilization – centered around the issue of the *Babri Masjid*, an old mosque in Ayodhya reportedly build upon the foundations of an older Hindu temple – between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, and other minor ones. These do not appear as 'physiological' cycles: mobilization is mostly promoted by the major organizations, when it suits their strategic purposes.[31] Thus, especially in the political field, periods of virulent maximalism abruptly follow years of relative moderation. The issues mostly regard the hostility against Muslims and Christians, and are centered not only around holy places litigations, but also around the opposition to cow slaughter, religious conversions, and Muslim 'privileges' (such as the separate civil code, and the autonomy of the Jammu and Kashmir state).[32] Mobilization is often disruptive, with massive marches and pilgrimages which often lead to violent clashes with people

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[28] See Andersen Walter K. and Damle Shridhar D., *The Brotherhood in Saffron. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, Vistaar Publications, Delhi, 1987, pp. 10-11.

[29] The term *hindutva* was created by the Maharashtra Brahmin Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1925 with his book *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?*. This ideology regards as Hindu all those looking at India as their homeland, being of Indian breed, and belonging to the Indian cultures and civilizations. Therefore, it accepts Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs, but not Christians and Muslims.

[30] Jaffrelot Christophe, Introduction, in: *Sangh Parivar: A Reader*, Jaffrelot Christophe (Ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 1-22; Jaffrelot Christophe, The BJP at the Centre: A Central and Centrist Party?, in Jaffrelot (Ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 268-317.

[31] Jaffrelot Christophe, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics (1925 to the 1990s)* (London, Hurst & Co., 1996).

[32] Appaiah Parvathy, *Hindutva. Ideology and Politics*, Deep & Deep, New Delhi, 2003.

from religious minorities. [33] The social base of the *sangh parivar* is complex (also because of the heterogeneous social fabric of the country): the movement is strong in areas with strong religious minorities and a high level of inter-communitarian conflict; but also among middle class people and, in several parts of the country, outcasts.

In its early years of political activity, the movement tried to gather an opposition cartel of anti-Congress forces, creating the Janata Party. However, after experiencing the mistrust of most allies, the *sangh parivar* decided to go alone, creating its own party, the BJP. This party has since then always represented – with the exception of some local groups, such as the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra – the only point of reference for the movement. Its influence on Indian politics, although at first minimal, gradually widened, also thanks to the weakness of the ruling Congress Party and the openings to political Hinduism made by Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv. In 1996 and 1998, the BJP managed to win the general elections, creating coalition governments including RSS men in the main institutional posts. These years of government have not, however, satisfied most of the demands posed by the *hindutva* supporters (growing more and more restless, and igniting a new phase of strong mobilization peaked in the 2002 tragic Gujarat clashes). An exception is represented by the educational field, in which attempts at curricula and textbooks rewriting have been partially successful.[34]

c. *Israel*

The ideology[35] of the Jewish national religious movement in Israel was created in the early 20th Century by rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Kook, and later developed by his son Zvi Yehuda (spiritual guide of the movement until his death in 1982).[36] After the Six Days War (when the religious nationalist thesis gained more influence) its small group of followers grew to become a real movement, with the creation of Gush Emunim. The movement entered mainstream national politics after the electoral victory of Menachem Begin's Likud in 1977.

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[33] Sharma Harish, *Communal Angle in Indian Politics*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur/Delhi, 2000.

[34] Ghosh Partha S., *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism. From Periphery to Centre*, Manohar, Delhi, 1999; Nanda Meera, Postmodernism, Hindu nationalism and 'Vedic science', *Frontline*, Vol. 20, No. 26, 2004.

[35] This ideology (strongly contradicting the positions of Jewish orthodoxy, today represented in the Country by the so-called *haredim*) is rooted in the idea that Zionism, although a non-religious movement, was inspired by God. It regards the conquest of all the territories of the biblical Kingdom of Israel as prerequisite to ignite the process of messianic Redemption. See Ravitzky Aviezer, Religious Radicalism and Political Messianism in Israel, in *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, Sivan Emmanuel and Friedman Menachem (Eds.), State University of New York, Albany, 1990, pp. 11-37.

[36] See Ravitzky Aviezer, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 1996.

The movement's organization has considerably changed in time. While in its early years it was centered around Gush Emunim – and, later, also the Kach movement of rabbi Kahane – and rabbi Kook's spiritual authority was undisputed,[37] from the 1990s it became more and more fragmented. While its pragmatic faction was almost completely integrated into the settlers' institutions, the rest of it split into many pieces, each pursuing its own projects, and in many cases choosing explicitly violent activities.[38] The social base of the movement is formed first of all by a core of settlers dwelling in the occupied territories, but also by religious people living in other parts of the country, and poor people (not uncommonly recent immigrants in Israel) living in urban areas.

The Jewish religious nationalist movement has never gone through typical cycles of mobilization. On the one hand, it has always been marked out by a sort of permanent mobilization (defined "sacred vigilantism" by Ehud Sprinzak);[39] on the other, its activities have been deeply influenced by the emergence of phenomena such as the two Intifadas and the peace process. The main issues proposed by the movement are related to the occupied territories, which militants would like to make part of the State of Israel. They also contend the opening to Muslims of several holy places: first of all the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. They also work in order to expand privileges allowed to religious students, and to expand the role of religion in Israeli public life.[40] Their repertoire of mobilization has always been by nature disruptive, and often openly threatening and violent, with occasional acts of terrorism (such as those planned and carried out by Machteret, an offspring of Gush Emunim, in the early 1980s).[41]

In the political arena, the movement's choices have always been very volatile and diversified. Although its main point of reference traditionally was Mafdal (also known as National Religious Party),[42] its militants have created several (often short-lived) small parties such as Tekuma and Matzad (not to forget rabbi Kahane's Kach, banned in 1986 from the Knesset because of its explicit racism), while also penetrating into Likud. The movement has faced in the last three decades different kinds of political opportunity structures: partly because the situation was much more

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[37] Aran Gideon, The Father, the Son and the Holy Land; The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish-Zionist Fundamentalism in Israel, in: *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders in the Middle East*, Appleby R. Scott (Ed.), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 1997, pp. 294-327

[38] Guolo Renzo, *Terra e redenzione*, Guerini, Milano, 1997, pp.118-119.

[39] Sprinzak Ehud, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1991.

[40] Pedahzur Ami, The Downfall of the National Camp?, in: *Israel at the Polls 1999*, Elazar Daniel J. and Ben Mollov M. (Eds.), Frank Cass, London/Portland, 2001, pp. 37-54.

[41] Sprinzak, *op. cit.*.

[42] Guolo, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

favorable when the religious parties and the mainstream right were parts of the government, partly because the different sizes of the governments determined different blackmail potentials for the movement's allies.[43] While the situation was rather propitious when Likud held power (under Begin, Netanyahu and Sharon), it was much more neutral during the national unity governments, and hostile during the Labor-led governments of Rabin and Barak.

Mostly, the movement appears not to have been really influential on the political choices related to the territories and the other strategic issues its militants were concerned about, since even 'friendly' political leaders have often preferred *realpolitik* to maximalism. On the other hand, when they have acted as demanded by the national religious groups, they appeared to act that way because of strategic – and not religious – concerns. Many concessions were instead made regarding the settlements (often used by right wing governments to pursue their own policies in the territories); right to perform religious rituals in disputed holy places, and religious students' privileges.

d. *Turkey*

The Turkish Islamist movement is rooted in the experience of the Ottoman Caliphate (which distinguishes it from similar movements in Arab and Persian Countries). However, it developed only in the 20th Century, in the difficult situation created by the radical secularist reforms implemented by Mustafa Kemal's regime.[44] Only after the democratization of the 1950s, in fact, did some new opportunities emerge, allowing Necmettin Erbakan to form, at the end of the 1960s, the so-called *milli görüş* movement. This movement created, in the following decades, all the main Islamist parties active in the country, among which the Refah Party (which ruled Turkey between 1996 and 1997). The conservative pro-Islamic party AKP (ruling Turkey since 2002) also descends from this stem.[45]

The organization of the movement was, at first, dependent on the networks of the Sufi brotherhoods (*tarikat*); later, however, the *milli görüş* developed its own structures, creating a new grassroots network of political militants. This organization hegemonized the movement until the mid-1990s, although a division gradually emerged between Erbakan's old guard and a new, more moderate, faction (which was led by Abdullah Gül and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan). Since the tension between the two groups became intolerable in the second half of the 1990s, they separated, each

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[43]   See Sartori Giovanni, *Parties and Party Systems*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.

[44]   See Zarcone Thierry, *La Turquie Moderne et l'Islam,* Paris, Flammarion, 2004.

[45]   Yavuz M. Hakan, Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1997, pp. 63-82; Gülalp Haldun, Political Islam in Turkey: The Rise and Fall of the Refah Party, *The Muslim World,* Vol. 89, No. 1, 1999, pp. 22-41.

one creating its own party.[46] However, while Erbakan's SP can still be regarded as a fundamentalist party, the AKP is a much broader coalition, including also moderate and conservative forces. The social base of the movement is also quite heterogeneous, including not only traditionalists living in rural areas in the East, and poor people dwelling in the shantytowns around the major cities, but also middle class and educated people, and members of the new Islamic bourgeoisie and entrepreneurial class.[47]

The cycles of mobilization of the movement seem to be affected first of all by the different political opportunity structures, and the consequent degrees of repression. A massive cycle of mobilization occurred in the early 1990s (in the years of the rise of the Refah Party), while a new period of mobilization has begun in the 2000s, when the clash between the old secular elite and the AKP government has become harsher.

The issues are mostly related to the freedom of religious expression in the public sphere:[48] first of all the freedom for women to wear headscarves at universities and public offices (where all kinds of headscarves are banned by the law).[49] The Islamist movement is also active in the educational field, both promoting religious schools and demanding free access to the universities for students educated in them.[50] It also stigmatizes 'immoral' behaviors and practices, such as alcohol drinking and pornography, and in foreign policy it actively opposes Israel's territorial policies and supports the Palestinians. In the economic field, an initial protectionist stance has gradually been substituted (while more entrepreneurial forces entered the movement) by a more free-trade oriented (but always with a pro-welfare tendency). The repertoires of mobilization are strongly based on the creation of networks of relationship and on demonstrations, with occasional events of violence.

The movement has faced a wide range of political opportunity structures: the severe repression after the 1980 coup; the relatively positive situation under the Özal governments in the 1980s; the conquest of power after the electoral success of the Refah Party in the mid-1990s; the subsequent repression; and a new opening after the victory of the AKP in 2002. These variations have determined the choice of

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[46] Yavuz M. Hakan, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003; Atacan Fulya, Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2005, pp. 187-199.

[47] Yavuz M. Hakan, Introduction: The Role of the New Bourgeoisie in the Transformation of the Turkish Islamic Movement, in: *The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Party*, Yavuz M. Hakan (Ed.), The University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 2006, pp. 1-19.

[48] See Casanova Jose, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000.

[49] Özdalga Elizabeth, *The Veiling Issue, Official Secularism and Popular Islam in Modern Turkey*, Curzon, Richmond, 1998.

[50] Özdalga Elizabeth, Education in the Name of "Order and Progress": Reflections on the Recent Eight Year Obligatory School Reform in Turkey, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 89, No. 3-4, 1999, pp. 414-438.

different political strategies in different periods of time.[51] In the 1980s, when the *milli görüş* was in troubles, militants often supported Özal's ANAP (moderately pro-Islamic); after Özal's death, they gathered under the flag of Erbakan's Refah. When this latter was banned, there were some years of bewilderment, but the rise of the AKP made it the new representative of the movement (although Erbakan's SP still receives a small share of votes).

The movement outcomes are not particularly significant: although friendly governments have tried several times to change laws about secularism, they have always been prevented from fulfilling their purposes by the action of other institutions (the Constitutional Court and the Presidency) or by the pressures of the military.[52]

4. *Comparison of the cases*

The cases are evidently heterogeneous under several points of view, but they also show striking resemblances.

Among the features discriminating them from each other, we must first of all mention the organizational structure. Although all the movements analyzed are formed by a plurality of organizations, these latter are connected through different patterns. The most strictly interconnected movement is undoubtedly the Indian, whose parts are nearly all integrated in the so-called *sangh parivar* and coordinated by the RSS. The movement has been strictly interconnected for many years also in Turkey; and, although the cleavage between the extremist and the pragmatic faction partly undermined cohesion for some years, today most of the movement has gathered again under the AKP flag. In Israel the movement had a quite close texture between the 1970s and the 1980s, becoming however more and more fragmented in the following decades. In the United States, the movement has always been polycentric, not only because of the several leaders involved in it, but also because of its mixed congregational composition. Generally the different degrees of organizational interconnection of the different movements are reflected by the degree of cohesiveness of their leaderships. The social bases of the four movements are also heterogeneous, although in each case it is generally possible to find a mix of

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[51] The militants' electoral choices were also affected by the 10% threshold, which encourages strategic voting (rewarding the parties with more chances to enter the parliament). See Tachau Frank, *Turkish Political Parties and Elections: Half a Century of Multiparty Democracy*, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2000, pp. 128-148.

[52] Whose pro-secular influence has been institutionalized by the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) after the 1960 military coup, and further strengthened by the 1982 Constitution (after the 1980 coup). See Ünsaldi Levent, *Le Militaire et la Politique en Turquie*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005.

poor and middle class people (and in the cases with a high degree of inter-communitarian tension, also people living in disputed areas or refugees).

Considering the issues put forward by the movements, the differences are mostly apparent, and related to the contexts in which the movements act: indeed, they reveal two main trends. In the countries where strong religious minorities are perceived as 'enemies' by religious fundamentalists, the issues have a strong nationalist orientation; they are often related to disputed holy places, territorial litigations, and other specific problems (not uncommonly connected to the legal systems) which create conflict among the different communities. Where this 'threat' is absent (or unnoticed), the focus of the movements shifts towards their relations with the secular State, particularly about the role of religion in the public sphere; the most common concerns regard education, public morality and freedom of religious expression. The interest in foreign policy is, in both categories, rarely relevant, except in cases when the interest is driven by purely religious motives (for example, Israel is supported by the CR and hindered by Turkish Islamists, while Hindu militants strongly oppose Pakistan). The movements' stances in economy are instead mainly determined by the needs of their social bases and are usually not influenced by religious motives.

Closely connected to the kind of issues put forward by the different movements are the repertoires of mobilization that they adopt. While mobilization is more conflictual and often violent in movements with a nationalist orientation, it is usually more peaceful and inclined to negotiation and non-violent protest in the other cases (in which the occasional violent events are usually also connected to the relation with some kind of minority).

Cycles of mobilization are heterogeneous. Only the American case shows 'regular cycles', similar to those observed in other kinds of social movements.[53] In all the other cases, the mobilization intensity is affected by different factors: the changing political opportunity structure and the subsequent different degrees of repression (Turkey); the circumstances related to the inter-communitarian struggle (Israel); the strategies adopted for political purposes by the leadership of the movement (India).

However, several features are shared by the movements. First of all – according to Hanspeter Kriesi's model[54] – all the movements have followed similar institutionalisation trajectories. Although all the movements started as outsiders, they are today integrated in the social and political mainstream: their parties

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[53] See Tarrow, *op. Cit.*

[54] See Kriesi Hanspeter, Sviluppo organizzativo dei nuovi movimenti sociali e contesto politico, *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1993, pp. 67-117.

compete with secular ones, and some of their issues have been adopted by the non-fundamentalist right; also the public opinion is much more inclined to accept their ideas than it was some decades ago. Another general trend has been the increase of the services provided by the movements, and their economic activities (particularly in the educational field, and in the media).

The most striking resemblance among the movements is nevertheless represented by their political stances, which are regularly conservative, nationalist and (at least since the 1990s) mostly pro-free-trade. While at the present day the association of fundamentalism and political right seems to be taken for granted, it was not so until the 1960s (and part of the 1970s). At that time, for instance, the US southern conservatives mostly voted Democrat; the Israeli religious nationalists participated in the Labor-led governments; and most Indian religious nationalists voted for the Congress party. Today, the fundamentalists' right-wing orientation is so consolidated that they often prefer to vote for a secular right-wing politician rather than choosing a religiously oriented left-wing politician.

The political strategies of the movements are also, however, determined by the electoral systems adopted in the different Countries. In fact, where a majority system is in use, fundamentalists vote almost unanimously for the main right-wing party (which has been infiltrated by the movement in the USA, and utterly created by it in India). However, where a proportional system is adopted, the fundamentalist movements and their militants choose more mixed strategies, which include not only the infiltration of mainstream right-wing parties, but also the creation of smaller fundamentalist and extreme right parties. The subsequent fragmentation, very prominent in Israel, is however mitigated in Turkey by the 10% threshold, which encourages strategic voting.

Fundamentalist movements do not usually get majorities large enough to rule by themselves: they must therefore form (either inter-party or intra-party) alliances with nationalist and conservative parties which only share some of the fundamentalist issues. We can find examples of intra-party alliances in the US Republican Party, in the Indian BJP and in the Turkish AKP; examples of inter-party alliances were instead the Erbakan government in Turkey in the mid-1990s, the BJP-led governments ruling India from 1998 and 2004 and virtually all the right-wing Israeli governments (and also some national unity governments) since 1977. In such contexts, the political leaderships of the movements must pursue compromises which make their stances more pragmatic and moderate; in turn, the bases of the movements are often dissatisfied about the politicians' choices and, not uncommonly, tend to feel betrayed.

Wide coalitions probably determine another prominent similarity among movements: their limited results in terms of public policies. Having to reach for a compromise with their allies, fundamentalists rarely can get a parliamentary vote on the substantial issues they put forward; even more rarely, are their demands approved; and in the rare cases in which they are able to transform their proposals into laws, these are often annulled or vetoed by other institutional powers (such as constitutional courts and presidencies).

However, this does not always happen in local government bodies, where, under particular circumstances, fundamentalists can get wider majorities.

5. *Concluding remarks*

It is now possible to give an answer (although tentative, and needing further research) to the three questions put forward in the introduction of this paper. First of all, it is undeniable that all the movements analyzed have played a prominent role in their political systems. They have gained a significant share of power within right-wing parties; they have obtained high political offices both at the national and at the local level; and they have often been decisive in singling out the issues of the political debate and the political agenda.

Moving to the second question, the similarities among movements (see Table 1) are not relevant in terms of organizational structure, cohesiveness and leadership; but they are in terms of trajectories and, most of all, of political orientation. About the issues and the repertoires of mobilization, there are two trends: in the cases marked out by the presence of a significant ethno-religious minority (India and Israel), they are inclined towards nationalism and conflict; otherwise (United States and Turkey) they tend to be connected to the relation with the secular state (particularly about the role of religion in the public sphere) and to be supported mostly in peaceful ways.

As mentioned above, all the movements analyzed side with the conservative, nationalist and (at least since the 1990s) pro-free-trade right. Their political strategies appear instead to be mostly related to the electoral system adopted in their respective Countries. Where a majority system is in use, militants usually gather under the flag of a single party; in countries adopting a proportional system, movements are more politically fragmented (although high thresholds can mitigate this fragmentation).

These remarks allow us to sketch a model of the political choices of fun-damentalist movements (see Table 2), taking into account both their organizational and their ideological features. We can thus distinguish, on the one hand, between

movements which (usually in political systems marked out by majority electoral systems) act through a single political referent; and those which (in proportional systems) adopt more complex and less coherent strategies; on the other hand, between movements concerned first of all about the role of religion in the public sphere (and acting through mostly peaceful repertoires of mobilization), and those with an ethno-nationalist orientation (and inclined towards a more conflictual and often violent mobilization).

The last question was about the movements' impact on their respective political systems in terms of public policies (but also, more broadly, in terms of quality of democracy). All the movements analyzed have obtained limited outcomes: a surprising fact, if we take into account the role they got to play in politics and the favorable political opportunity structures they have often faced. This apparent contradiction can be explained through two observations. First of all, electors casting their vote only because of religious concerns are a minority (at least at the national level and in ordinary circumstances). In order to gain power, fundamentalist movements have thus to broaden the range of their issues (which waters down the role of the religious factor), and to make alliances with non-fundamentalist parties (or, in some cases, to include non-fundamentalist factions within their own parties). Consequently, when fundamentalist militants get to high offices, they are prevented from carrying out their plans by the problems connected to the preservation of the (often fragile) political and social coalitions they depend on. Moreover, in the rare cases in which they are able to sanction a 'fundamentalist' law, this latter is often annulled or repealed by other institutional powers (or, in some cases, changed by subsequent governments and political majorities).

We have thus to conclude that the inclusion of fundamentalist movements in democratic politics has no significant impact on political and social systems? Taking into account only the legislative output in connection to the issues put forward by the movements, the answer must be affirmative.

However, this cannot be regarded as a conclusive answer for two reasons (not to mention the obvious need for more research on the subject). First of all, this research was conducted on fully (or at least sufficiently) developed and articulated democracies, in which a decisive role in curbing the fundamentalist yearnings has been played by a solid and equilibrated institutional set up (balancing the movements' activity with counterpowers); and also by a developed civil society (activating countermovements).

Moreover, the action of the fundamentalist movements is evidently also devoted to long-term strategies and targets, both related to the attempts at changing the institutional and constitutional frameworks in which they act, and at

creating a different (more friendly to their vision) culture in the younger generations. These projects are pursued through the occupation of key ministries (such as Justice and Education), and the implementation of long-term programs including revision of schools textbooks and curricula, and support to religious schools and universities; as well as through, in other fields, significant activities related to media, culture and welfare.

The influence of fundamentalist movements could thus be much more trenchant; both in the future of the democracies analyzed in this research, and, also today, in less developed political systems.

Table 1 – Comparison of the cases

	United States	**India**	**Israel**	**Turkey**
Social base	Southern traditionalists, small and medium class people	People living in places with strong religious minorities, middle class people, outcasts	Settlers, poor inhabitants of the urban shantytowns	Rising entrepreneurial class, eastern traditionalists, inhabitants of the urban shantytowns
Trajectory (Kriesi's model)	Institutionalization	Institutionalization	Institutionalization and radicalization	Institutionalization
Movement organization	Polycentric	A plurality of organizations, strongly connected and coordinated	At first relatively united, later more and more fragmented	Segmented
Leadership	Fragmented, with some more prominent leaders	Relatively centralized, with a joint coordination	At first relatively united, later more and more fragmented	More or less centralized in different periods
Repertoire of mobilization	Conventional mobilization	Mobilization oriented towards conflict and violence	A wide spectrum of actions, from lobbying to violence	Oriented towards peacefully mobilization and demonstrations, with occasional events of violence
Cycles of mobilization	Regular	Mostly shaped by the leadership of the movement	Permanent mobilization, affected by circumstances related to inter-communal conflict	Determined by the strength of the repression
Political position	Conservative and nationalist right	Nationalist right	Nationalist right	Conservative and nationalist center-right, with some pro-welfare trends
Political strategy	Single-party	Basically single-party	Diversified and volatile	Diversified, but oriented towards strategic convergence of votes
Issues	Related to the role of religion in the public sphere, integrated in a wider set of issues	Mostly related to the ethno-nationalist conflict	Mostly related to the ethno-nationalist conflict	Related to the role of religion in the public sphere
Outcomes	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited

Table 2 – Typology of fundamentalist movements in democracy

	PRESENCE OF AN EXTERNAL ENEMY: ISSUES ORIENTED TOWARDS NATIONALISM AND STRONG INCLINATION TOWARDS CONFLICT	ABSENCE OF AN EXTERNAL ENEMY: PURELY RELIGIOUS ISSUES AND BASICALLY NON VIOLENT MOBILIZATION
MAJORITY ELECTORAL SYSTEM: POLITICAL UNITY	INDIA	UNITED STATES
PROPORTIONAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM: TENDENCY TOWARDS POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION	ISRAEL	TURKEY

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Abstract

Luca Ozzano

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND DEMOCRACY

This essay deals with religious fundamentalist movements engaged in democratic politics: a phenomenon still not thoroughly analyzed by comparative political science. First of all, it proposes a definition of religious fundamentalism which can be suitable for political science research (connecting the existing theories about fundamentalism to the literature about collective identities and social movements: particularly the political opportunity structure and resource mobilization models). Later, it takes into account four cases of religious fundamentalist movements in democratic regimes: the Christian right in the USA, the *sangh parivar* in India, the Jewish religious nationalist movement in Israel, and the Islamist movement in Turkey. In this section, the main features of the movements' mobilization and their political strategies are singled out. The work eventually tries to find out common patterns by comparing the different movements, their relationship with politics, and their impact on public policies. Particularly, it proposes a typology of fundamentalist movements in democracy, according to their political strategies and the ideological orientation of their issues.

Key words: Religious fundamentalism, Democracy, Christian Right, Sangh Parivar, Religious Zionism, *Milli görüş*

Резиме

Лука Озано

ВЕРСКИ ФУНДАМЕНТАЛИЗАМ И ДЕМОКРАТИЈА

Овај есеј разматра питање фундаменталних верских покрета који су активни у демократским политичким системима: феномен који упоредна политичка наука још увек није у потпуности размотрила. Пре свега, у овом есеју предложена је дефиниција верског фундаментализма која може бити од користи приликом истраживања у политичким наукама (ова дефиниција повезује постојеће теорије о фундаментализму са литературом која се бави групним идентитетом и друштвеним покретима: посебно <u>теоријом политичке могућности</u> и моделима теорије мобилизације ресурса). Потом, разматрају се четири примера покрета верског фундаментализма у демократским политичким системима: хришћанска десница у САД, *Санг паривар* у Индији, јеврејски верски националистички покрет у Израелу и исламистички покрет у Турској. У овом делу, издвојене су главне карактеристике покрета мобилизације и њихових политичких стратегија. На крају, покушали смо да пронађемо заједничке моделе упоређујући различите покрете, њихов однос са политиком и њихов утицај на државну политику. Посебно, овај рад предлаже једну типологију фундаменталних покрета у демократији, сходно њиховој политичкој стратегији и идеолошкој оријентацији.

Кључне речи: верски фундаментализам, демократија, хришћанска десница, *Санг паривар*, верски ционизам, *milli görüş*.