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The Three Religious Revivals. Pentecostal, Islamic, and Orthodox Upswings in the Context of Long-Term Secularization

Jörg Stolz | ORCID: 0000-0002-3849-7812
Professor, Institute for Social Sciences of Religions,
University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland
Corresponding Author
joerg.stolz@unil.ch

Maruša Novak | ORCID: 0009-0006-7231-1141
Graduate Assistant, Institute for Social Sciences of Religions,
University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland
marusa.novak@unil.ch

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Abstract

Secularization theory is often criticized by pointing to counterexamples where—apparently or really—revivals of religion have coincided with modernization. But secularization theorists have responded to such criticisms by arguing that secularization is compatible with temporary religious upswings. Recently, Stolz and Voas (2023) have proposed a typology, distinguishing 5 mechanisms: "crisis", "reaction", "transition", "state intervention", and "composition". This paper puts this typology to the test by examining the three most important religious revivals in the 20th and 21st century: the Pentecostal, the Islamic, and the Orthodox religious revival. We argue that all three revivals have led to strong increases in various indicators of religiosity, each of them built on a different combination of central mechanisms. While the Orthodox revival seems to have come to a standstill, the Pentecostal/Charismatic and Islamic revivals are ongoing.

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Keywords

religion – revival – Christianity – Islam – Orthodox – secularization theory – Pentecostal – Charismatic

1 Introduction

Secularization theory is often criticized by pointing to counterexamples where—apparently or really—revivals of religion have coincided with modernization (Casanova 1994, Müller 2020, Joas 2017 (2. Auflage)). Three of the most important revivals that may have created such counterexamples in the 20th and 21st century are the Pentecostal, the Muslim, and the Orthodox religious revivals (Roy 2006, Carvalho 2009, Alvarsson 2011, Anderson 2000, Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012, Voicu and Constantin 2012). At different times and in different geographic areas, they have led to increases in religious belief, practice, power, and infrastructure; the societal consequences have been immense.

In the light of such counterexamples, some critics argue that secularization theory should be reformulated as applying only to limited geographical areas (such as Europe) (Berger, Davie, and Fokas 2008); others think that secularization theory should simply be abandoned (Gauthier 2020).

But secularization theorists have responded to such criticisms by arguing that secularization is compatible with temporary religious upswings. Wallis and Bruce (1995) have claimed that religious revivals fall into two types and have to do either with "cultural defense" or "cultural transition". Kasselstrand/Zuckerman/Cragun (2023: 140) distinguish three types of revival: "cultural defense", "government restrictions/artificial religiosity", and "forced secularization/artificial secularization". Recently, Stolz and Voas (2023) have proposed a typology that encompasses and extends both previous typologies, distinguishing 5 types: "crisis", "reaction", "transition", "state intervention", and "composition".

Only proposing typologies, however, is not enough; one has to show that they are useful when applied to the counterexamples. The goal of this paper is therefore to present the three revivals and see how they can be interpreted in the light of the Stolz and Voas (2023) typology of revivals.

Our paper is conceptual rather than empirical. It contributes to the debate about secularization by showing whether and how long-term-secularization may be compatible with an explanation of the three most important religious revivals of the 20th century.

2 Theory

In its core, secularization theory claims that a multi-faceted modernization process will lead to secularization. All other specifications are contentious. There are many good accounts of the theory and we do not wish to repeat them here (Bruce 2011, Kasselstrand, Zuckerman, and Cragun 2023, Voas and Chaves 2016). It is, however, useful to briefly define our terms.[1]

Modernization can be defined as the process that leads societies to a greater level of complexity in at least three domains: technological, institutional, and cultural (Stolz and Tanner 2019, Ruiter and Tubergen 2010).[2] *Secularization* is the decline of the importance of religion on a societal, organizational and individual level (Dobbelaere 2002, Pollack and Rosta 2017, Stolz 2020).[3] *Religion* consists of social structures and individual practices and beliefs that are performed with the explicit or implicit goal of entering into contact and exchange with some form of transcendent or superhuman reality (often including superhuman agents such as gods or spirits) (Riesebrodt 2010). We define a *religious revival* (or resurgence) as an increase in the importance of religion on the individual, organizational, and societal levels in a given country or region. We use revival as a religiously neutral term regardless of whether the religion itself regards a phenomenon as a "revival". A *counterexample* to the theory of secularization is a country or region that is undergoing modernization but is not experiencing secularization or is instead experiencing a revival of religion.

Stolz and Voas (2023) propose the typology of mechanisms of religious persistence or revival depicted in Figure 1. Every one of the types points to a family of processes that we will briefly summarize.

(1) A religious revival is possible if a *societal crisis* is so deep that we may speak of a temporary "de-modernization" (Rabkin and Minakov 2018). In such cases, we should find one or a combination of several of the following

1 For reasons of internal consistency, this part of the paper is very similar to the definitions and concepts given in its companion paper Stolz and Voas (2023).

2 Technological modernization derives from scientific progress that results in innovations and technical know-how, creating a world increasingly made and controlled by human beings. Institutional modernization concerns the change of regulations and social organization leading to the differentiation of societal sub-spheres, democratization, and bureaucratization. Cultural modernization refers to a social evolution that accepts the ideas of the Enlightenment and a scientific vision of the world.

3 In our view, the most general way to formulate secularization theory is by pointing to a religious-secular competition argument (Stolz 2009, Voas 2008) on the basis of a general theory of social games (Stolz 2023). Since non-religious social games begin to provide efficient technical solutions to life problems that were formerly addressed by religious games, individuals tend to lose interest in religion. This leads to the secular transition.

phenomena: the de-differentiation of societal subsystems, a breakdown of the welfare state, an abandonment of democracy, a declining level of education and longevity, a steeply declining level of GDP/capita, a migration from urban to rural areas and a relapse to simple agrarian modes of production. It is also possible that societies show de-modernization in some areas but modernization in others. Major crises can destabilize material existence and ways of interpreting the world, leading to extreme inequalities and insecurities. In these situations, religious groups may provide a sense of security and help reintegrate people.

(2) A religious revival is possible as a *reaction* to a threat either from another group, from an elite, or some cultural change. In such a situation, religion may be used by the threatened actors as an identity resource to coordinate their fight against the perceived aggressor and to build up and defend a positive group identity. This strategy was called "cultural defence" by Wallis and Bruce (1995: 702).

(3) Religious revival may appear as a part of a *transition* when groups of individuals choose to adapt to societal change. In this case, it may be used not so much defensively as in the previous type but rather to legitimize new values and techniques of life and, in this way, smooth the transition. Furthermore, early modernization may have given religious groups new and powerful techniques to get their message across and find new members. This type of mechanism was labelled "cultural transition" by Wallis and Bruce (1995: 702).

(4) A religious resurgence is also possible as a result of *state intervention*. We can distinguish cases where state regulation supports, promotes, or even requires religious adherence from cases where the state removes obstacles to belief and practice. In the former case, a state lacking legitimacy will actively support religion as a legitimation resource to sustain political power, thus creating a "religious revival from above". Such a state may offer both legal advantages and financial resources to one or several religions close to the state, and it may at the same time suppress other religions (Fox 2015). In the latter case, a state removes suppressive regulation, thus allowing religion to rebound to a level consistent with expectations (Stark and Bainbridge 1989, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Negative sanctions on some or all religious groups can include administrative obstacles to religious activity, the spreading of negative information about leaders and/or members of religious groups, obstructing the careers of members or their children, or even interdictions on religious practice.

(5) A final type of mechanism regards *composition* effects. The revival is here not caused by a change in the behaviour and beliefs of individuals but rather by the fact that the composition of the population is changed either by migration or fertility and mortality. Migration may lead to religious revival

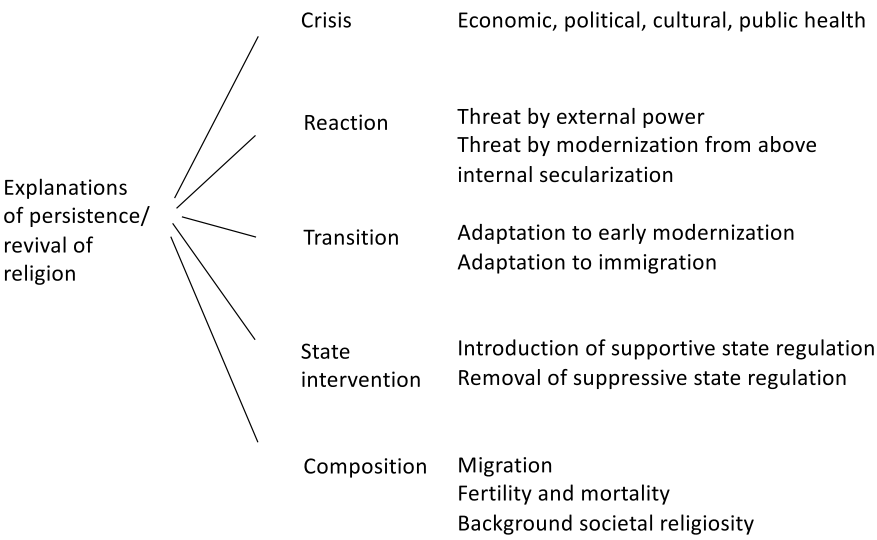

FIGURE 1 A typology of mechanisms of religious persistence or revival

through composition effects when there is immigration from more religious countries or when there is emigration of particularly secular individuals. A society or region may also become more religious when religious groups exhibit higher fertility and/or lower mortality rates than secular groups.

These types of mechanisms may appear alone or in combination to create empirical religious upswings. In what follows, our goal is to briefly describe the three revivals mentioned to see whether and to what extent our typology is able to classify their central mechanisms. Of course, these revivals are extremely complex phenomena. We do not claim to entirely explain them.

3 The Pentecostal Revival

The Pentecostal resurgence first emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, with the Azusa Street revival (1906–9) in Los Angeles, US, and the less known Mukti revival in India (1905–7) (Anderson 2004, Robbins 2004, Fer 2022). It built on Methodist revivalism where strong emotional and ecstatic experiences had already been present. The distinguishing element of the revival was the idea that a specific event, the "baptism in the spirit" would ascertain the believer of his or her state of grace. The proof that the event had happened was normally seen in the speaking in tongues and other manifestations of the holy spirit.

The movement soon spread through the US and throughout the world, becoming the fastest growing tradition of the Christian religion. It led to new Pentecostal denominations (the largest being the Church of God in Christ and the Assemblies of Gods), thousands of non-denominational churches, and the fact that the new beliefs and practices were taken over by many denominations that had initially not been Pentecostal (such as Catholics) (Anderson 2005).

The spreading of the movement happened in different ways. On the one hand, the movement sent out missionaries to a large number of countries on all continents. The Pentecostal missionary practices especially in the global South were firmly based on colonial thought, but the ideas and practices of Pentecostalism were obviously attractive and led to the emergence of many non-western pioneers of the movement (Anderson 2005). On the other hand, visitors from within the US and the entire world flocked to Los Angeles in the beginning years to observe the "outpouring of the spirit"; they often themselves started to speak in tongues and went back to their home base to spread the new faith. If successful, these movements could themselves become the base for new missionary activities.

Researchers sometimes distinguish different "waves" of Pentecostalism in a temporal dimension (Barrett 1988, Kay 2011, Bartos 2015). According to this typology, a first wave starts around 1906 with the Azusa revival under the leadership of William Seymour who had himself been influenced by William Parham. A second wave is called the charismatic movement, starting in the 1960's, when first Protestant and then Catholic believers take over Pentecostal practices without leaving their denominations. A third wave is often identified starting in the 1980s with leaders such as John Wimber, Peter Wagner, and Kenneth Hagin advertising "Signs and Wonders", "Power Evangelism", and the divine right of believers to prosper in all domains of life including health, friendships, family, and finances (sometimes called "Prosperity Gospel" (Gonzalez 2014).

The Pentecostal movement was extremely successful, although estimations of the extension of the Pentecostal/Charismatic share among Christian believers vary. Zurlo et al. (2020) estimate that in the mid-2020s, 17.6% of world Christianity can be counted into the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition (Figure 2).

The Pew Research Center (2011) estimates that in 2010 there were about 279 million Pentecostal Christians worldwide, which presents almost 13 % of world Christian population. If we add to this number also Charismatic Christians (305 million), we arrive at almost 27 % of the world's Christian population.

Today, Pentecostalism is mostly concentrated in the global south—Latin America and Africa—as well as in Asia. According to the World Christian

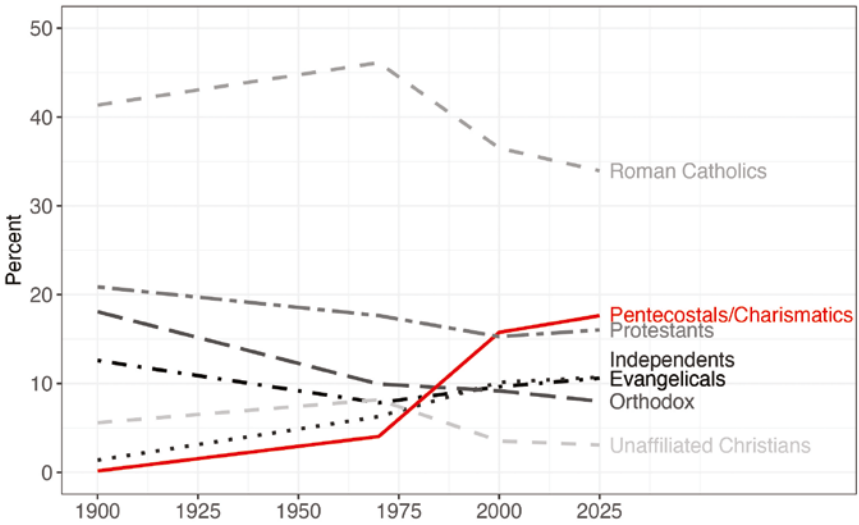

FIGURE 2 Intra-Christian traditions 1900–2020 (percentages)
Note: Own Figure on the basis of the data in Zurlo et al (2020)

Database, approximately 35% of all Pentecostals/Charismatics (P/C) are situated in Africa, a bit less (30 %) in Latin America and 20% in Asia (19.5%).

We believe that the Pentecostal revival in the global south was to a significant extent caused by the transition and composition mechanism specified in our typology.

The transition mechanism is given when individuals are uprooted by modernization shocks. In the 20th century, in many areas of the global south, urbanization was linked to significant migration from the rural to the urban part of the countries. People who moved to the cities felt displaced and alienated because they lacked a sense of close community (Flory and Sargeant 2013, Roberts 1968). In many cases, modernization brought rapid industrialization and the birth of neoliberalism. Capitalist values and new lifestyles emerged, commodifying old value systems, and allowing free religious markets (Marshall 2009). The previous century also saw the establishment of autonomy and independence in most of African and some Asian countries. This brought new democratic values, new nationalistic motivations, and state orders.

Pentecostalism is a religion—much like Methodism in the 18th and 19th century—that seems to help uprooted individuals find new meaning and legitimation for their lives, especially under newly modernized conditions (Martin 2002). Religion thus becomes less a matter of traditional community and more a matter of the individual choice to belong to a certain group of

believers. Pentecostals promote and thrive on the ability of the individual to make such a religious choice. They take an entrepreneurial approach to start new organizations, modifying old ones, and attracting converts. And they reach out to the displaced urban populations, helping them establish new community and religious roots. As Bruce (2011: 186) writes:

> The shift from a rural agrarian economy based on the organic community of the village and the hacienda to an urban industrial economy undermined the old social ties and created a demand for a new kind of persona: the self-reliant self-directed individual. [Pentecostalism encouraged such] personal autonomy and self-direction.

The success of Pentecostalism among newly urbanized populations can be seen, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, where countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana experienced a sudden surge in rural-urban migration in the 1960s and 1970s without any real investment in urban planning, and where urban poverty and inequalities increased. Thus, Pentecostal prosperity theology offered hope to move up in society, and attracted especially young urban people who were most experiencing unemployment, loneliness, and inadequate health care (Omenyo 2014). Especially in the first part of the 20th century, Africa also saw a rise of independent Pentecostal churches that grew out of the desire for political independence, nationalist feeling and African self-expression (Anderson 2014). In Kenya, for example, one could observe that after the independence in 1963, membership in Assemblies of God rose from 40.000 (1958) to 98.000 (1967) (Gerrard 2002).

The same mechanisms could also be observed in Asia: In the 1970s and 1980s, some Asian countries, such as South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India experienced rapid urbanization and industrialization that resulted in the rise of a wealthy middle-class and consequently the growth of megachurches and the spread of prosperity gospel (Au 2020, Chong 2015). In South Korea, the Yoido Full Gospel Church reached a membership of one million in the 1970s (Chong and Goh 2015) and by the 1995 the same country had 15 megachurches (Hong 2000). For South Korea, one also has to note that the rise of Pentecostalism was strongly pushed by the government, a "state intervention" mechanisms was thus also involved (Lee and Suh 2017).

The rise of Pentecostalism has mainly happened in the global south and here it has been greatly amplified by the high fertility rates in these regions of the world (Pew 2015). But Pentecostalism has also had some modest success in highly modernized countries. Here, it is in part due to migration and

composition effects. The transnational flow of Pentecostalism mostly goes from the global south to the Global West. Pentecostalism is finding its place in Western countries with immigrants looking for new economic opportunities, which is the case of Latino Pentecostals entering the US (Miller 2013), or the case of African Pentecostals entering major urban areas in Europe (Godwin 2013). There is also some evidence that Pentecostalism is the branch of evangelicalism that is most successful in western countries independently of immigration (Alvarsson 2011, Kay and Dyer 2011). This may be due to its particularly emotional rituals (Stolz and Favre 2019). Generally, however, the very strong secularizing tendencies in western countries provide a difficult environment for Pentecostal groups; growth therefore remains severely limited.

4 The Islamic Revival

The contemporary Islamic revival emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century (primarily the 1970s) in predominantly Muslim countries, primarily in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia (Dessouki 1982, Hafez 1997), but also among the Muslim communities in the western world (Parvez 2017, Jouili 2015, Karcic 1997). The Islamic revival consists of a wide variety of revivalist movements that are not—as sometimes portrayed by the mass media—a phenomenon of marginal or extremist groups but involving the overall societies on various levels. There have been several Islamic revivals in the past—the current revival differs from past movements, particularly those of the 18th and 19th centuries, in that it is less spiritual and moral in nature and more political (Ali 2012: 86).

Unfortunately, there are to our knowledge no comprehensive statistical data on the contemporary Islamic revival. Nevertheless, there are some studies that provide empirical evidence:

A study by Mutlu (1996, in Carvalho 2009) shows that religious belief among students at the University of Ankara underwent significant changes between 1978 and 1991. The study shows that belief in God rose from 54 % in 1978 to 81 % in 1991. Similarly, belief that there is a Heaven and Hell grew from 36 % to 75 %. Moreover, Hafez (1997: 304) points out that the state-supported mosques in Egypt had more than doubled their number of religious educational institutions between 1970 and 1985, while the number of students at those institutions more than tripled. Also, the number of the privately run mosques in Egypt increased from 20.000 (1970) to more than 40.000 (1981) (Hafez 1997),

and the annual number of pilgrims visiting Mecca increased from 90.000 in 1926 to 2 million in 1979 (Kepel 2002: 75).

There is also plenty of ethnographic data showing the return of Islam. Mutalib (1990: 880), for example, reports some observations of religious change in Southeast Asia for the period from 1970 onwards and especially in the 1980s—the attendance in mosques and surau for prayer had increased, traditional Muslim dress (*songkok, filbab, telekong mini, purdah*) became worn more frequently, the greeting "Assalaamu'alaikum" had become more common, Muslim forums, lectures, and seminars had increased in number and frequency. A notable sign of revival is also the introduction and flourishing of "missionary" activities, referred to as the Da'wah phenomenon. Haddad (1987: 240) reports, among other things, for the first half of the 1980s, a greater adherence to fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the proliferation of Islamic literature in Egypt. In addition, hundreds of rooms in private homes in Egypt were converted into small areas for prayers, Koran readings and religious discussions in the 1980s (Sonbol 1988: 33).

Another manifestation of Islamic revival can be observed in changes in law. For example, in 1978, Zia-ul-Haq introduced an Islamic legal system in Pakistan with a special system of Shari'ah courts. He also promoted the Islamic form of democracy, called *shuracracy*. Similarly, in 1978, Egyptian president Sadat, proposed an amendment imposing the Shari'ah as the primary source of legislation (Najjar 1992: 64). In Sudan, Ja'far Numayri declared a significant initiative to Islamize both the legal system and the governance of the state (which instantly faced much opposition) (Voll 2013: 62). In Bangladesh, the Mujib Regime (1972–1975) made Islamic studies and Arabic compulsory in secondary school, banned public sale and consumption of alcohol and gambling, and began to promote Islamic cooperation with Middle Eastern Muslim leaders. The subsequent Zia Regime (1977–1981) posited Islam as the foundation for state ideology and incorporated Islam as a state religion in the constitution. It also declared Friday, instead of Sunday, to be a work-free day (Islam and Saidul Islam 2018: 336–337).

Over the past five years, religiosity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has increased significantly, especially among the youth. The results of the Arab Barometer Wave 7 (2021–2022) indicate a resurgence of political Islam. In most of the countries surveyed, the data show a tendency of increased role of religion in politics. This is the first significant upswing in support for political Islam since the Arab uprisings in 2011 (Robbins 2023). In addition, the Pew Research Center reports that Muslims are expected to be the fastest

growing religious group in the world. The number of Muslims is projected to increase by 70% between 2015 and 2060. The number of Christians is projected to increase by 34%, slightly faster than the world population as a whole, but much slower than that of Muslims (Pew Research 2017).

We believe that the Islamic revival in traditionally Muslim countries was caused by three mechanisms specified in our overall typology. First, a reaction to an outside threat, which took the form of European colonization and forced secularization "from above". Second, a positive state intervention, that is, government support of Islamization. Third, a relatively high fertility rate. We will describe these mechanisms in order.

The Islamic revival was a strong *reaction* to European colonization and forced secularization "from above". Western influence began in the 16th century and impacted the Islamic world with Western ideologies (nationalism, democracy, socialism, etc.), new political and educational systems, and technologies. Western colonialism even brought down two of the most powerful Islamic empires that existed for centuries—the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic Mughal dynasties (Ali 2012: 62).

This colonization was strongly resented by some movements that resulted in reformist and revolutionary awakening of nationalistic thought. The most influential ones are the Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia (18th century), the Mahdiya movement of Sudan (19th century), the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt (20th century), the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan (20th century), and the Salafism in Algeria in the 1930s (Singh 1981: 56, 63). All these movements were religious and social in their nature, seeking to create pan-Islamic consciousness and ideas of Islamic community (umma), while trying to end colonial control of their people.

Another part of the outside threat to Muslim countries in the 20th century was forced secularization. Governments attempted adapting Western discourses of nationalism, urbanism, capitalist materialism, economics, and educational systems (Ali 2012: 63–64). The most salient feature of this adaptation is the education of women and the abolition of the women's veil. In Turkey, for example, Kemal Atatürk introduced secularist reforms that gradually abolished the fez and veil head coverings. He also changed the alphabet and introduced the Gregorian calendar, making Sunday an official day of rest. Religious education was restricted and later banned, and the power of the ulema religious hierarchy was also restricted and eventually abolished (Lewis 1952: 2).

All those changes immediately triggered reactions and resistance movements. For example, when the Indonesian government introduced a secular marriage law in 1973, many Muslims protested through demonstrations and

even occupied the parliament (Crouch 1981: 204). Furthermore, rapid urbanization and rural migration into the cities brought serious economic hardships which gave a rise to growing numbers of extremist Islamic groups (Hafez 1997). Cairo's population, for example, grew from 4 million in 1960 to more than 8 million in 1979 (Ibrahim 1987: 129–130), which contributed to creation of militant groups such as al-Takfir w'al-Hijra (Repentance and Holy Flight) and al-Jihad (The Holy Struggle).

The Islamic revival was, however, also created by a series of *positive state interventions* in promoting Islamization. This was the case in Egypt, where Sadat, seeking to reach the general public, gave authorization to the Muslim brotherhood to fully operate in public life (Sonbol 1988: 28), or later Mubarak, who supported the established religious institutions such as the al-Azhar University and the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Awkaf*) (Ibrahim 1987: 637–638). Following the oil boom, Saudi Arabia's government started to greatly finance Islamic organizations (Carvalho 2009). In Bangladesh, Zia's government displayed Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions in government offices and public places (Islam and Saidul Islam 2018), and in Indonesia, Suharto's government (mid-1980s) increased its role in building mosques and sponsoring and participating in Islamic festivals and conferences (Schwarz 1994: 175).

In the 1980s, a variety of movements and organizations emerged under the umbrella term "political Islam"—a term that can be understood as the "Islamization of modernity," in contrast to the old efforts to modernize Islam (Voll 2013). Calls for the establishment of Islamic states grew louder. There is growth of Islamized governments, organizations, laws, banks, social services, and educational institutions.

The contemporary Islamic revival movement continues to evolve with its political engagement, involvement in banking and financing, resurgences (for example the Taliban in Afghanistan), growing of Halal industry and other movements.

As for the Pentecostal upswing, the Islamic revival is increased by a *composition effect*, since fertility rates in traditionally Islamic countries are high (Pew Research 2017). In general, we can note that the Islamic revival has mainly happened in countries with relatively low or very partial modernization. There is no traditionally Islamic country with a very high level of modernization, high Gdp/capita, democracy, and a developed welfare state. Secularization theorists might therefore claim that the Islamic upswing is not a counterexample to secularization theory and that secularization should set in once (and if) traditionally Islamic countries start on a modernization trend similar to western countries.

5 The Orthodox Revival

The religious revival in post-Communist Orthodox countries, such as Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine, started already during the Soviet era, in the 1970s, but had its main takeoff in 1985 with the beginning of the Perestroika and lasted roughly 25–30 years (Stolz et al. 2023, Pew 2017: 22).

It somewhat surprised and confused social scientists since many had predicted a general religious revival in all post-communist countries after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Instead, the revival appeared almost exclusively in majority Orthodox post-communist countries, but not in majority Protestant or Catholic countries (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012, Pew 2017: 9).[4] Furthermore, the revival was measurable mainly in affiliation, and much less in religious practice, such as attendance or prayer (Krindatch 2004: 125, Pew 2017: 7).

Still, the revival measured by indicators of individual religiosity was real and, in some countries, quite spectacular. In Russia, for example, the membership of the Orthodox Church increased from 37% in 1991 to 71% in 2015, in Bulgaria the rise was from 59% to 75%, and in the Ukraine from 39% to 78% (Pew 2017: 8).

Indicators of personal religiosity other than self-identification also increased in most of the post-communist Orthodox countries, although the rise was much less pronounced. For example, in Russia, the percentage of individuals finding "religion very important" rose from 12% (1990) to 18% (2017), in Bulgaria from 16% (1997) to 19% (2006) and in the Ukraine from 21% (1996) to 27% (2011) (Stolz et al. 2023: online Appendix p. 7).

The religious revival was not confined to individual religiosity. The Orthodox church also gained political power in that it was officially recognized by the state in many of the countries, such as in Russia, Georgia, or Romania (Voicu and Constantin 2012, Janelidze 2015, Jödicke 2015, Pollack and Rosta 2017). In many of these countries, the state began to finance the Orthodox church on a significant level and politicians sought the vicinity of the Orthodox church as a legitimation tool for their political power. For example, in Russia, Putin very willingly showed himself together with Patriarch Kirill and even said in 2007

4 Post-communist Muslim-majority countries, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, also experienced religious revivals after the fall of communism. However, the revival movements were much smaller and politically less intense than those in other Muslim countries that did not experience communism (Haghayeghi 1994).

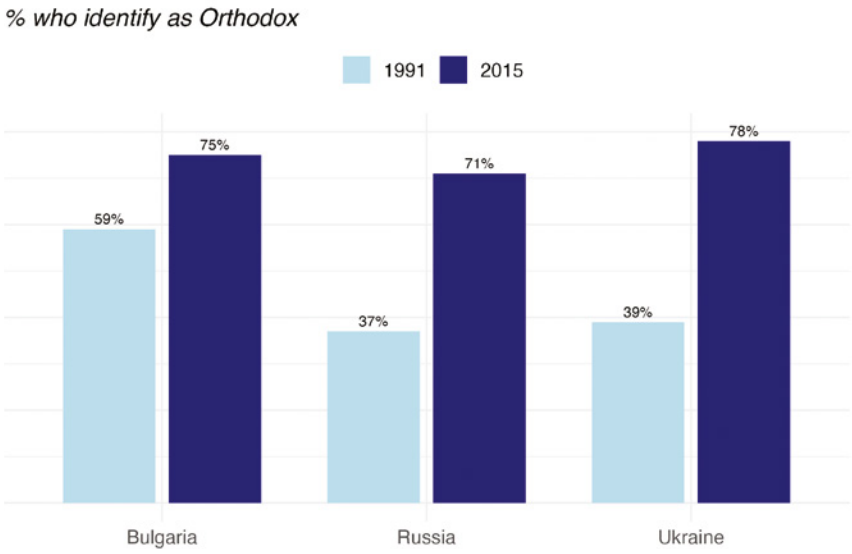

FIGURE 3 Religious revival in Orthodox countries
Note: Pew data. Own Figure using the information from Pew (2017: 8)

that traditional religions were as important for Russia's security as nuclear protection (Pollack and Rosta 2017).

In our view, the Orthodox revival in traditionally Orthodox countries was caused by a combination of mainly three of the mechanisms described above: removal of government suppression, government support, and crisis (de-modernization).

The first mechanism was the removal of government suppression. During the communist regime, religion had been ferociously suppressed in all countries belonging to the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc more generally. This suppression was particularly strong in the 1920's and 1930s and was somewhat alleviated over time. Still, the communist regimes during the Soviet Era remained with a negative view of religion until the very end. Arguably, these policies suppressed religion in communist states to an artificially low level. When Gorbatchev started the Perestroika in 1985 and the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, the government suppression of religion was immediately stopped. This did not have the effect—as market theorists of religion would have predicted—that a flourishing competitive religious market arose. Rather, it created social space for a revival of the faith that had traditionally been present in these countries: Orthodoxy.

Second, governments not just removed suppression, they also began to actively support the respective national Orthodox church, while at the

same time often stifling the religious competition. Politicians described the Orthodox churches positively, visited Orthodox churches, showed themselves publicly with Orthodox leaders, and put in place policies that were beneficial for the Orthodox churches both in terms of public image and finances. This mechanism in itself can be seen as a religious revival on a societal and organizational level, but it also signaled to individuals that it was a socially acceptable and even desirable trait for an individual to appear religious. We do not think that the material help for churches was an important explanatory factor, at least initially, since the revival set in almost immediately with the Perestroika and important financing needed time to arrive, remained often limited, and attendance at religious rituals hovered in most countries on very low levels anyway. Rather, it was the overall stance of the government and state that must have sent a positive signal to individuals that it was a good thing to present oneself as Orthodox.

Third, and most importantly, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to an unprecedented economic and social crisis in all of the formerly communist countries. GDP plummeted, unemployment and corruption rose to new heights, criminality spread (Rabkin and Minakov 2018, Stolz et al. 2023: online Appendix p. 7). This can arguably be seen as a temporary de-modernization. Individuals did not trust the state and public institutions before, but now, they could not even guarantee public order—and the economic situation had become much worse for most people. Thus, individuals lost the little confidence they had had in the government, the political parties, the judiciary system, and the state more generally. In this situation, the Orthodox church of the respective country seemed in many Orthodox countries to be the one institution that was still trustworthy (Krindatch 2004: 130). It did not offer material help, but it gave a positive message of self-worth. To be Russian (Georgian, Rumanian, Ukrainian etc.) meant to be Orthodox. The Russian/Orthodox people should be proud to be so and would be victorious in the face of hardship. God had a special plan for this special national-religious group. It was this message and this ideological solution to their everyday problems that was probably the strongest cause of the Orthodox revival after 1985.

Perhaps we can add even an element of a fourth mechanism: "reaction". Post-communist societies were hit by the sudden introduction of western capitalist principles and the results were disastrous. As a result, many individuals in these countries became very skeptical of western values and principles. It may be that some of the religious revival can also be interpreted as an increased emphasis on an own identity in contrast and as a reaction to a western identity that is deemed to be dangerous for one's country.

Why did the revival only appear in Orthodox countries and not in traditionally Catholic and Protestant post-communist countries? In our view, religion had been especially strongly repressed in these countries, since their national-religious structure had not given them transnational tools to resist the suppression (such as for Catholic and Protestant churches). Religion was thus at an especially "unnaturally" low level. Furthermore, the same national-religious structure lent itself especially well for a national-religious identity revival. Finally, these countries were especially hard hit by the economic and societal crisis.

One may ask why the Orthodox revival was especially strong with respect to affiliation, but much less so regarding private religiosity and even less with attendance of public ritual. One explanation is that individuals were mainly interested in a positive social identity and were not so much concerned with religion as such. Another possibility is that revivals use the inverse of the so-called P-I-B sequence. We find that in the secular transition in congregational religions societies tend to first lose participation, then importance of religion, and finally belonging. It might be that revivals take the inverse sequence and start with belonging, then add valuing, and only finally attendance.

6 Conclusion

We have set out to present three religious revivals, Pentecostal, Muslim, and Orthodox, and see how they can be interpreted in the light of the Stolz and Voas (2023) typology of revivals. When comparing the three revivals, it becomes clear that there are similarities and differences (Table 1).

All three revivals took place in countries with a relatively low level of modernization. This is in accord with secularization theory. Had important revivals taken place in highly modernized countries, they would have been much more convincing as "counter-examples". It seems that major religious revivals need a context where there are not too many secular alternatives to religious goods. None of the countries where great revivals took place had a stable democratic government and experienced general prosperity. In this respect the Pentecostal revival is extremely instructive. When the Pentecostal revival really took off after 1906 in Los Angeles, the new beliefs and practices were exported to other regions in the US, and to Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. We can view this situation as a sort of "natural experiment" where the same product is tried out in very different contexts. While Pentecostalism was enthusiastically received by many in all these contexts, in the long run, the revival was only successful in less modernized settings such as Asia, Africa, or

TABLE 1 The three revivals compared

	Pentecostal	**Islamic**	**Orthodox**
Average level modernization in countries	low	low	low
Main mechanism	– transition – composition	– reaction – state support – composition	– removal state – suppression crisis / de-modernization
Timing	1906–	1970–	1985–2015

South America, but much less so in Europe, the US, or Japan (and even when controlling for demography). In strongly modernized settings, Pentecostalism has not been able to stop ongoing secularization even though it has been able to crowd out some of the less emotional evangelical and Catholic competition.

All three revivals use mechanisms described in the typology of Stolz and Voas. However, the combination of the main mechanisms seems to differ. The Pentecostal revival in the global south seems to be primarily one of "transition" and "composition". Here, individuals who were often highly religious in traditional ways adapt to rapid modernization by shifting to a more individualized religiosity attuned to modernity. When this happens in the global South, high fertility rates will strongly amplify the revival. Since the Pentecostal revival extends over more than 100 years and is a global phenomenon, various other mechanisms play a role in other contexts. Thus, in South Korea, state intervention plays a role and in western countries, the rise of Pentecostalism is partly a composition phenomenon linked to immigration. The Islamic revival is one of "reaction", "state support", and "composition". Colonization, strong secularization, westernization from above, and the establishment of Israel are seen as threats to the traditional way of life and are counter-acted by an emphasis on Islam. This has been vigorously supported by some Muslim governments (e.g., Saudi Arabia, post-revolution Iran, post-2010 Turkey). Again, relatively high fertility rates in many traditionally Islamic countries are increasing the force of the revival. The Orthodox revival is based mainly on the mechanisms of removing state oppression and a crisis so severe that de-modernization set in. When all other institutions seemed to fail, the Orthodox church was the one place where individuals could get a positive social identity and some reassurance.

The starting point and duration of these revivals varies greatly: the Pentecostal revival emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, the Islamic revival began in the 1970s and the Orthodox revival began in the 1990s.

Are these revivals transitory? It seems that the Pentecostal and Muslim revival are ongoing, even though growth rates are declining (see Table A1 in the Appendix). The Orthodox revival has arguably come to somewhat of a standstill. Thus, the Pentecostal/Charismatic revival showed absolute annual growth rates of 5.2% between 1970 and 2000; between 2000 and 2015 this rate dropped to 2.3%. The Muslim revival had annual growth rates of 2.8% between 1970 and 2000; between 2000 and 2015 this rate dropped to 2.0%. The Orthodox revival had annual growth rates of 2.0% between 1970 and 2000; between 2000 and 2015 this rate dropped to 0.4%. While for the Pentecostal/Charismatic and Muslim revivals annual growth rates are positive in absolute terms and relative to the world population, we can confidently say that these revivals are still ongoing. The Orthodox revival is a different matter. Here, the absolute growth rate between 2000 and 2015 has become positive, but small (0.43%), but the relative annual growth rate has become negative.

Are these revivals counterexamples to the secularization theory? Only a cautious answer can be given. We have shown that they are *not necessarily* counter-examples to the secularization thesis, but can be explained with the mechanisms stated in the typology by Stolz and Voas (2023). One of the revivals has come to a virtual standstill; the other two are ongoing. Secularization theory can explain that and why these revivals should appear, but it would also predict that the revivals should stop once the causal mechanisms responsible for the revivals subside. Thus, once the different countries involved set on a stable modernization path, secularization should set in. Only the future can tell whether this will be the case.

This paper has obvious limits. A first limit is that we have only made a conceptual argument by showing how central elements of the three revivals may be accounted for by one or several of the mechanisms given in the typology of Stolz and Voas (2023). We have not shown that these mechanisms empirically do apply. Further, much more focused empirical research would have to show this empirically. A second limit is that our discussion has had to be very general so as to be able to describe and compare the three very large revivals. This has meant skipping over many important details and specificities. Finally, we acknowledge that there is an inherent problem of explaining counterexamples of theories. Scholars sometimes try to immunize their theories by "explaining away" counterexamples post-hoc. To guard against such strategies, rigorous empirical testing is necessary.

Researchers who will want to test the ideas put forward in our paper should note that it builds on the distinction of different *main causes* of the revival. For example, a religious revival we have categorized in the "crisis" category, should to a significant extent have been causally produced by a societal crisis. A religious revival we have categorized as a "reaction", should have, to a

significant extent, been causally produced by the contact with a threatening country, elite, or culture. In this sense, our paper contains hypotheses that can and should be empirically tested.

We welcome research that studies these revivals in the context of long-term secularization more in-depth.

Appendix

TABLE A1

Tradition	Affiliated 1970	Affiliated 2000	Affiliated 2015	Annual growth 1970–2000 %	Annual growth 2000–2015 %
Pentecostal / Charismatic					
absolute (Million)	57.6	441.8	589.8	7.02	1.94
relative (%)	1.6	7.2	7.9	5.14	0.6
Orthodox					
absolute Million	115.4	207.6	221.3	1.98	0.43
relative (%)	3.10	3.40	3.00	0.31	-0.83
Muslim					
absolute (Million)	568.9	1288.6	1726.5	2.76	1.97
relative (%)	15.40	21.00	23.2	1.04	0.67

Note. Data from World Christian Database.
Calculations of annual percentage growth rate from 1970 to 2000, and from 2000 to 2015 use the formula:
((Affiliated in ending year / Affiliated in beginning year) ^ (1 / Number of Years)) – 1

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