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Religion versus state and the struggle for control in society's developmental arena: a review

The modern conception of a state as a liberal democracy envisages that the state takes on the role of sole agency in realising the values of equal liberty and distributive justice to its citizens. Literature on society's development has focused on and dwelt thoroughly on this supposed agency of the state in society. In doing this, the role that religion and other agents play in development is inadvertently ignored; hence there is no space provided for contestation of the dominance of state in society's varied arenas. This article revisits the scholarly debate on state versus religion and reviews some selected literature on the actual role that religion play in society's development. The study proposes another paradigm different from popular narratives which only exult the role of state in society. It is argued that this is important in devising a way forward in which other credible stakeholders in society's varied arenas are allowed agency roles in society's development.

Introduction

Before the inception of the modern world (1780-1914)[1] and the modern liberal state, religion and religious actors were at the helm of affairs in the running of society; religion and state were effectively mixed (Bruce 1996; McLeod and Ustorf 2003). But the Enlightenment era, which gave birth to industrialised *cum* secularised societies, initiated ideas which attacked religion and its exalted position in the affairs of society (Aquila 1987; Mueller 2013). This led to the supposed dethronement of religion, its replacement with a system upholding human reason and challenging theological doctrine, often derisively called dogma (Teitel 1993; Laski 2003). Hence, modern liberal democracies, which also resulted from this change in the status quo, took on the principle of separation of state and religion, in which religion was thought to have exhausted its usefulness and could be conveniently relegated into antiquity (Mueller 2013; Wallace 2013).

Contemporary political thought is rethinking the above modernist view in the light of recent awareness that religion and its networks play a special role in the public sphere (Wilson 1982; Rubin 1994; Berger 1999; Whetho and Uzodike 2009). The utility of religion and faith-based actors and their ability to contribute to the socio-political sphere of society is anchored on their potential to "heal", which can be conceptualised as encapsulating the spiritual and physical realms (Simkhada 2006; Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer 2005; Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana 2009). Hence, religion and faith-based actors serve as points of reconciliation and peace in divided societies (Abu-Nimer 2003; Harpviken and Røislien 2005; Hayward 2012) and also contribute to the task of delivering social services. This has led to openness by some governments to include faith-based actors in their social service delivery plans as exemplified by the fact that President Bush signed legislation that allowed faith-based actors to help in social service delivery in the United States (Cnaan and Boddie 2002).

These perspectives on the interface between religion and state provide the background for the analysis of the role of religion in poverty alleviation and development in liberal democracies against the backdrop of the exalted role of the state. This central aspect in the discourse on agency has been widely researched, as the (far from complete) selection of studies reviewed in this paper can attest. The aim of the current research is to survey some of these studies, highlight some of the salient points therein and then identify and interrogate the gaps in some of the assumptions in the studies. Notably, the literature on poverty alleviation and development in different societies has dwelt thoroughly on the supposed role and hegemony of the state in society. The role that religion and its networks play

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1   See further Bayly (2004)

in such a crucial task as development is not thoroughly interrogated. There is no space to contest the dominance of the state in society's varied arenas including that of poverty alleviation and development. This review also interrogates some literature on the actual role that religion and its networks play in society's development arena. The idea is to propose a paradigm different to popular views in the literature, which only exalt the role of the state in development while ignoring the role of religious networks. This is crucial in devising a way forward in which other credible stakeholders in society can contribute to society's development in concert with state efforts.

Religion versus state in history: the debate

Liberal democracy is the brain-child of Enlightenment philosophy with its notion of individual freedom, the supreme place of human reason against dogma, and the notion of progress of human society. In essence, the Enlightenment[2] created 'a self-conscious and revolutionary radicalism and a new vision of human potentialities and the possibilities of their liberation' (Tame 1977: 215). The liberation is from the perceived "shackles" of authoritarianism associated with religion which had been the dominant system governing European societies prior to the Enlightenment. Tame (1977: 218) further affirms that 'for the philosophers of the Enlightenment the decline of Graeco-Roman civilisation and the rise of Christianity constituted a terrible tragedy: the Middle Ages were for them truly Dark Ages, when the power of reason was once more subject to superstition and overwhelming religious and political tyranny'. The thoughts of philosophers such as: Rene Descartes (1596-1650) – *cogito ergo sum* – human reason against dogma; Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) – upholding the ideals of reason, liberty, science and human progress; Hegel (1770-1831) – separation of church and state; Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) – *Homo homini deus est* – Man is a god to man; Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) – the death of God; Karl Marx (1844-1900) – religion as opium; etc., in one way or another provided tools for the discourse on the "irrationality" of religion; the separation of religion (church) and politics (state); and how individual freedom should be supreme in modern states. Their thinking also contributed to the atheistic feelings found in liberal states in which religion (and its role in public life) is increasingly confined to antiquity. Mueller (2013: 17) affirms that 'an important component of the set of reforms proposed by Enlightenment thinkers was to create a clear separation

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2   It is pertinent to state that the "Enlightenment" as used in this article is not presumed to be a single ideological edifice. The author understands and acknowledges that the era stretched across centuries (1650-1800) and presented many diverse elements of philosophical thoughts. See further Jonathan Israel's (2001) thesis on the Enlightenment era.

of Church and State'. However, in recent times, the resurgence of religion and its increasing influence in the public sphere of many societies has resurrected the debate on what role if any can (or should) it play in society's various arenas. Social and political science scholars have dwelt on these issues and much literature attests to the interest in the struggle for dominance between religion and state in the public sphere, especially in the area of poverty and development alleviation.

Certain studies, including that of Haynes (1996; 1998), Mandaville (2009), Callaway (2012), Basten and Betz (2011), Drum (2010), Meyer (2007), Madeley (2002), Mueller (2013), Buchwalter (2006), Hervieu-Lèger (1990), Hackett (2005), Peralta (2012), have contributed to this debate on the role of religion in government or the rhetoric on the relationship between state and religion. These scholars take various positions on the question of the importance of religion in modern liberal societies, in the light of the modernisation and secularisation theories which envisaged the "death" of religion and its redundancy in the affairs of modern states. The questions then are: what is the relationship between religion and the state in modern democracies? Should religion and the state be separate? Do religion and indeed faith-based networks operate within a paradigm that is alien to the ideals of a modern liberal democratic state?

Haynes (1996), Mandaville (2009) and Callaway (2012) try to answer the question of how religion and religious beliefs affect politics in modern liberal democracies in different parts of the world. Haynes's (1996) focus is on the relationship between religion and politics in post-independence African countries. Haynes's study looks at Christianity, Islam and various "syncretistic" movements and their relationship to the politics of post-independence Africa. The study examines the various roles that these religious traditions played in the African political process in its historico-social and international contexts. For Mandaville (2009) the focus is on whether or not religion matters in global politics. The author believes that 'it would seem that we need to answer this in the affirmative, but with certain very important qualifications' that include 'the importance of understanding when and how to grant importance to religion in seeking to understand global politics' (2009: 120). Callaway's (2012) interest is on the nexus between religion and politics, which has become an important theme in political philosophy. For the author, 'one reason for the importance of the topic is that religions often make strong claims on people's allegiance, and universal religions make these claims on all people, rather than just a particular community' (2012: 1). Also, Callaway's study aims 'to survey some of the philosophical problems raised by the various ways in which religion and politics may intersect' (2012: 1). The study concludes that although secularism is linked with the understanding of economic progress in modern societies, 'nevertheless

religion continues to be an important political phenomenon throughout the world, for multiple reasons' (2012: 5).

On the level of philosophical analysis, Basten and Betz (2011) and Peralta (2012) focus on Marx and Weber and seek to assess how their thoughts influenced the role of religion in the economic development of modern liberal democracies. Basten and Betz (2011) focus on answering the question of whether religion affects politics and the economy. According to them, this question is the subject of a long-standing debate that saw Marx and Weber taking different positions. The authors note that according to Marx, economy influences culture and religion but the reverse is not the case, while Weber rejects this view, asserting that religion (Protestantism) and culture 'by nurturing stronger preferences for hard work and thriftiness had led to greater economic prosperity' (2011: 5). Using the context of Switzerland, Basten and Betz's findings are that 'on a more general level … religion is not just, as Karl Marx would have us believe, "People's Opium", but can, by its own force, significantly change people's preferences, both self-regarding and social ones' (2011: 26). Peralta's (2012) study confirms this view after assessing the role that the Catholic Church plays in the politics and governance of Mexico. The study examines the different political positions and actions that the Catholic Church has taken in the politics of the country especially in the transition to democracy in 2000. Peralta argues that the Catholic Church in Mexico contra Marx's conception of religion 'has not been an "ideological state apparatus" [rather it] has played a role as auditor of public life, being a strong critic of the post-revolutionary political system, even becoming an agent who helped to establish in Mexico a competitive and plural party system' (2012: 17).

Moreover, the studies by Haynes (1995), Drum (2010) and Meyer (2007) also assess the influence of religion in liberal democracies across the world. Haynes (1995) explores the role played by religion and its relationship to politics in sub-Saharan Africa. The study's focus includes the relationship of senior religious figures to the state and the political importance of "popular" religions. The study finds that popular religion is very important in sub-Saharan African states as it 'reflects the power of ordinary people to take charge of their own spiritual well-being' (1995: 90). Popular religion for the author also offers solidarity at a time of social upheaval and crisis which characterised modernity and also helps to fulfill people's spiritual and material needs' (1995: 90). The author concludes that 'the relation of the religious hegemons to state power is … reflective of the effects of modernisation, in the way that both political and religious power is closely tied to the wielding of material resources' in modern sub-Saharan African states (1995: 106).

Using the context of Western Australia's State Parliament, Drum's (2010) study assesses the nexus between faith and modern politics. The study interrogates the

observation that parliamentarians within that context do invoke Christian beliefs in public life, which raises the question of whether there is an effective separation of state and religion in Western Australia. The study concludes that there is an effective separation of politics and religion in the context of the study. In spite of this, the author notes that the religious affiliations of the parliamentarians do influence 'their decision-making, but even when it did, alternative more inclusive terminology was employed, such as "Judeo-Christian values", "our cultural heritage" and personal "life experiences"' (2010: 61). Meyer (2007) asserts that 'religions have made a worldwide political come-back' (2007: 2); there is a general revival of religion in all cultures and 'this is not just in the area of personal religious faith which respects the rule of law in democratic societies, but also seen in the politicised religion of fundamentalists whose claims are also being revived and making bids for State power' (2007: 2). The study looks at the possible future relationship between religion and politics and notes that there are some contradictory tendencies which border on 'political co-operation between religious and cultural traditions, on the one hand, and a fundamentalist policy of conflict, on the other' (2007: 2). This is to say that fundamentalism is a stumbling block to the proper functioning of religion in the modern liberal state.

Following from the above and from other problems that suggest that religion and politics (state) are incompatible especially in modern liberal democracies, scholars like Madeley (2002), Mueller (2012) and Buchwalter (2006) are of the view that religion should not be mixed with the politics of the state. Madeley's study focuses on the relationship between politics and religion – the impact of the religious factor (which is often seen as an anachronistic survival from a pre-modern era) in Western Europe politics (2002: 42). The author faults religion for not providing the social glue which Durkheim and other sociologists regarded as the prime social function of religion in traditional societies (2002: 62). However, for Madeley 'it is quite possible... that on one measure at least, the impact of religion could, in fact, increase as "political Christians" engage themselves for and against the "new politics" of peace, environment, development and other issues' (2002: 64).

Mueller's (2012) focus is on the proposition accepted in the West that the state should be separated from the church. This is seen clearly in Huntington's proposition, which 'claims that the separation of Church and State was a salient feature of Western Civilisation, which explains why Western countries tend to be democracies' (2012: 1). However, Mueller notes that Huntington's assertion takes it for granted that the state is separated from the church in Western democracies. The author does not agree that this is so because 'a closer look at the relationships between State and Church in these countries...reveals considerable financial and institutional linkages between the two institutions'

(2012: 3-8). The study critically documents and discusses this relationship between state and church and observes that 'State support for religion today cannot be claimed to provide any form of public good, it merely subsidises the private benefits that accrue to those who do practice some religion' (2012: 17). The study proposes the complete separation of church and state in congruence with the Enlightenment agenda with respect to church and state (2012: 17). In line with Mueller's position, Buchwalter's (2006) study analyses the relationship between religion and politics under conditions of modernity and globality from a Hegelian perspective. The study 'explores Hegel's distinctive account of the relationship of religion and politics, focusing on the manner in which it articulates the aims and assumptions of modern political thought while supporting cross-cultural dialogue and the possibility of a differentiated global culture' (2006: 64). The author notes that Hegel's account of the relationship between church and state 'bears strong resemblance to conventional liberal-enlightenment positions' (2006: 65). This Hegelian position rejects the idea of a state religion and insists on the separation of state and any particular religious creed.

On the other hand, the view of Hervieu-Lèger (1990), Haynes (1998) and Hackett (2005) are that religion (and the role it plays) should not be discarded or relegated into the background in the discourse on how to realise people's rights in liberal states. Hervieu-Lèger (1990) looks at the nexus between religion and modernity in the French context. The intention of the study is to develop a new approach to understanding the concept of secularisation in modern societies like France, in which there is a resurgence in religious movements and popular religion post-1968. According to the author, this resurgence calls into question the presumption of secularisation in such a society since 'the theoretical argument can now be advanced that, far from being antithetical to modernity, [the] "renewals" of religion are in harmony with modernity' (1990: 15). The author concludes that instead of the popular conception that sees modernity and religion as mutually exclusive there should be a re-conception that sees the two as mutually inclusive since secularisation, as understood in the conception of modernity, is 'no longer simply the "decline" of religion but is the process whereby religion organises itself to meet the challenges left by modernity' (1990: 15).

Using a global survey method, Haynes (1998) evaluates the nexus between religion and politics. For the author religion and religious actors have openly rejected the ideals of a secular state which tends to relegate religion and faith to the realm of privatised belief. This study observes that currently, religion is 'increasingly concerned with political issues, challenging the legitimacy and autonomy of the primary secular spheres, the state, political organisation and the market economy' (1998: 2). Religion's return to the public sphere in the so-called secular states of the West 'is moulded by a range of factors, including

the proportion of religious believers in society and the extent to which religious organisation perceives a decline in public standards of morality and compassion' (Haynes 1998: 15). Hackett (2005) situates the impetus for the expanding sharia law in Nigeria in the broader global perspective of the resurgence of religion in the public sphere. The author notes with satisfaction the positive impact that religion is making in the democratised and globalised public sphere (2005: 99). She is of the view that since religion is becoming an ever more important aspect of people's lives in the so-called liberalised and democratised countries, it should not be ignored in making decisions that concern their well-being.

The crucial role of religion and faith-based networks in development

From the foregoing, it can be observed that there is a dichotomy in the literature between religion and state, and subsequently there is a divergent understanding of the actual role of religion in the modernised world. Notably, the role that religion and indeed faith-based networks can play in development was neglected in modernisation theories which, following the thoughts of social thinkers like Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Freud, etc., conceptualises development and industrialisation as going in *pari passu* with secularisation. It was thought that as societies develop the role that religion plays in such societies diminishes. Hence, secularisation theories, which according to Boender, Dwarswaard and Westendor (2011: 8) assume that religion would lose its meaning in the public sphere due to modernisation, become prevalent in modern social science discourse. Because of the view that religion and development are mutually exclusive, religion and the possible role it can play in the so-called modernised societies was ignored as irrelevant and 'in some cases viewed as obstacle to economic growth' (Landmark 2013: 14). It is worth noting that most modernisation theorists conceive of development as economic growth hence the focus on such things as the GDP of a country as a mark of development of the country. Colombatto (2006: 243) affirms that in literature on growth and development scholars agree that development 'refers to growth when dealing with proportional changes in GDP or – more frequently – in GDP per capita; and to development when analysing living standards – including features that do not necessarily form the object of monetary measurement'. This conceptualisation of development helps to distance the possible role religion can play in the public sphere as it is seen as not having any business in economics.

However, the recent resurgence of religion has greatly discredited the prophecy of its death and has led to an increased realisation of the potential role that religion can play in development. In 1980 the World Bank, in a special issue titled "Religion and Development", recognised this role and 'called for a re-

evaluation of the relationship between religion and development, questioning the validity of secularism for development' (Landmark 2013: 14). Since that assertion, there has been much literature on the issue of religion in development, with many theories emanating from academic circles. These theories take into consideration the values, potentials and resources which make religion a force to be reckoned with in development. They also focus on the reconceptualisation of development to include human development and the realisation of values that lead to true human development and poverty alleviation. On these developments, Landmark (2013: 15) observes that one of the trends which has consequences for the new interest in religion within development academics is the increased recognition of faith-based organisations (FBO).

Subsequently, various scholars have looked at the increasing role that faith, faith-based networks, and FBOs play in development and in helping governments to ensure that social services reach all citizens. Specifically, Marshall and Van Saanen (2007), Brennan (2007), Whetho and Uzodike (2008) showcase the importance of faith and faith-based networks in development and well-being. Marshall and Van Saanen (2007) look at global poverty, and the suffering of people who lack the basic needs of life and the lost opportunities in human development. The authors observe that in the efforts aimed at ameliorating this situation, the possible contribution and impact that faith actors can make to the situation is not acknowledged (2007:xi). They find this problematic as they are positive about the ability of faith and faith-based networks to help development in Africa. They advocate for greater partnerships between development and faith institutions. The study seeks to bridge the gap between faith and development, as they argue that faith is germane to the proper development of people and in bringing people out of poverty and suffering. Brennan (2007) also explores the relevance of faith in development, seeking to show the importance of exploring faith's role in development and trying to understand whether faith is a hindrance or a help in fostering development in a state. Brennan observes that 'given the increasing reference to faith and God in politics it is clear that faith and spirituality are beginning to play a more prominent and public role in people's lives' (2007: 1).

Brennan (2007) concludes that 'whether one calls for development to be secularised or says that no development can take place without taking into account people's spirituality it would seem that either way faith is a significant player in the development context' (2007: 11). Whetho and Uzodike (2008) affirm this significant role of the faith-based network in development especially as reflected in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Their study is situated in a broader study of the role that religion and faith-based organisations play in helping post-conflict states to overcome conflict and to enter new political agreements and development. Their analysis also seeks to understand how

faith-based networks helped in the post-conflict democratic transition in the country. The study finds that involvement of faith-based networks as agents of development or as facilitators of peace-building in post-conflict DRC is positive and points to the intent of spirit of liberation theology in the country (2008:77).

Campbell (2009), Olarinmoye (2012), Reeves (2010) are positive about the role of FBOs in development. Campbell (2009) analyses the potential of faith-based public policies in changing lives and promoting social policy goals. The author's analysis takes a community networks approach which according to him 'subsumes individual and organisational level concerns within a broader framework' (2009: 130). The study's findings suggest that 'faith-based policy initiatives have significant potential as a means of expanding the reach of government services' (2009: 142). This study is part of a larger research area which proposes that governments allow faith-based networks the opportunity to contribute to welfare policies of states since they can help to improve people's lives, which is one political objective of states. Olarinmoye (2012) agrees with this focus on the role of FBOs in ameliorating the developmental failures of governments in Africa. His study uses the context of Nigeria and seeks to 'explore the various dimensions of FBO engagement with development … and their interaction with other development aid actors' (2012: 1). The study examines the faith-development discourse and assesses the implication of this discourse for development in African countries. After evaluating the role FBOs play in the development project in partnership with the government in Nigeria, the author concludes that 'FBOs are important but silent actors in development whose success is closely tied to their religious nature and whose activities can be further enhanced if the constraints arising out of their religious nature can be reconciled with the logic of the state' (2012: 1).

Also for Olarinmoye (2012: 10-11) 'the Nigerian case has shown that FBOs are important organs of development in Africa. Their spread, high societal penetration, and flexibility of programmes inspire trust among the recipients of development aid.' Reeves (2010) also agrees that FBOs are doing great work in partnership with the state in development, as can be seen in Australia. For the author, FBOs there are doing emergency relief work and there is a heavy demand for them due to the tightening of criteria to access some government benefits and residual payments. The study also reveals that 'people of faith are heavily motivated by their religious beliefs leading to compassionate help even in the face of limited resources; FBOs meet clients' immediate need irrespective of socio-economic situation, or behaviours' (: 114). This says that FBOs do have potential and are successful in helping governments better the lives of the people. However, the author's concern is 'how long the faith-based sector can keep providing services

set against a state which seeks to make access to state resources increasingly difficult' (2010: 121).

In addition, Fust (2006), Ndiaye (2006), and Schüle (2006) substantiate the claim that FBOs contribute positively to development in states. Fust (2006) observes that 'religion and spirituality constitute creative political and social forces; they are forces for cohesion and for polarisation; they generate stimuli for social and development policies; they serve as instruments for political reference and legitimacy' (2006: 9). Hence, FBOs have a great work to do in helping states to achieve developmental policies; and they 'undoubtedly play an important role and in many contexts can be partners and have done good work' (2006: 11). Fust suggests that we should not treat religion and politics as separate actors but as worthy partners helping each other in achieving the development of a state (2006: 11).

Ndiaye (2006) agrees that FBOs' development efforts cannot be ignored since they are effective due to the fact that, historically, religious actors are well trained in the field of development (2006: 24). The author observes that FBOs' participation in the politics of development arises as a result of the 'inadequacies of concrete State actions in favor of the poor' (2006: 25). This is a reality in African countries and hence the proliferation of faith-based networks involved in development projects in African countries. However, despite the optimism about the role of FBOs in development Ndiaye also warns that care must be taken to avoid the proselytising tendencies of FBOs. Schüle's (2006) study partly responds to this warning. The study presents concrete experience and observation of how FBOs help in bettering the lives of people. The FBO that the author analyses is Christian-based but the author observes that its religious beliefs do not impact on its agenda of bringing hope and assisting people in need irrespective of their race or religion (2006: 29). He suggests that considering the need for such an effort towards bettering the lives of people 'FBOs should distinguish themselves by having a particular sensitivity [and] aim to identify with the human beings concerned in a holistic manner, with their history, their culture and their religion' (2006: 31).

Clarke (2006), Dillon (2013), and Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) also contribute to this discussion. Clarke (2006) looks at the relationship between FBOs, civil society, and development. His study looks at the debate on donors to development projects in civil society. He has two main arguments: that traditionally, donors have always supported organisations that are faith-based and also that 'faith-based organisations play an active role in the lives of the poor and in the political contexts that affect them' (2006: 835). The fact that FBOs play an active role in improving the lives of the poor is the more reason why they have become the focus in developmental discourse and policy (2006: 845). This, says the author, shows that faith matters and the convergence of faith and development poses

a challenge – the problem of engaging 'with faith discourses and associated organisation, which seem counter-developmental or culturally exotic to secular and technocratic worldviews …' (2006: 846).

Dillon (2013) is indifferent about the role of faith-based values in the developmental process and in the wider social and economic change in developing countries. For the author 'faith-based values and 'development processes' are neither inherently 'good' nor 'bad', it depends on how we interpret and practice them' (2013: 2). The author also says 'faith-based values play diverse and often contradictory roles in development [as] they can be inspiring and frightening, positively transformative and destructive, inclusive and exclusive, open and fundamentalist' (2013: 2). For Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) the effort of FBOs as service providers and in development and their partnership with government in the developmental project is positive and should be encouraged. Their study is inserted in the wider discussion on the relationship between church and state, which, according to them, 'persistently raises important policy and practical issues' (2013: 469). After looking at specific services provided by FBOs the authors observe that FBOs compared favourably to secular organisations; FBOs 'are pervasive in the provision of social services' (2013: 484). This calls for greater research towards understanding how FBOs can work well with government towards effective service delivery.

Ragan (2004), Wuthnow, Hackett and Hsu (2004), Kissane (2007) and Lipsky (2011) evaluate the effectiveness of FBOs' efforts in development. Ragan (2004) compares the performance of faith-based affiliates and other social service providers. Policymakers, programme managers and researchers are asked about the relative effectiveness of services provided by FBOs as compared to those provided by secular organisations. This is a fundamental question as 'answering the effectiveness question could have a significant impact on efforts to increase involvement of faith-based organisation … in the delivery of government-funded services' (2004: 3). After the analysis of the research data, the author finds that 'there *were* differences in performance of faith-affiliated and secular nursing homes and home health agencies' (2004: 29). Wuthnow, Hackett and Hsu (2004) agree with this conclusion and support the literature that suggests that FBOs have a significant role to play in the task of service delivery. Their study examines the effectiveness and trustworthiness of FBO services based on the perceptions of the recipients of these services. The study compares 'contact with and perceptions of the faith-based organisation, nonsectarian organisation, government agencies, hospitals, and churches and employs a method that takes account of respondents' varying portfolios of service providers' (2004: 1). The authors find that 'mean effectiveness and trustworthiness scores are relatively high for FBOs in comparison with those for the public welfare department' (2004: 14).

Kissane (2007) compares FBOs to secular providers in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of both. The author explores perceptions of FBOs from the points of view of directors of both secular organisations and FBOs and from the recipients of service from these organisations. The study finds that 'overall, about half of directors viewed FBOs as capable or more capable than other organisations in providing services to needy families, while the other half were concerned about FBOs, particularly their ability to provide employment-related and education services' (2007: 110). Similarly, Lipsky (2011) evaluates the strength of faith-based organisations in providing health services in sub-Saharan Africa. The author observes that despite the many advantages of FBOs in service delivery, there is a reluctance by international organisations to work with them because of the tradition of separation of church and state prevalent in Western countries (2011: 25). The author advises that 'considering their prominence in the field of health service delivery more outreach is needed to ensure the inclusion' of FBOs in service delivery (2011: 35).

Appraisal: balancing the state versus religion debate – the relevance of Joel Migdal

These studies have contributed to the scholarship on the issue of religion and state and also on the crucial role of religion and faith-based networks in the area of development. Notably, the discourse on the role of religion and faith-based networks in development as here presented follows the assumption in the discourse on religion versus state, in which the role of the state has been exalted above the role of religion in society's development. This, I argue, constitutes weaknesses in the available literature on the role of religion in development, since this role (if any) has to be negotiated with the state, apparently in charge of the modernisation and development of society. Markedly, it can be observed that Colombatto (2006) and Landmark (2013) base the arguments in their study on the conceptualisation of development from a utilitarian point of view which sees development in terms of economic progress embedded in modernisation theories. In this understanding, religion and its networks/affiliates become redundant and seem unable to play a role, since the envisaged development is supposed to go together with secularisation. The current study questions this conception of development and proposes that further studies on the issue of religion versus state in development should consider a conception of development which goes beyond that found in modernisation theories. Filling this gap will help lay the foundation for the analysis of the proper role of religion and faith-based networks in development.

The views in the literature on the role of religion and its networks in development are positive. However, some of these assertions of this positive role of religion in development fail to acknowledge the negative role which religion and its institutions have played in the politics of state; for example, religion has been used as a mobilising force to foment conflict and violence in different parts of the world (Uzodike and Whetho 2008). According to these authors, this has to be considered in any effort to deploy religion and its affiliates in society's developmental arena. However, it is important to note the predominantly positive role that religion and its institutions have played and play in the development of society. Notably, religious institutions have helped in educating Africans and many post-colonial intellectuals were products of missionary education (Mwale 2013). Also, liberation theology has been an important tool for political mobilisation and the fight against repression and unjust structures in South America (Levine 2014). Crucially, in recent times religion has been a tool for a type of mobilisation which has influenced states and their foreign policy (Judis 2005; Baumgartner, Francia and Morris 2008). Arguably, a total separation of state and religion, as some of the reviewed literature seems to say, cannot be sustained in the face of the important roles religion has played in the politics of the state. Historically, the evidence is legion where there has been a symbiotic (or mutually dependent) relationship between church and state.

Against this backdrop, the current study proposes perhaps a new paradigm to help circumvent the traditional (modernist) understanding of the hegemonious role given to the state to control developmental affairs in society. Such a paradigm should be able to recognise the crucial role of religious networks and other civil society organisations in development. This study suggests Joel Migdal's (1994) State-in-Society approach that conceptualises the state (a political organisation) and other agents of society's development as social forces competing in society's varied arenas. Migdal (1994) argues with the notion of the strong state that has the sole agency role in the development agenda of society. For Migdal, according to the state-in-society approach, the state is not an organic entity nor does it have ontological status, since it does not exist outside or above society – it is part of society as are other agents of society's transformation project (Migdal 1994; Lambach 2004).

Conclusion

This study surveyed selected literature on the long debate on religion versus state, with a special focus on how the debate plays out in contemporary times, especially in the issue of the agency role of the two institutions in the development project of modern societies. Some studies incline towards the Modernist conception of

development, and seem to buy into the view that only the state has the hegemony of control in the societal arena of development and hence religion and faith-based networks play (or should play) second fiddle as transformation agents. These studies fail to question such assumptions as the exalted status given to state and politicians in the affairs of society.

This study is of the view that a proper conceptualisation of religion and state as different social forces struggling for dominance in society's multiple arenas seems to be lacking in the extant literature on this debate. This study agrees with the premise that religion (and its institutions and networks) are also social forces whose positive contribution to society cannot be ignored. The argument is that they constitute part and parcel of society as civil society organisations as does the state (government) which, according to Migdal (1994), is just another organisation and social force within society.[3] Therefore, the arguments, based on the belief that states have the monopoly of the agency to organise and transform society and that religion and its institutions and affiliates are "second class" agents, can no longer be sustained in social and political science discourses. This study suggests that the actual role that religion and indeed religious actors can play in the transformation of society should be further assessed on an equal basis as that of the role of the state in society.[4] This point of departure grounds the thesis for future research on the crucial role of religious networks in the development agenda in modern liberal democracies.

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3   The arguments in literature on this issue so far brings out clearly what Joel Migdal (1994) in his explication of the State in Society Approach, conceives as struggle between social forces for the control of society. This paradigm is important towards a new way of conceptualising the nexus between religion and state in society's development arena. The current study suggests that perhaps this paradigm should be the controlling paradigm as a way forward in this issue. Assessing this further constitutes ground for future research.

4   This assertion may seem far-fetched because of the fact that by nature, most states are political consequences and built on the Modern conception of a state as seen in some of the reviewed literature. However, the argument is that adopting the suggested paradigm, can lead to allowing grounds for the emergence of other contesting paradigms challenging the conception of a state from a modernist perspective which upholds the hegemonious role of state in society.

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