

**Rituals of Respect:**  
**Sufis and Secularists in Senegal\***

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**Introduction**

In this essay I will attempt to make four interrelated contributions to the comparative literatures on secularism, human rights, citizenship, and democratization using Senegal as my primary case.

First, Senegal has been ranked by some authorities as the leading democracy in the Islamic world since 2000. The country has been brilliantly written about by anthropologists and historians, but many of Senegal's experiences and creations have not been sufficiently incorporated into modern democratization theory. Overcoming this lacuna is a major goal of this article.

Second, much of the standard literature on religion and politics, building on France and the United States, implies that secularism, with a complete separation of church and state, is the most conducive institutional

\* I would like to acknowledge the great intellectual support, during all stages of this article of Etienne Smith who is finishing his doctorate at Sciences Po in Paris on "joking kinships" in Senegal. Etienne Smith was an immense help with the bibliography and history of Senegal, and helped me arrange and conduct more than twenty interviews with religious, political, and civil society leaders, some in Wolof, in Senegal.

\*\* To be published in Thomas Banchoff and Robert Wurthnow, eds., *Religion and the Global Politics of Human Rights* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, 2008).

arrangement for democracy-building and the protection of human rights. But I will show how, and why, three of the countries with large Muslim populations who are performing best in the democratic world (India, Senegal, and Indonesia) violate, and I will argue appropriately violate, these French and American “lessons”. Empirical democratic theorists must abandon the idea of a singular secularism, and advance research concerning “the multiple secularisms of modern democracies”.<sup>1</sup> I hope my observations about Senegal’s social construction of a version of secularism they call “laïcité well understood and properly practiced” will encourage new thinking about alternative formulas for rights protection and democratization in polities where religions are practiced robustly.

Third, virtually every long standing democracy in the world (eg., Japan, India, The United Kingdom, France, The United States) respects certain basic norms, but has distinctive historical origins and institutional features which facilitated the growth, and the support, of democracy in that country. Analogously, it is my conviction that human rights in the countries of the world are on firmer ground if they can be defended as being consistent with the highest and most cherished values of that society.

I have argued elsewhere that all religions are “multivocal”. By that I mean that all religions in the world at some time have had aspects in their doctrines and practices which are in tension with democracy, and some aspects that are “useable” for democracy.<sup>2</sup> Within this multivocal situation it has proved very important, for the emergence of a greater consensus on democracy, if authoritative actors from within the religious tradition, and from within the country, make effective public arguments against the most salient and influential non-democratic doctrines and practices in their community. External democracy and human rights advocates, if they are present at all,

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<sup>1</sup> I will develop this argument in greater general detail in an article “The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democracies”, being prepared for the SSRC Working Committee on Secularism. An early version, with the above title, was presented at SSRC on February 12, 2007, New York and at the Globalism Seminar at Columbia University, November 3, 2007. Here I will concentrate on Senegal. I am building upon the work of S. N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities”, *Daedalus* (Winter 2000):1-29, Sudipta Kaviraj, “An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity”, *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 46 ( December 2005): 496-526, and the articles by Rajeev Bhargava cited in footnote 46.

<sup>2</sup> I develop this argument in more detail in “The World’s Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the “Twin Tolerations””; see Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.213-254, esp.pp.227-229. Henceforth this article will be cited for brevity simply as Stepan, “Twin Tolerations”.

are almost always more effective if they have been invited by major domestic democratic actors and movements in a clearly supplementary role. In such an invited, supplementary capacity, the chances that democracy as an institution, and human rights as a value, will be rejected because they are “alien” to the culture, and a “foreign imposition,” can be diminished.<sup>3</sup>

Building on the above theoretical and empirical perspectives, I will advance the argument in this essay that where specific human rights violating practices are defended as being an intrinsic part of that country’s religion the most efficacious actions are independent but coordinated state and religious campaigns against such practices. More explicitly I will attempt to show why such coordinated policies are unlikely to be possible in a society with a pattern of high religious practice and high respect for religious leaders if the state has adopted a ‘religiously hostile’ form of secularism, but quite possible if state and religions have developed patterns of mutual respect. To support this argument I will show how, and why, such campaigns came about in 95% Muslim Senegal in areas such as anti-AIDS policy, and anti female genital mutilation policy. I will also show how and why, given the tacit Sufi-religious and secular-state cooperation, there is no space or demand in Senegal—unlike in Pakistan-- for foreign-funded, Wahhabi like fundamentalist madrasas, with their rights-eroding practices.

Fourth, “institutions do matter,” and I have devoted much of my scholarly life to studying them, but “respect” matters too, and is more difficult for institutionalists to study. I will try to gain some leverage on this elusive subject in this essay, because what I have come to call “rituals of respect” were crucial in Senegal to the emergence of a more democratic and rights-respecting polity.

In a world where many polities are marred by intolerant and violent state and societal behavior, especially in areas concerning religion, passive tolerance or non-

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<sup>3</sup> For example, one of the major contemporary Islamic political theorists, and an advocate of human rights everywhere in the world, Abdullahi An- Na‘im, argues that each specific society must argue against human rights violations in their own society, drawing upon useable and authoritative arguments in their own tradition, or such arguments will be rejected. “The Muslim world and the ulama in particular have been unable and unwilling to embrace the [human rights] debate for the simple reason that so much of it has been dominated by external actors and agents.” But he insists that “We can assert our religious or cultural justification of these rights, instead of the “take it or leave it” attitude of Western secular advocates of human rights”. See the interview, “Muslims Must Realize That There Is Nothing Magical About the Concept of Human Rights”, in Farish A. Noor, ed., *New Voices of Islam* (Leiden: ISIM, 2002), p. 6.

interference is a positive value. But, mutual public respect for the rights of the “other”, between religiously or ethnically different groups, and between the state and all religions in the society, if it could be attained, would be of even greater social and political value.

Much of the classic literature on “rituals” focuses on an individual’s rite of passage, such as birth, puberty or death.<sup>4</sup> However, the type of rituals I will focus on in this chapter are quite different. My concern is not with a once-in-a-life time “individual transitions” from one stage to the other, but with recurrent, reciprocated, public performances. These rituals of respect must be “public, repeated, and reciprocated” because one of their major functions is to produce assurance of a common knowledge among all relevant actors. Michael Suk-Young Chwe, in an innovative and broad ranging book, argues that ritual messages must not only be sent, but sent in such a way that it becomes very clear that “people are aware that other people also receive it. In other words, it is not just about people’s knowledge of the message; it is also about people knowing that other people know about it, the ‘metaknowledge’ of the message.”<sup>5</sup> Almost all the Senegalese rituals of respect I will discuss are structured so as to produce, reproduce, and extend, such “common knowledge” about mutual respect.

Indeed such performances in Senegal are often designed precisely to demonstrate group recognitions of mutual dignity.<sup>6</sup> Such “rituals of respect” are thus “performative” in that they have significant political implications, because they involve repeated active participation in reciprocal gestures of respect between state and society, and between different religious, ethnic, or linguistic groups.

Conceptually and historically, the origins of such rituals in any society are less important than their persistence. Their origins theoretically could be, and empirically are, highly diverse in motivation and/or conjuncture, ranging from military opponents wishing to send a sign of co-existence or even eventual possible cooperation, to religious groups desiring to acknowledge the oneness of humanity. Whatever their origins, when

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), and Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Suk-Young Chwe, *Rational Ritual: Culture, Coordination, and Common Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.9. Almost all the Senegalese rituals of respect I will discuss are structured so as to produce, reproduce, and extend, such “common knowledge” about mutual respect. I thank my colleague Macartan Humphreys for bringing Chew’s book to my attention.

these rituals of respect are mutually valued, and persistently repeated, they can be transformative, and contribute to a virtuous cycle of social relations in the polity.

As is well-known, in John Rawls' classic work on liberalism, an "overlapping consensus" in society is virtually only generated by liberal public argument; he also initially argued that such consensus is best achieved by "taking religion off the agenda".<sup>7</sup> But where religion is central to potential conflicts, and in polities where many of the participants in a possible conflict are deeply religious and illiterate, and/or have poor access to public systems of communication and media, such liberal public argument is highly unlikely to occur. But such a context, if it can be socially constructed, can be conducive to the emergence of the "twin tolerations" which I have defined as entailing a sufficient degree of autonomy from religion for democracy not to be constrained by theocrats, and a sufficient degree of autonomy of religion from the state for religious citizens and organizations to exercise their religious rights and their rights of expression, not only in their places of worship, but in civil and political society as well.<sup>8</sup> Could "rituals of respect" play a role in generating such a normative and behavioral consensus for peace and tolerance? Could rituals of respect contribute to fostering an overall political context in which basic rights of religions, and eventually a democratic state, are respected, and independent but coordinated state and religious human rights policy reforms are possible?

The structure of the presentation is straightforward. Part One briefly makes the case that Senegal ranks near the top among the world's poor countries in indicators relating to "stateness", social peace, civilian control of the military, religious toleration, civil liberties, democracy, and human rights.

Part Two draws on excellent historical work to document the social construction of first "accommodation," and then growing mutual Sufi/French respect, in two different "political geographies" within Senegal, the interior and the coastal towns.

Part Three analyzes how "rituals of respect", especially in the area of religion, contribute to Senegal's overlapping consensus concerning the "twin tolerations".

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<sup>7</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> See Stepan, "Twin Tolerations"

Part Four examines the role of such rituals in contributing to cooperation between the state and religions in key contemporary policy areas of direct concern for human rights.

The Conclusion attempts to explore why, emerging from the ground up, Senegal's rights-enhancing system increasingly worked for Sufis and secularists alike, and to suggest theoretical and policy implications that might be applicable elsewhere.

### **Part One: Senegal: Political and Human Rights in Comparative Perspective**

My stress on a “package” of political processes such as “stateness”, credible constraints on bureaucratic impunity, and civilian control of the military, comes from my historical and comparatively based understanding that it is a theoretical and political mistake to focus only on “human rights” by themselves. A mistake because, while human rights, as values may be “universal” and “inalienable,” they can not, as practices, be effectively protected unless there is a “useable state”, and some form of rule of law, that, among other things, credibly establishes horizontal and vertical checks on the state apparatus itself. In the modern world, a democracy, of course, is nether a sufficient, nor in all cases a necessary, condition for a rights- respecting political system. However, in terms of constitutionally embedded citizen's rights, and constitutionally crafted and constrained institutions of governance to protect such citizen's rights, democracy would seem to be a better starting point than any other type of political system.<sup>9</sup> Senegal ranks well on a number of the key dimensions indicating a reasonably workable social and political consensus and non-violation of basic human rights. Let us see.

Senegal is not now, and has never been, a “failed state.” As Linz and Stepan have argued elsewhere, where there is no state, there can be no protected human rights, no law

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<sup>9</sup> In the previously cited interview, see footnote 3, the Islamic political theorist and human rights advocate, Abdullahi An-Na'im, is emphatic on this point; “Human rights, as the term is defined today, can only be protected when there are certain legal and political institutions at work. .... You need the basic fundamentals of democracy and democratic institutions to be in place at least—an open and democratic government that is genuinely representative, a working judiciary that is credible and independent, a security and law and order apparatus that is not politicized, etc. Without such institutions and political norms in place, it is hard to imagine human rights being promoted and protected by anyone”. See Noor, ed., *New Voices of Islam*, p.10. Some countries, like most mid-nineteenth century Scandinavian polities did not necessarily have all these democratic institutions in place but managed to be rights protecting . However the general point about a useable state with some constraints on its own actions is certainly one worth stressing.

boundedness, and of course, no democracy.<sup>10</sup> In 2006, the magazine, *Foreign Policy*, in collaboration with The Fund for Peace and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, created their second annual Failed States Index. Twenty states, including four of Senegal's West African neighbors (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast) were listed in the worst category, "critical". Twenty additional states, including four more of Senegal's West African neighbors (Togo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Nigeria) were in the next worst category, "in danger".<sup>11</sup> Senegal was in neither category. While it has not threatened to produce "statelessness," I would be remiss not mention the on-off armed conflict with some separatist implications for the last twenty-five years in Casamance.<sup>12</sup>

Senegal is also highly unusual in that, like India, it has never been ruled by a military regime, and has therefore been free of all the problematic "prerogatives" such regimes often leave both in civil society and the state concerning patterns of acceptable civil-military relations.<sup>13</sup> In Latin America since World War II, eighteen of the twenty countries have experienced direct military rule.<sup>14</sup> Latin America is not exceptional. In sub-Saharan Africa, more than thirty newly independent countries have had major military involvement in their governments.<sup>15</sup> In Asia some countries that are now democratic, such as Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan have had recent periods of military rule; some once-democratic countries, such as Pakistan, and Thailand are now under military rule, and Bangladesh in 2007 is undergoing military tutelage.

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<sup>10</sup> See Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> See "The Failed States Index", *Foreign Policy* (May/June, 2006), pp. 50-58. International relations theorists often allude to the difficulty of maintaining stability, due to negative spill over effects, if a state lives in a "hard neighborhood." From this perspective Senegal's stability is of special note. Senegal is in an especially hard neighborhood. For example, eight of its thirteen other fellow members in the Economic Community of West African States are classified in the Failed States index in the two most endangered categories. Also see, "Special Report: Responding to War and State Collapse in West Africa", United States Institute for Peace, January 21, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> See Macartan Humphreys and Habaye Ag Mohamed, "Senegal and Mali: A Comparative Study of Rebellions in West Africa" in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, eds., *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Vol. 1, *Africa* (Washington, D.C. : World Bank, 2005), pp. 247-302.

<sup>13</sup> On the negative effects on many democracies of such "prerogatives", which can occasionally last for decades after direct military rule see the chapter "The Military in Newly Democratic Regimes: The Dimension of Military Prerogatives" in Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 68-92.

<sup>14</sup> See Arturo Valenzuela, "Presidencies Interrupted", *Journal of Democracy* (October 2004):5-19.

<sup>15</sup> See for example the data compiled and monitored by Arthur S. Banks for Africa under the categories of "military government" or "military civilian government" in his *Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive* (CNTS), Databanks International, Binghamton, N.Y. June 2005.

Within the set of the world's non-democratic regimes some have almost no constraints on state violence against its citizens, whereas some non-democratic regimes, in interaction with their societies, have established a degree of rule of law in which citizens have some civil liberties, if not political rights, and state employees do not have unchecked discretionary authority, but act within some mutually recognized norms. One standard indicator of such variation is Freedom House's Civil liberties scale that goes from 1 (the best score) to 7 (the worst score). From 1972-2006, fifty seven countries have at one time or another received a score of 6 or 7 on civil liberties. In contrast, Senegal never received a score worse than 4 in any one of these years.<sup>16</sup>

With no religious freedom in a polity, both human rights and the "twin tolerations" suffer. The Religion and State Codebook ranks 152 countries in the world on measures of "discrimination and/restrictions against religions". On this index, Senegal had a better ranking than all but two of the European Union's twenty-seven members. Saudi Arabia ranked 152<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>17</sup>

In attempting to rank countries on a democracy scale, the political scientist, Ted Gurr, created Polity, which has a 21 point scale running from minus ten to plus ten.<sup>18</sup> For the last two editions of this scale, in 2000 and 2004, Senegal received a score of plus 8, the third highest score possible. Senegal's average score for 2000 and 2004 was the highest of the 43 Muslim-majority countries included in the Polity scale.<sup>19</sup>

Senegal's comparatively superior wealth cannot explain this top ranking among the Muslim-majority countries. Indeed, 32 of the 43 other Muslim-majority countries have a higher per capita income than Senegal's \$1300.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, since countries

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<sup>16</sup> Computed from data contained in the annual reports produced by Raymond D. Gastil, ed., *Freedom in the World: Political Rights and Civil Liberties* (New York: Freedom House).

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of the database see Jonathan Fox, "World Separation of Religion and State into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 39 ( June 2006):537-569.

<sup>18</sup> The polity 21 point scale goes from minus 10, to zero, to plus 10.

<sup>19</sup> For 2000 see Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers, *Polity IV Project*, Integrated Network for Societal Conflict (INSCR) Program, Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), University of Maryland, College Park, [www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/polity](http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/polity). Unfortunately, we observed key parts of the February 2007 presidential election and believe that some presidential abuses of power should merit a lower ranking in the next Polity ranking. See Alfred Stepan's February 2007, Project Syndicate op-ed type column that appeared in numerous countries before the election, "Senegal's Imperiled Rituals of Respect."

<sup>20</sup> See Alfred Stepan with Graeme B. Robertson, "An 'Arab' More than a 'Muslim' Electoral Gap", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14 (July 2003), Table 2.

below \$1500 per capita income that have competitive elections are highly unusual, Senegal merits classification as one of the world's few "great electoral overachievers".<sup>21</sup>

How did this come about? What was the role of resistance, mutual accommodations, or even respect?

## **Part Two: French Colonists and Sufis: The Social Construction of Mutual Respect**

### From Colonial Military Conflict and Jihad to Mutual Accommodation: Rural Senegal

One of the founders of modern democratization theory, Dankwart Rustow, argued that conflicting groups, if they come to the conclusion that they cannot completely defeat their opponents, occasionally implicitly accommodate each other.<sup>22</sup> Historians of the French conquest of the interior of Senegal note that the French military almost completely destroyed the system of traditional African kingship in the interior of the country. Islamic, largely Sufi military, leaders stepped into the vacuum this created, some of them declaring jihad against the French. However, eventually, both the French and the Sufis came to the realization that they could not dislodge the other, and arrived at a Rustovian accommodation. The distinguished British political anthropologist, Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, comments: "France was short of legitimacy in Senegal, short also of staff and money, and it made good sense to support the local Muslim leaderships.... [Sufi orders] may have in the nineteenth century been identified by the French policy makers as instruments of holy war, but in the twentieth century colonial setting it was quite possible to come to an understanding on the solid ground of shared material interests."<sup>23</sup> The French could not develop agriculture in a hostile interior, but they could, and did, grant substantial landholdings with great peanut growing potential to major Sufi orders, especially to the Mourids, to do so.

The French did this, according to an excellent study by David Robinson, because "the Mourids were already a necessary part of the infrastructure of central Senegal. They

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<sup>21</sup> For the concept of electoral "overachievement" and "underachievement" in comparison to a country's GNP see, Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See Dankwart Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model", *Comparative Politics* (April 1970): 337-363.

<sup>23</sup> See his classic article "Renegotiating the Senegalese Social Contract", in his *Symbolic Confrontations: Muslims Imaging the State in Africa* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p.194.

helped solve major problems of agricultural production, labor supply, and social control”.<sup>24</sup> In return, the Sufis not only generated Senegal’s major source of revenue, but the charismatic founder of the most influential Sufi order, Amadu Bamba of the Mourides, sealed the reciprocal relationship (which he saw as allowing Islam in general, and his Sufi Order in particular, to grow) by getting his followers to accept a long, mutually beneficial process of accommodation with the French.<sup>25</sup> In a critical letter that helped reinforce the incipient Mourid/ French rituals of respect Bamba wrote: “I have decided to give...some advice to my Muslim brothers in order that they not be drawn into wars....The French government, thanks to God, has not opposed the profession of faith but on the contrary has been friendly toward Muslims and encouraged them to practice [their religion].”<sup>26</sup>

Part of the reason that this rural accommodation evolved was due to a prior, quite different, but eventually reinforcing, urban process involving voting.

#### Voting : The Urban Dialectic of Citizen Conquest and Colonial Concession

Historical studies of the gradual, but powerful emergence of citizens’ rights in countries such as the UK, the USA, and India give great importance to the relatively early creation by local peoples of patterns of representation, whether by elections or parties. Such instruments of self-representation increased local people’s sense of their rights, just authority, and their power to negotiate with colonial authorities. Comparativists should add Senegal to this list.

For comparativists here are some important, but little noted, political processes.

Political authority in the major urban coastal settlements in what came later to be called the “Four Communes” of Senegal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had periods of sharp discontinuity. The permanent local residents, some black and some mixed race Creoles, appeared to have used such periods to increase their role in the management of the cities and to express their grievances. For example, the British

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<sup>24</sup> See David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), p. 218.

<sup>25</sup> Amadu Bamba sealed this process of accommodation with a letter to his followers in 1910. Malik Sy, the leader of the Tijania, the most numerous Sufi Order in Senegal, arrived at a similar accommodation. For an detailed account of these mutual French –Sufi accommodations in the interior of Senegal see *ibid*, pp.194- 227.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.221-222.

occupied the commune of Gorée in Senegal from 1758-63. But “when the French reoccupied Gorée in 1763 they found... a Catholic African acting as mayor.”<sup>27</sup> When the French Revolution destroyed the Old Regime, the local residents of the then most important commune, Saint Louis, sent a register of grievances to the Assembly in Paris, and a Colonial Council “composed of local residents elected by their fellow citizens” emerged.<sup>28</sup>

Residents of Senegal seized the opportunity of the revolution of 1848 to send a representative to Paris to petition for the right to elect a deputy to the new National Assembly. The petition was granted, and from 1848 until independence in 1960, any time France held elections for the Assembly, the Four Communes of Senegal elected a deputy to a seat in the French Assembly.<sup>29</sup> From 1848 to 1914 the deputy was either White or Creole. But as the franchise widened, Black Senegalese constituted a clear electoral majority. From 1914 until independence, all the Senegalese deputies to the French Assembly were Black Africans. In 1879, a General Council was created, and in the judgment of Johnson this “gave the Four Communes effective institutions of local government controlled by the urban inhabitants.”<sup>30</sup>

In 1946, two years after Gaullists took over power following the fall of Vichy France, Senegal won the right to elect an additional deputy from the previously unrepresented interior to the Assembly in Paris. The elected Deputy from the interior until independence in 1960 was Léopold Senghor, the distinguished poet who went on to become the first President of Senegal, and also an elected member of the Academy of France.<sup>31</sup>

Comparatively and interpretively, I draw four conclusions from this emergence of voting in Senegal.

First, contested campaigns, with rules of the game, for nationally important elections, have been an intrinsic part of political life in the Four Communes since the mid

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<sup>27</sup> See the very valuable book, G. Wesley Johnson, Jr., *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), p.39

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.40-41.

<sup>29</sup> The two major breaks in this continuous electoral history were the two authoritarian periods in France, the Second Empire of 1852-1870, and the Vichy government during Nazi occupied France.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.vii.

<sup>31</sup> The standard biography of this major leader in English is Janet G. Vaillant, *Black, French and African: A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

19<sup>th</sup> century, more so than in any former colony of the Middle East, Africa or Asia, with the possible exception of India. But even India never elected members to the British parliament in London. While these elections were initially urban, some of the electoral traditions eventually spilled over to rural Senegal.

Second, the literature often refers to French “assimilation” policies which “gave” elections to the Senegalese as an overall part of their colonialization policy. The term “gave” does not adequately capture the process which I prefer to call a “dialectic between citizen conquest and colonial concession”. As Crowder stresses, “Senegal is the exception...the other territories of French Black Africa did not elect deputies until 1946.”<sup>32</sup> One reason such rights were “acquired” so early by Senegal is that, again and again, such rights were demanded. Significantly, there was a number of French efforts to take away these acquired rights, all of which failed.<sup>33</sup> The Senegalese social scientist, Mamadou Diouf, is particularly useful in showing the numerous strategies devised by the Senegalese to retain their political rights. In a convincing and revisionist argument, Diouf helps us advance the general argument about “respect”<sup>34</sup>. Beyond military accommodation, there can be “won,” and “earned” respect. For Diouf, “assimilation” implies “the loss of a historical initiative and of cultural creativity, because of total subordination to the metropolitan culture.” Diouf rejects the appropriateness of the use of the term “assimilation” for what occurred in the Four Communes, because the local population, black, mixed, and white, was able to fight back and create a new and original culture. He calls this process “acculturation”, which he defines as “the recreation of a culture and society in the context of a colonial experience, an original production built on the continual reorganization of precolonial and colonial experiences.”<sup>35</sup>

Part of this original production of a culture in the Four Communes was the successful political and legal struggle to retain the full French legal code giving Senegalese inhabitants of the Four Communes rights as citizens, including voting rights, while also retaining some aspects of Muslim personal law. This combination was refused

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Crowder, *Senegal: A Study of French Assimilation Policy*, (London: Methuen, 1960), p.6.

<sup>33</sup> An entire chapter is devoted to such French attempts in Crowder, Chapter 3, “French Reaction against Assimilation”, in *ibid*, pp.21-34.

<sup>34</sup>Diouf, “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal)”.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8. Emphasis added.

by the French to Algerians, so Algeria never attained the Senegalese-type of voting status within colonial rule. One of many successful moves in the struggle to retain the right to vote involved the decision by the Four Communes to voluntarily pay extra taxes to support France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1871; but the Communes then petitioned Paris that, as tax payers, their right of representation could not be cancelled. The chief French administrator in Senegal supported the petition, adding that the Senegalese also paid a “blood tax, which none of the other colonies pay, by fighting in our colonial armies.”<sup>36</sup> Before agreeing to fight in World War I, the first black elected Deputy from Senegal to the French Assembly, Blaise Diagne, stipulated that the Senegalese would adhere to all the obligations of citizenship such as military service; but he also proposed a law stipulating that, in return for such military service, France would ever after recognize the full citizenship rights of Senegalese. This demand was met in the French Citizenship Law of 1916, and in a series of other laws called the Blaise Diagne Laws.<sup>37</sup>

Third, voting in Senegal, given how it emerged, helped create incentives for inclusion in a religious sense as well. The major elected Deputy for the constituency of the rural interior of Senegal, Léopold Senghor, was a “double minority”. He was a Catholic, when more than 90% of his constituents were Sufi Muslims, and a linguistic and ethnic Serer, when the majority of his constituents spoke Wolof and did not consider themselves ethnically Serer. This electoral reality, in a context where elections had firmly established themselves as the “major game in town”, deepened Senghor’s interest in preserving Senegal as the religiously and ethnically tolerant polity it was becoming.<sup>38</sup>

Fourth, Senegal’s early and persistent voting created incentives for a more inclusive polity, geographically speaking. In many of the developing countries in the world, rural populations are politically abandoned by the capital cities. But, in a context such as existed in Senegal, where votes play a major part in producing political authority, political leaders have more incentives not to completely neglect the countryside than “sultanistic” or military leaders might have. For example, by 1951 a new electoral law tripled the number of people who could vote and “the balance of the electorate was

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<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, p. 44

<sup>37</sup> See Diouf, “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal)”, p.693.

<sup>38</sup> For this important and creative period in Senghor’s life see the chapter “Master Politician” in Valliant, *Black, French and African*, pp. 214-242.

shifting from the old communes to the country side.”<sup>39</sup> Senghor became the first major politician to campaign throughout the interior attending some 450 meetings, traveling ten thousand kilometers, and meeting with traditional village and religious leaders in the lead up to the 1951 elections. The hinterland was by then so electorally important that in 1951, even though Senghor’s party lost in the two largest towns of Dakar and Saint Louis, it still “won 41 of the 50 seats for Senegal’s territorial council.”<sup>40</sup> In addition, in Senegal, since the countryside is deeply influenced by Sufi religious leaders (the marabouts), secular state leaders and national politicians, since the universal male and female enfranchisement in 1956, have had incentives to develop forms of cooperative relations with such rural religious leaders.

### **Part Three: Rituals of Respect**

Let us now turn to our main interest. How did “rituals of respect” help shape and reinforce Senegal’s exceptional degree of overlapping consensus on religious, ethnic and even electoral matters?

#### The Secular State and Sufis

France and the United States are often taken as the two major examples of long-standing democracies where there is the greatest legal separation of religion and state. Such separation is often seen as a necessary part of, or at least conducive to, modern democracies. However, these two countries’ forms of separation of religion and state are polar opposites in their origins and consequences.

The concept of “laïcité” was created in France in 1905 as a clerically-hostile form of “freedom of the state from religion”. The driving spirit of separation of church and state in France has its origins in the French Revolution’s struggles to reduce the power of the Catholic Church.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the First Amendment of the US Constitution, with its

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.238.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p .239.

<sup>41</sup> The anticlerical struggle during the revolution in France was such that about 3,000 priests were guillotined and much church property was confiscated. During the thirty-five years struggle (1870-1905) leading up to the 1905 law on secularism about 15,000 Catholic schools were closed. For the contrast between French and U.S. secularism, see Ahmet T. Kuru, “Secularism, State Policies, and Muslims in Europe: Analyzing French Exceptionalism”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 40 (2008), forthcoming. France is the only country in Europe to pass a law banning headscarves in public schools. All but two members of

antiestablishment and religious freedom clauses, was passed as a clerically-friendly form of “freedom of religion from the state”.<sup>42</sup>

However, the clerically-hostile form of French *laïcité* does not actually apply to state-religion relations in Senegal, despite the fact that the opening articles in the Constitutions in both countries refer to *laïcité* and are virtually identical. It is hard to conceive that France’s religiously hostile brand of secularism would have contributed, in a society with intense involvements with the discussion and practice of religion, to the emergence of Senegal’s socially constructed overlapping consensus with its emphasis on respect. Note how the second President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf, in essence gives a new interpretation to “*laïcité*”.

“*Laïcité* in itself is a manifestation of respect of others. It acts in this way if it is *laïcité* well understood and properly practiced.

Such *laïcité* can not be anti-religious, but neither if it is a true *laïcité* can it become a state religion.

I would say further that such a laic state can not ignore religious institutions. From the fact that Citizens embrace religion flows the obligation for the state to facilitate the practice of that religion, as it does for all other vital activities of citizens.....

Respect of religion does not only mean tolerance, it does not mean only to allow or to ignore, but to respect the beliefs and practices of the other.

*Laïcité* is the consequence of this respect for the other, and the condition of our harmony”<sup>43</sup>.

Given the profoundly different normative and empirical implications of *laïcité* in France and Senegal, it should be clear why I argue that democratic theorists should speak not of “secularism” as a singular democratic universal, but instead of the “multiple secularisms of modern democracies”.<sup>44</sup>

India, with its Muslim minority of 140 million citizens, and heavily Muslim majority Indonesia and Senegal, are some of the highest ranked democracies in the

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the Stasi Commission recommended this ban. See “Le Rapport de la Commission Stasi sur La *Laïcité*”, *Le Monde*, 12 Décembre 2003, pp. 17-24, for the Report and an analysis.

<sup>42</sup> Indeed the U.S. pattern of separation of church and state is labeled “*philo-cléricale*” by a leading contemporary French scholar; see Dennis Lacorne, “La séparation de L’Église et de L’État aux États-Unis: Les paradoxes d’une *laïcité* *philo-cléricale*”, *Le débat* ( novembre-décembre 2003): 63-79.

<sup>43</sup> Reprinted in a large paperback printing with the Constitution of Senegal and commentaries edited by Me Doudou Ndoye, a former Minister of Justice (Dakar: EDJA, 2001), p.48-49.

<sup>44</sup> See my manuscript referred to in footnote 1, for greater elaboration of this point.

developing world.<sup>45</sup> None of them have either a U.S. or French-style notion of secularism as separation of religion and the state. All three have variants of the Indian invention of “equal respect, principled distance, and equal (and substantial) support for all religions.”<sup>46</sup> Such financial support on the part of the state in Senegal (and also in India and Indonesia) certainly violates French or U.S. ideas of a strict separation of religion and state, but does not violate citizens’ human rights, or violate the necessary spheres of autonomy that I have identified as the “twin tolerations” that modern democracies need. Indeed, the strong majority of religious leaders and followers alike in these three countries have arrived at a mutual accommodation with, and even support of, the democratic and secular state.<sup>47</sup> This is so, despite the fact that all three countries have versions of the secular state that can impose some normative and constitutional constraints on religious majoritarianism, and on possible religious violations of human rights.<sup>48</sup>

In Senegal rituals of respect contribute to the twin tolerations in numerous reinforcing ways. One of the rituals relates to state representation at religious ceremonies, and vice versa. At the major religious ceremonies of any of the three major Sufi Orders

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<sup>45</sup> For example, in the most recent ranking of all the countries in the world on a democracy scale in Ted Gurr’s *Polity*, of the 43 Muslim majority countries ranked, Senegal and Indonesia received the highest scores and India has been ranked at that level for over thirty years.

<sup>46</sup> For this model in India see Rajeev Bhargava, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism” in T.N. Srinivasan, ed., *The Future of Secularism* (Oxford and Dehli: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 20-53. For the moral and political theory behind India’s secularism, see Bhargava’s “Political Secularism” in John S. Dryzek, Bonnie Honig and Anne Phillips, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.636-655. Also see the volume Bhargava edited, *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), especially the articles by Bhargava, Akeel Bilgrami, and Amartya Sen.

<sup>47</sup> For numerous tables supporting this assertion for India see chapter 2 in Alfred Stepan, Juan J. Linz and Yogendra Yadav, *Democracies in Multinational Societies: India and Other Polities* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming). One of our most counterintuitive finding in India, for both Hindus and Muslims, is that the greater the intensity of religious practice, the greater the intensity of support for democracy. In India the responses of Hindus and Muslims were statistically the same. These three authors also wrote the questions on religion and democracy for the *State of Democracy in South Asia* (Delhi: Center for the Study of Developing Societies, 2006). The study included surveys and reports covering India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

<sup>48</sup> In Senegal they call their model “Laïcité Bien Comprise”, in Indonesia, “Pancasila” (state of five principles), and in India, simply “secularism”. In my current research into these three countries, I am examining the distinctive versions of secularism that have emerged and the contributions they make to the countries’ ability to manage democratic politics. For Indonesia, two basic books for the history and evolution of Pancasila are Azyumardi Azra, *Indonesia, Islam, and Democracy: Dynamics in a Global Context* and Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

(Mourid, the most politically influential, Tijan, the most numerous, and Qadir, the oldest), or of the influential Catholic minority, a significant number of cabinet-rank officials of the secular state will attend, along with the leading authorities of all the other religions.<sup>49</sup> The tradition of state officials attending such religious ceremonies informally began in the nineteenth century, but by the twentieth century, the French governor, De Coppet, mandated such attendance. According to Christian Coulon, a leading French scholar of such ceremonies, De Coppet did so because attendance “symbolized the existence of a relationship of mutual recognition between the religious power of the marabouts and the power of the colonial government, following a period of extreme suspicion between the two blocs.”<sup>50</sup>

At their recent annual pilgrimage (called the Grand Magal) over a million Mourides (around ten percent of Senegal’s entire population) converged on their holy city, Touba. The government was represented by eleven ministers, almost half the cabinet.<sup>51</sup> Building on the work of the influential British anthropologist, Victor Turner, Coulon goes on to argue that the Grand Magal creates what Turner would call a “communitas”, through which all the people who participate in such an event “come to think of themselves as a homogeneous unit, a communion of individuals who may be of varying status but who nonetheless, in particular circumstances, perceive of themselves as forming a distinct community.”<sup>52</sup>

Such participation by leading secular leaders in constant rituals of respect is seldom found in the secular state of France, where in their version of *laïcité*, officials of the secular state at the most might attend a religious event such as a funeral. But, *laïcité* became transformed in colonial, and even more, in independent, Senegal. Mamadou

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<sup>49</sup> Catholics now constitute only five percent of the population but they have been very important in the political and social history of Senegal because they probably, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, constituted a majority of the population of Saint Louis, the most important Commune in Senegal at the time. The first President of independent Senegal from 1960-1980, Léopold Senghor, was a Catholic.

<sup>50</sup> Christian Coulon, “The Grand Magal in Touba: A Religious Festival of the Mouride Brotherhood of Senegal”, *African Affairs*, Vol. 98 (1999): 195-210, quote from p.202.

<sup>51</sup> See Momar Dieng, “Onze Ministres chez Serigne Saliou: Quand la République Prend d’assault la Capitale du Mouridisme”, *Walfadjiri*, 23/04/2003.

<sup>52</sup> Coulon, “The Grand Magal in Touba”, p.205. The book of Victor Turner that Coulon is referring to is *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) especially the famous chapter on “Pilgrimages as Social Processes”, pp. 166-230. Also see Turner’s *The Ritual Process*.

Diouf's concept of "acculturation" works both ways, in this case not only on the Sufi orders, but also on the secular French colonial, and now on contemporary secular African Senegalese officials.

An important point to stress is that the government not only participates in, and provides important logistical, health, technical and financial support for this Mouride ritual, but for all similar pilgrimages, such as the Gamu of the Tijan Sufi Order to Tivaoune, and of the Catholic annual pilgrimage to Popengine.<sup>53</sup> The secular state in Senegal, as does the secular state in India, helps some of their Muslim citizens' fulfill their obligation of making, if possible, a pilgrimage to Mecca in their lifetimes by subsidizing their airfares. In Senegal the secular state also supports pilgrimages by Catholics to the Vatican.

In keeping with Chwe's point that a key part of rituals is the production of "common knowledge that everybody knows that everybody knows", the religious leaders often begin such ceremonies with a detailed public acknowledgement of the state agencies that have contributed to making the ceremony possible.<sup>54</sup> This shows everyone, including possible religious and political competitors, how powerful and respected the religious leader is. The acknowledgement also helps it be known to everyone, including possible political and religious competitors, how powerful and beneficent the secular state leaders are.<sup>55</sup>

As their part of this process of mutual recognition and co-participation in rituals of respect, there will be present leading figures from the Sufi Orders and the Catholic Church at all major events of the secular state.

### Rituals of Respect between Religions (and Between all Human Beings)

We turn now to "rituals of respect" between the different religions themselves. If there are intense problems at this level, there can be great conflict and intolerance, even if state policy opposes such intolerance.

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<sup>53</sup> For extensive discussion and documentation of this point see Djibril Samb, *Comprendre La Laïcité* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines du Senegal, 2005), pp.140-144.

<sup>54</sup> See Chwe, *Rational Ritual*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>55</sup> For an excellent illustration of how this works at local and national Tijan rituals see, Leonardo A. Villalón, "Sufi Rituals as Rallies: Religious Ceremonies in the Politics of Senegalese State-Society Relations", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 26 (July 1994):415-437.

Though Islam is a universal religion, there are many streams of interpretation, and concrete political practices within it, as there are in all such religions.<sup>56</sup> Sufis are not necessarily tolerant or peaceful at all times and in all places. However, some leading scholars of Islamic life in Senegal, such as the philosopher and historian of Islam, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, stress that within Senegal, a central part of the taught and lived Sufism is that “God is in every human being”, regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>57</sup> Diagne argues that “Sufism is, by the very nature of its metaphysics (founded on the notion that every being is longing after the One Necessary Being which sustains its very existence) particularly tolerant to different ways of worship. One of the main Sufi beliefs is that all spiritual paths are a quest for the same divine reality under the different representations they make of it. . . . . These metaphysics have attracted a great opposition from what may be considered as a literalist understanding of Islam.”<sup>58</sup> Thus for Diagne, and many Sufi religious Marabouts I have interviewed, violence against another human being, because of religious disputes or differences, is morally repugnant.<sup>59</sup>

Diagne approvingly endorses a paper of Abdul Aziz Kebe, the Official Coordinator of Communications of the Tijan Order of Tivaouane, that stresses the “absolute ontological gender equality” of males and females.<sup>60</sup> In a private

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<sup>56</sup> An example of great variation in state regulatory practices in Muslim majority countries is found in the Religion and State Codebook that ranks 152 states on various measures of discrimination and/or restrictions against religions. Among the 152 states Saudi Arabia ranked worst, 152nd, on the discrimination/restrictive measures; Senegal ranked 12<sup>th</sup>. For a discussion of the database see the previously cited Fox, “World Separation of Religion and State into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, pp. 537-569.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Stepan, November 29, 2006, Paris. Diagne comes from a long line of Sufi preachers and is an occasional preacher himself. Diagne was formerly at the University of Dakar and an advisor to the President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf. In January 2008 he joins Columbia University as Professor of Philosophy, French, and African Studies. **[Bachir: is this affiliation and title correct?**

<sup>58</sup> Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Islam in Senegal: The Religion of the Rosary,” (unpublished manuscript, Chicago, 2007).p.5

<sup>59</sup> When I told Bachir of these interviews he commented to me that they were in no way exceptional but reflected modal opinions in Senegal. On the same day, in his April 5, 2007 public lecture at Columbia, Bachir developed the theological and ethical underpinning in Sufism, especially as understood and practiced in Senegal, of the imperative of non-violence in religious disputes.

<sup>60</sup> As quoted in Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Sufism and the Deconstruction of the Macho Ego”, (unpublished manuscript read and distributed at Columbia University, April 5, 2007). The paper he is referring to is a ninety-three page argument on the fundamental equality of men and women. See Abdoul Aziz Kebe, “Argumentaire Religieux Musulman Sur L’Equité de Genre”, Fonds des Nations Unies Pour la Population and Government of Senegal, Ministère de la Famille, du Développement Social et de la Solidarité Nationale, (Dakar: 2003). Some of the characteristic statements in this document are that the soundest Islamic jurisconsults in fact argue that “women have the right to participate in public life”, “to issue judicial decisions” and to arrive at “personal interpretations” concerning proper Islamic life. p.53. He also argues that “it is inappropriate to quote haddiths and specific verses referring to domestic life and to

correspondence with me, Kebe also stressed that Fatwas were seldom given in contemporary Senegal on major social or political issues and that in any case they are only learned legal opinions, not absolutely binding moral obligations, because even major Islamic scholars can, and do, contradict each other.<sup>61</sup>

Islam, like all world religions is of course “mutivocal.”<sup>62</sup> However, again and again in my interviews with Senegalese religious and political leaders, they chose to emphasize those parts of the Koran’s multivocality that urges tolerance as a response to diversity. For example, a Professor of Arabic read to me a number of Koranic verses (Suras) that emphasize that God created diversity in the universe. For example, Sura 49:13: “We have made of you nations and tribes so that you can know each other”; or Sura 5:48: “ If Allah had willed he would have made of you one nation”.<sup>63</sup> Many of them quoted Sura 256, in which God states that: “There shall be no compulsion in religion.” Some even quoted Sura 18:29: “Whoever wills, let him believe; and whoever wills let him disbelieve.” The right of religious “exit” was often stressed as being consistent with these texts.

It is in this context that almost no one I interviewed felt comfortable with the concept of an “apostate” and all felt comfortable with the fact that the famous Catholic Cardinal Thiandoum of Dakar came from a Muslim family. In general, in Senegal, there are strong normative codes against forms of physical attacks on the body as a form of punishment, even religious punishment.<sup>64</sup>

This “Senegalese Sufism” contributes to the numerous “rituals of respect” between religions in Senegal, and within, and between, the Islamic Sufi Orders in Senegal. Examples of such rituals between the once very influential Catholics and the Sufis abound. In the city of Popengine, both Sufis and Muslims helped build each others’

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extend their effects to the domain of public life; all misunderstandings and injustices in matters of gender equality and social construction come from this”, p.23.

<sup>61</sup> Email in answer to my questions about Fatwas on June 27, 2007. Also an interview in Dakar, December 4, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> On “multivocality” in all the world’s religions, see Stepan’s article on the “Twin Tolerations”, pp.223-226, on the “intolerant” and the “tolerant” aspects of multivocality in Islam, see, pp. 233-237.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Abdoul Aziz Kebe, University Cheikh Anta Diop, December 5, 2006.

<sup>64</sup> The political scientist and comparativist, H. E. Chehabi, who was born in Iran, visited Senegal in 2005. Upon returning, he told Stepan and Linz he was amazed at the fact that the concept, apostate, almost did not exist in ordinary Islamic speech in Senegal. Stoning to death or cutting off of hands for supposed crimes against Islam are not only illegal in Senegal but theologically unsupported by Senegalese Sufis and culturally offensive to Senegalese traditional customs.

Mosque and Church.<sup>65</sup> In Fadiouth, after the Catholic Church was destroyed in a hurricane, it was rebuilt with the physical and financial help of the Muslims.<sup>66</sup> In two cities, Ziguinchor and Fadiouth, there is a common cemetery for Muslims and Catholics.

There is also a “Senegalese Catholicism” in that, whereas in France Catholics disliked the imposition of *laïcité* in 1905, in Senegal, the Catholics are the greatest defenders of Senegal’s “*laïcité bien comprise*”.<sup>67</sup>

Within the Sufis, Donal B. Cruise O’Brien asserts that the three major Sufi orders have “well established procedures of co-existence”, that “state leadership in Senegal encourages devotional togetherness on a national scale,” and that the two great Sufi “tomb-shrines of Touba and Tivouane, . . . have become centers for the reconciliation of intractable national disputes.”<sup>68</sup>

Surveys are not very abundant in Senegal, but those that we have are consistent with the account we have advanced so far of widespread tolerance of “other” religious and ethnic groups. Three political scientists from the University of Connecticut interviewed 200 Islamic religious leaders, and a national sample of 1,500 respondents. They constructed a tolerance measure based on responses to twelve questions. The religious leaders were by no means tolerant across the board; for example, only 12% of them were tolerant of “drug addicts”. But 98% of religious leaders were tolerant of “people from other ethnic groups,” and 92% were tolerant of “people from another religious group”. Among the general population 87 % were tolerant of other ethnic groups and 78 % were tolerant of other religious groups.<sup>69</sup> Pew surveyed seventeen Muslim majority countries concerning whether democracy “could work “in their country

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<sup>65</sup> See the article in a Dakar newspaper significantly entitled “Une Famille, deux religions,” *Le Soleil*, 23/10/2001.

<sup>66</sup> *Syfia International*, 01/09/ 2001.

<sup>67</sup> This was repeatedly emphasized to me throughout a four hour conversation in Dakar with Abbé Jacques Seck, who from 1977-2000 was assigned by the Cardinal of Dakar to be a member of the Commission for Muslim- Christian Dialogue in Senegal. Abbé Seck said that the Catholic radio shows of the sort allowed in Senegal would be inconceivable in the Arab countries he had visited such as Tunisia or Morocco. Seck also stressed that Catholics did not only want to be “tolerated” in Senegal, but “respected”, and that on the whole they were.

<sup>68</sup> See his *Symbolic Confrontations*, pp.12-13.

<sup>69</sup> See Richard Vengroff, Lucy Creevy and Abdou Ndoye, “Islamic Leaders’ Values and the Transition to Democracy: The Case of Senegal”, unpublished manuscript, University of Connecticut, 2005.

or was only “a Western way”. The country where the highest percentage of respondents felt democracy “can work here” was Senegal, 87%.<sup>70</sup>

#### **Part Four: State / Religion Policy Cooperation and Conflict Concerning Contemporary Human Rights Reforms**

President Léopold Senghor, when he spoke at the inauguration of the Mourids’ Great Mosque at Touba in 1963, captured the sense of how even the leader of the Senegalese secular state could participate in the spirit of a Victor Turner-like “communitas.” Indeed, in his speech he indicated that such communitas and laïcité even entailed state/religion co-design and co-implementation of major social policies.

“Last Monday, the Head of State attended the great national pilgrimage of Popenguine. Today, he is attending the inauguration of the Great Mosque of Touba. This double attendance will astonish only those who keep ignoring the realities of Africa. For us, Senegalese, it constitutes the basis of our national policy. ....I have always found support, advice and comfort among you....Laïcité, for us, is neither atheism nor anti – religious propaganda. I give as just one piece of evidence the articles of the Constitution that guarantee the autonomy of religious communities. Our Constitution goes further; it turns these religious communities into auxiliaries of the state in its education task, its cultural task. For religion is an essential part of culture”.<sup>71</sup>

The constant mutual public displays of respect between religions and the state has facilitated policy cooperation even in some sensitive areas of human rights abuses. It has also facilitated an atmosphere where religious leaders have felt free to make arguments from within Islam against practices and policies that violate human rights. When I argued in the “Twin Tolerations” that all religions are “multivocal,” I also drew the conclusion that this necessarily implied, contra John Rawls, that it would be mistake to “take religion

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<sup>70</sup> See, The Pew Global Project Attitudes, February, 3, 2005. The same report says that Pew polled twelve Muslim majority countries as to whether it was “very important to live in a country with honest multiparty elections” and Senegal polled the highest.

<sup>71</sup> Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté 1: Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), pp.422-424. Elsewhere in the same volume he asserts “Union and cooperation between religions is a national, and vital, necessity.... Religious leaders understand this by collaborating for nation-building and by making religious cooperation one of the primary principles of their actions”. p.307.

off the agenda.”<sup>72</sup> I did so because proponents of some human rights violating policies often use religious arguments to support their positions. There thus must be a counter-response in defense of rights put on the agenda.

Ideally, this response is not only from abroad, in the name of “universal human rights”. The most effective counter-response is by a local authoritative figure, who, from within the core values of the religion and culture of the country, makes a powerful, religiously-based argument against the specific practice that violates human rights. Let us look at some examples of Senegalese state/religion policy cooperation in the area of human rights.

#### The Campaign Against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

A variety of national and international Feminist and Human Rights movements wanted to ban the practice of FGM but had been countered by powerful religious-based attacks. In the end, secular movements in the government, and some national and international NGO’s, were greatly helped by religious leaders. The Secretary General, N’Diaye, of the National Association of Imams of Senegal (ANIOS), publicly argued that there is nothing in the Koran commanding the practice, and that there was no evidence that the Prophet had his own daughters circumcised.<sup>73</sup> A law banning female circumcision was passed in 1999. To avoid the law being a dead letter, ANIOS enlisted the help of government health authorities to train Imams how to speak authoritatively about the health problems circumcision presents and to help with anti-FGM talks by Imams on radio and television. Since patterns of female circumcision are closely related to perceptions of marriage eligibility, the government, ANIOS, and national and international women’s rights organization worked together with entire adjacent villages to develop policies of “coordinated abandonment” of female circumcision so as to preclude jeopardizing marriage prospects within participating villages.<sup>74</sup>

Despite this law banning FMG, it helps make the law an increasing social reality if the most authoritative religious bodies in the country continue to campaign against the practice so that the practice is increasingly delegitimated in the religious norms and

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<sup>72</sup> See Stepan, “Twin Tolerations”, pp. 227-229.

<sup>73</sup> See the long feature article in one of Senegal’s leading newspapers, Habibou Bangré, “Croisade musulmane contre l’excision: les imams rétablissent la vérité sur cette tradition”, *Walfadiri*, June 8, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* A similar social policy of public pledges renouncing foot-binding in nearby Chinese villages with high patterns of inter- marriages proved useful.

social practices of the country . To help advance this crucial goal, Professor Abdoul Aziz Kebe, coordinator for the Tivaouane based largest Sufi order in Senegal, the Tijans, wrote a powerful forty-five page attack on FGM. The Report systematically argues that FGM is a violation of women's rights, bodies, and health, with absolutely no justification in the Koran or in approved Haddiths. Kebe argues that not only is there no Islamic justification for FGM, but that given current medical knowledge, and current Islamic scholarship, there is a moral obligation for communities and individuals to bring a halt to FGM. The Report was distributed by Tijan networks, secular ministries, and by the World Health Organization.<sup>75</sup>

Female circumcision is still a problem in Senegal, with an estimated 28% of women from the ages of 15 to 49 having undergone FGM according to UNICEF. However, the same source lists Egypt at 96%. Senegal's three contiguous Muslim majority countries have much higher rates; Mali, 92%, Guinea 95%, and Mauritania 71%. It should be acknowledged that ethnic traditions, as well as social policy are important. The Wolofs traditionally have not practiced FGM. However, it is worth noting that among ethnic groups that have a high rate of FGM, the rates inside Senegal are lower. For example, the Pular in neighboring Mali have more than a 90% rate and the Pular in Senegal have a 62% rate.<sup>76</sup>

#### Anti- Aids Policies

Another area of policy cooperation between religious and secular authorities concerns AIDS. A United Nations Development Program report on anti-AIDS policies in Muslim majority countries notes that: "In Senegal, when political leaders realized that a change in sexual behavior was necessary to contain HIV/AIDS they undertook multiple strategies, an important one of which was to enlist the support of religious leaders. Religious leaders were given training to equip them with knowledge for advocacy work. HIV/AIDS then became a regular issue of Friday prayer sermons in mosques throughout the country and religious leaders talked about HIV/AIDS on television and radio. Brochures and information were distributed through religious teaching programmes.

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<sup>75</sup> See Abdoul Aziz Kebe, "Argumentaire Religieux Musulman Pour L' Abandon des MGF's," (Dakar: Organisation Mondiale de la Sante, décembre 2003).

<sup>76</sup> All FMG rates from UNICEF statistics (Multiple Indicator Cluster Servers, MICS 1995/2005) available at <http://www.childinfo.org/areas/fgmc/tables.php>.

Since the early 1980s, Senegal has managed to keep their HIV prevalence rates low, less than 1%.”<sup>77</sup>

Some observers may think that the Muslim pattern of male circumcision alone accounts for this low AIDS rate. However, they should bear in mind that AIDS rates in some other Muslim majority African states, where male circumcision is also the norm, such as Chad, Guinea, Eritrea, Mali, and Djibouti, are two to five times higher. This is of course, not to speak of the extremely high Aids rates in some non-Muslim states such as South Africa, 21%, and Botswana, 37%<sup>78</sup>

#### Tacit Cooperation between Sufis and Secularists: Education

In social policies, cooperation does not always have to be explicit. Tacit cooperation can be quite useful. In the 1980s, as the Iranian revolution, Saudi Arabian money, and Wahhabi influences gained greater weight in the Islamic world, there were numerous articles about some trends in Senegal that seemed to be going in a more Islamist direction, using the term to mean in a more fundamentalist direction.<sup>79</sup> It appeared there could be some tensions and even conflicts between Sufi Islam and Islamists. This seems less of a prospect today. By and large neither the secular state nor the Sufis wanted to block political Islam by repression, because this would go against their prevailing spirit of religious tolerance, and also against their belief that fundamentalists grow best under repressive politics. However, neither the secular state nor the Sufis went out of their way to facilitate Islamist expansion.<sup>80</sup> A brief examination of Islamist, or what some call fundamentalist, schools or madrasas illustrates this point.

In Senegal the state provides free public schooling for close to 85% of all primary school age children.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, state schools since 2003 offer religious instruction

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<sup>77</sup> “The Role of Religious Leaders in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS”, United Nations, UNDP, 30 November, 2006, p. 19.

<sup>78</sup> See Table 4 in UNICEF, [http://www.unicef.org/french/sowc05/Table4\\_F.xls](http://www.unicef.org/french/sowc05/Table4_F.xls)

<sup>79</sup> For a review of this literature see Roman Loimier, “L’Islam ne se vend plus: The Islamic Reform Movement and the State in Senegal”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 30 ( May 2000):168-190

<sup>80</sup> For example, Sheldon Gellar in his *Senegal: An African Country Between Islam and the West* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1990), p.98 writes that: “During the mid 1980s, relations with Iran worsened because of Iran’s attempt to foster radical fundamentalist movements in Senegal. In January 1984, Senegal expelled Iranian diplomats from the country and broke diplomatic ties, which were not resumed again until February 1989... By this time Iran under President Rasanjani had reduced its efforts to export its revolution to Black Africa in general and to Senegal in particular.”

<sup>81</sup> République du Senegal, Ministère de l’Education, *Situation des Indicateurs de L’Education, 2000-2005*, (Octobre 2005).

(using authorized text books that are never Wahhabi in spirit), with the informal approval of secular and Sufi teachers alike. More and more parents are increasingly sending their sons, and now their daughters, to these tolerant, accredited, and democracy-compatible, schools.

Some parents still elect to send their children to private, often Franco- Arabic, schools. However, the Senegalese pattern of state-religious relations allows the state to partially fund such private religious schools. In return, the state inspects such schools regularly. The only schools the state does not supervise are the Koran-based schools, which some parents use as a complement, seldom a full substitute, for state education. But most of the traditional religious teachers in such schools practice Senegalese rituals of respect, and in any case, view Saudi Arabian style schools as culturally alien competitors.<sup>82</sup> In this overall Senegalese context, fundamentalist schools, as well as Iranian and Saudi Arabian aid in the education sector, find little space, or demand.<sup>83</sup>

#### Not Even Tacit Cooperation but Implicit Acceptance

Sometimes the fact that the state has a form of secularism, but, as in India and Indonesia, is in no way anti-religious, allows the government to take a policy initiative in the area of human rights that the religious leaders might not originate, or even oppose, but to which such leaders eventually accede simply because the law has been duly passed by the organs of a democratic state of which they are full participating members. In 1973, for example, after years of debate and opposition by many religious leaders, the Senegalese parliament passed a revised Family Code enhancing women's rights in the

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<sup>82</sup> Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Zaman have recently edited an invaluable book that reviews madrasas in eight different countries, see their *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). In terms of state involvement in the consensual development of a moderate curriculum these eight countries vary from the low involvement of Pakistan to the high involvement of Indonesia and India. In his Introduction Hefner asserts that "No comparison better illustrates the contextual relativity of modern Islamic education than that of Pakistan and India... the situation in the madrassas in the two countries could hardly be more different", p.23. Unfortunately, Senegal was not included in the study, but at the primary and secondary level, Senegal would seem to be close to India and Indonesia, and completely different from Pakistan, especially from the situation in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province where there are only about 1,400 registered, but 15,000 unregistered, madrassas. See *Ibid*, pp.85-86.

<sup>83</sup> The above two paragraphs are based on talks with an official from the Ministry of Education and to the Head Master and some school teachers in a major private Franco-Arabic school in Dakar, December 12, 2007 that I visited, with my Columbia colleague, Ousmane Kane. They told us that visits by authorities occur regularly, often once a month. I also interviewed a Marabout in Touba who was a son of the former Khalife General of the Mourides. The marabout happened to teach the history of Islam in a state school and felt the new materials being developed were acceptable. The marabout also taught in a Koranic only school.

areas of divorce and inheritance. The code still remains controversial, many of Muslim leaders calling it a “Women’s Code.” Worse, when it was issued, the Khalif General of the Mourides pronounced that the family code would not be enforced in the Holy City of Touba. At the time Touba was a very small new settlement and the government turned a blind eye. However, now that Touba is the second most populous city in Senegal, this is increasingly problematic. In 2003 a group of Imams created a pressure group, CIRCOFS, to reverse the code. However, in an interview, a leader of CIRCOFS acknowledged that, given the resistance of the state, CIRCOFS had few prospects of success. He seemed unhappy, but reconciled, to this result.<sup>84</sup>

#### Limits of State/Religion Cooperation: Polygamy

Polygamy is proving one of the most intractable issues for human rights advocates and feminist groups. Female education reduces the rate, but it is still substantial in Senegal; 49% among women with no instruction, 34% for women with a primary education, and 27% for women with at least a secondary education.<sup>85</sup> The Family Code introduced a partial reform, in that it allowed women to ask for divorce, and made men entering into marriage sign a statement as to whether they agreed to enter a monogamous marriage or not. If men signed the affirmation that their marriage would be monogamous, they could be legally charged with breaking the law if they became polygamous. Feminists correctly argue, however, that for social reasons, there is not sufficient enforcement of this law.<sup>86</sup> Here we must observe what Max Weber would call “an inconvenient truth.” Some African political systems under periods of non-democratic leadership, such as Tunisia, or Turkey under Atatürk, simply abolished polygamy. But under a democracy such as Senegal’s, until public opinion changes more strongly against polygamy, the practice might be eroded, but not completely legally abolished.

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with Imam Mbaye Niang, at his “Unfinished Mosque of the Airport”, on December 9, 2006. The Imam is also the President of a small political party MRDS which includes Catholics, and stressed that “when one creates a party, one must respect the constitution.”

<sup>85</sup> See Fatou Sow, “Les Femmes, L’État et le Sacré”, in M. Gomez- Perez, ed., *L’Islam Politique au Sud du Sahara* (Paris: Kartala, 2005), pp. 283-307, esp. p. 302

<sup>86</sup> For the views a prominent feminist, human rights ,medievalist, and former Minister of Culture on these and other issues see Penda Mbow, “ L’Islam et la Femme Senegalaise”, *Ethiopiennes: Revue Négro-africaine de Littérature et de Philosophie*, numéros 66-67 ( 2001). Also see Sow, “Les Femmes, L’État et le Sacré”.

## **Conclusion**

The historical pattern in Senegal of French and Sufi mutual accommodation in the rural areas, and the urban dialectic between French colonial “concessions” and Senegalese “citizen’s voting conquests”, helped socially construct a workable consensus concerning once quite conflictual divisions within Senegalese society. This consensus contributed to Senegal’s never having a failed state, never having a military coup, never having a period where the state (French or Senegalese) ruled with no constraints on its ability to violate citizens’ human and political rights, and never producing political leaders who were able to successfully use religious or ethnic differences to create regime destroying conflicts to advance their interests.

That Senegal actually has a socially-constructed, overlapping consensus, is itself the consensus view many leading scholars of Senegal. The historian, Andrew F. Clark, speaks of a balance in Senegal “between religion and politics that has served both sides exceedingly well”.<sup>87</sup> Donal B. Cruise O’Brien comments that “The strength of the Senegalese state, its connections with social networks and institutions, has been assured above all by Sufi Muslim intermediation”.<sup>88</sup> Mamadou Diouf talks about the “social creativity” of 19<sup>th</sup> century Muslim and Catholic indigenous cultures in the four major communes, a creativity which resulted in a ‘two sided religiosity.... whose civility is the product of a compromise and of revisions of cultural outlooks.’<sup>89</sup> Leonardo A. Villalón begins his important monograph on Sufis with the statement that “socio-political cleavages based on religion, whether between Muslim and non-Muslim or between Sufi orders, are virtually nonexistent”.<sup>90</sup> Why was this rights-enhancing regime accepted by both secularists and Sufis?

Three conclusions, with comparative implications for what I call the “the multiple secularisms of modern democracies,” would seem to have emerged strongly from this essay.

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<sup>87</sup> See his “Imperialism, Independence, and Islam in Senegal and Mali”, *Africa Today*, Vol. 46 (double check), Number 3-4 (1999), p.165.

<sup>88</sup> See his “Sufi Symbolism and the State in Senegal, 1975-81” in his *Symbolic Confrontations: Muslims Imagining the State in Africa* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p.49.

<sup>89</sup> In his previously cited “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal)”, p.694.

<sup>90</sup> See his *Islamic Society and State Power in Senegal: Disciples and Citizens in Fatick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.2

First, in a polity like Senegal (which in its religious intensity of belief and practice is closer to India and Indonesia than it is to France) this overlapping consensus could not have emerged if the French had tried to impose a religiously hostile separation of religion and state. Any attempt to impose French style secularism in Senegal would have met resistance and blocked cooperation. With their powerful, but limited military resources, French colonialists could probably have put down major jihads, but they would have been subjected to some internal criticism from the electorally based Republican institutions, and most importantly, without accommodation, they could not have peacefully and productively developed the peanut economy in the interior of Senegal or received the black Senegalese military support they so valued in WW I. The French thus dropped ‘hard secularism’ and aspired to be an “Islamic power” in Senegal. To further this goal, they gradually adopted, and were “seen” to have adopted, the numerous policies we have documented; they supported pilgrimages of influential Sufis to Mecca, they created a Muslim Tribunal in 1857 (even after giving Senegal a Deputy and the right to vote), they gave some financial support for Mosque construction, they supported Arabic language training for Islamic schools, and increasingly they attended major Sufi ceremonies and were seen to give public respect to marabouts.<sup>91</sup> All of these policies violated 1905 French style *laïcité*, but none of them violated human rights, democratic values, or what I call the “twin tolerations”.

Second, Senegal’s overlapping consensus would not have emerged if Sufi leaders had violated all of the many possible versions of democratic secularism, by trying to impose a complete fusion of religion and state of the sort that much of political Islam often attempts. Senegal is possibly the only country in the world where Sufis are not only the overwhelming majority of the population, but have never been systematically repressed, marginalized, or controlled by state authorities. The outlines of this possible future were already clear in the early twentieth century. However, this future would have been put in jeopardy if a major Sufi leader such as Amadu Bamba had struggled for a fusion of religion and state. The French would not have accepted such fusion, and the effort to create this fusion would have required a jihad, which probably would have been

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<sup>91</sup> For a documented and convincing discussion see Chapter 4, “France as a ‘Muslim Power’”, in Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation*, pp. 75-96. Also see, Donal Cruise O’Brien, “Towards an ‘Islamic Policy’ in French West Africa”, *Journal of African History*, 8, 1967, pp. 303-316.

unsuccessful. In fact, Bamba made a virtue of the non- fusion of religion and state. As Robinson argues “Bamba put a premium on autonomous Muslim communities that would live, work and reproduce themselves in conditions of stability”.<sup>92</sup> Bamba, who in the interior of Senegal had great prestige for not submitting to France, struggled not to be involved in the direct administration of state policies, and thus was not seen by fellow Muslims as the collaborative ally of the French colonial state.

Third, laïcité, “well understood, and properly practiced”, not only worked for the secularists, but for the Sufis. Indeed, Senegal must be included with India when human rights activists and democratic theorists alike reconsider “the multiple secularisms of modern democracies”.

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<sup>92</sup> David Robinson, “The Murids: Surveillance and Collaboration”, *The Journal of African History*, 40 (1999),p.200.