FAITH BRINGS DOWN REGIMES. THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN TRANSITIONAL PROCESSES

Patrycja Sasnal. Head of the Middle East and North Africa Project, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Poland
In 1990, a year after the Polish Round Table Agreement, which ended ‘communism’, a French catholic weekly *La Vie* put the following title on their front page: “Faith brings down regimes” (Wiera obala rezymy, 1990). The publication surveyed Poles, Hungarians and Russians (in Moscow only) asking them if religion played a big role in democratizing the system in their countries: while 73% of Poles said it played an important role, 23% were of a different opinion; 48% of Hungarians said that role was important, while 46% responded differently; and only 28% of inhabitants of Moscow said it was important while 54% said the role of religion was unimportant.

The response of Poles to the question put by *La Vie* points to the important and specific role of the Catholic Church in the Polish transition – a role that cannot be assessed in normative terms, for as much as the church helped to ease the transitional tensions in 1989 it also became one of the biggest institutional beneficiaries of transition.

This paper will discuss the role that religion played in the Polish transition to democracy after 1989. It will then try to draw parallels with the changes in the Arab world after 2011, proposing a four-fold categorization of the manner in which religion is incorporated into the political systems. An attempt at assessing how much religion in public life jeopardizes the foundations of democracy will follow based on an analysis of specific religious elements in the public sphere.

Since ideologically socialism and religion do not go together, in the pre-1989 socialist Poland the state remained in conflict with the Catholic Church, which in turn became instrumental in the creation of the opposition to the regime.

Religion has always been a potent mass mobilizer in Polish religious society, a mobilizer that either needs to be co-opted by the ruler or quelled. But since ideologically socialism and religion do not go together, in the pre-1989 socialist Poland the state remained in conflict with the Catholic Church, which in turn became instrumental in the creation of the opposition to the regime. The pre-1989 propaganda ingrained in people that religion was a private matter. The radical division between religion and politics had been developing over the years in a significant part of the society – a fact of some importance for the post-1989 developments. However, many Poles – most probably a majority – not only felt a strong spiritual affinity to the church but also looked to it for political inspiration. For most of the communist’ era, albeit in opposition to the regime, the Catholic Church could function fairly autonomously until it engaged in politi-

---

1. ‘Communism’ is used here only nominally. By no standards could the political system in the pre-1989 Poland be factually called communist.
cal and social debate, mainly after 1978 when a Pole became pope. The 1980s marked the most politically active period for the Catholic Church, largely owing to the leadership and social guidance of the pope. Back in 1990 La Vie asked Poles if they thought that John Paul II had an impact on the return of freedom to the East – 89% claimed he had a decisive or very important impact (Wiara obala rezymy, 1990).

The 1980s marked the most politically active period for the Catholic Church, largely owing to the leadership and social guidance of the pope.

The church joined the Round Table in early 1989 with three roles to play: as an observer, mediator and guarantor (Dudek, 2006). In these landmark negotiations – thought to have ended communism in Europe – the two bitter enemies (the communist regime and the Solidarity opposition) agreed on a plan of democratic reform. In this difficult agreement the church gave Solidarity a security valve against accusations from anti-communist radicals who would later see the talks as betrayal and, vice versa, it gave the ruling side guarantees that what was agreed would be respected. The church also supported subsequent reforms and, overall, gave the revolution a moral flavour.

Already in April 1989 a bill regulating church-state relations was agreed but not yet put to a vote: the church had a legal status, the freedom of religious operation and organization, the right to its own TV and radio stations, cinemas and theatres, and the right to regain the property taken by communist rule. Therefore, the Polish Church got much more than, for example, the church in neighbouring Czechoslovakia from the central-rightist government of Vaclav Klaus. In the June 1989 parliamentary elections the church was to remain formally uninvolved, but in reality priests in their parishes often instructed people in their sermons on how to vote or which list to sign. The church supported General Wojciech Jaruzelski (a representative of the regime) for president and later the head of the Catholic Church in Poland, Józef Glemp, chose Mazowiecki as the best out of three candidates for prime minister. It is hard to say if his voice was decisive but certainly he was seriously consulted.

Generally then, in the pre-1989 period, the church adopted one major rule: avoid confrontation with the communists, engage in dialogue as long as the crucial principle of church autonomy is upheld. However, as much as the church unified the Polish people before 1989, its role and position in a secular democratic country after 1989 became a divisive issue.

Mostly because Poles did not really want to see it play as big a role as it had. The same survey in La Vie (1990) also asked if the respondents thought that priests should engage in political activities to defend democracy and freedom. In response, only 36% said yes and 55% said no.2

As much as the church unified the Polish people before 1989, its role and position in a secular democratic country after 1989 became a divisive issue.

POST-1989 GAINS

In 1989 the Catholic Church emerged as a primary single player in Polish public life – very visible and potent, often imposing its doctrine on formal solutions, either directly or indirectly. As a direct example, in 1990 religion began to be taught in public schools and in 1993 abortion was made illegal. In 1993, a Concordat was signed with the Vatican, a document that usually recognizes the Catholic Church in a coun-

try, which is also the biggest benefiter of the accord in terms of legal and financial profits. In compensation for what was taken from it, before 1989 the so-called Property Commission gave the church 50 million dollars and more than 66,000 hectares of land of a value impossible to estimate (Pietraszewski, 2012). These were the immediate gains for the church as a result of its political and social influence.

One example of the indirect imposition of Catholic discourse was the difficulties of the subsequent Polish ombudsmen after the transition. Professor Ewa Łętowska and Tadeusz Zieliński served this function precisely when religion energetically re-emerged in public life. They defended the secular character of the new state and the rights of non-believers engaging in heated debates over issues such as teaching religion in public schools or displaying religious symbols in public places. The rightist parties even sought to curb the Ombudsman’s prerogatives. Eventually, the differences of opinion on social issues with a religious background further divided the new political elites (who were once a unified anti-communist conglomerate).

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

In Poland, constitutional reform took a long time and was immensely divisive partly because of the need to constitutionalize the place of religion in the state. Owing to this divisive nature, the constitutional reform had to slow down and take a gradual and cautious path. In April 1989, the parliament amended the 1952 Constitution in accordance with the transitional period’s needs and the Round Table Agreements. Seats in the lower chamber (Sejm) were divided 65% to the ruling Communist Party and its allies and 35% to be distributed in an electoral process but at the same time it was agreed that the upper chamber (Senat) would be set up. Elections to the Senat were to be free and democratic. The elections took place on 4 June 1989 with the Solidarity camp taking 35% of seats in the Sejm and 99 out of 100 seats in the Senat. It was a sweeping victory that surprised even the opposition, given the short time for preparation.

In the electoral process the church played a two-fold role: on the level of parishes it was able to generate support for the Solidarity camp in Sunday sermons (at that time a vast majority of Poles would attend Sunday mass) and Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs served as an additional network of electoral mobilization (Słodkowska, 2009). As a result of the elections, the ruling Workers’ Party was unable to form a government so, in August 1989, Tadeusz Mazowiecki from the Solidarity camp was sworn in as the first free prime minister. In December, another amendment to the Constitution was introduced, the so-called December amendment. It scrapped the ideological preamble and allowed for political pluralism in Poland (Bankowicz, 2010, p.140). It needs to be remembered that the 1952 Constitution was still valid. In January 1990, the Communist Party was dissolved. In April 1992, the Sejm accepted the constitutional bill that regulated the process of drafting a new constitution. It specified that the National Assembly (NA, both chambers of parliament and the president) would have to approve it before it was put to general referendum. Constitutional drafts themselves could be put forward by the president, the constitutional commission of the NA, by a group of 56 members of the NA and a group of 500,000 citizens (since 1994). But work on the new constitution was slow and the system so opaque that a ‘Small Constitution’ was approved in October 1992: it regulated the relation between the legislative and executive branches and also local governments. In the general constitutional debate there were three contentious issues: the scope of social rights (liberals clashed with those who advocated a more robust role of the state in solving social problems), the position...
the president in the system and the role of the Catholic Church, and subsequently the freedoms of conscience and belief. The last issue was catalysed in the heated debate about the wording of the preamble: whether there should be an invocation to God in a constitution of a secular country. In all three contentious cases a consensus solution was approved with the preamble finally worded by Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Marek Borowski in the following way:

(…) We, the Polish Nation — all citizens of the Republic,
Both those who believe in God as the source of truth, justice, good and beauty,
As well as those not sharing such faith but respecting those universal values as arising from other sources,
Equal in rights and obligations towards the common good — Poland,
Beholden to our ancestors for their labours, their struggle for independence achieved at great sacrifice, for our culture rooted in the Christian heritage of the Nation and in universal human values (…) (Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997).

It was not until April 1997 – eight years after the ‘revolution’ – that the new Constitution of Poland was approved and accepted in a national referendum and it finally replaced the 1952 Constitution.

PARALLELS WITH THE ARAB WORLD IN 2011
Similarly to 1989 the 2011 Arab uprisings have re-opened the global debate on the role of religion in public life and, more precisely, on how Islam and politics can be reconciled. In fact, if one compares the Polish and Arab transitions one may come to a conclusion that after a revolution in a society where religion had been repressed in one form or another its role will usually be emphasized in the new system. In 2006 Jürgen Habermas began his article on ‘Religion in the public sphere’ in the following way: “Religious traditions and communities of faith have gained a new, hitherto unexpected political importance since the epoch-making change of 1989-90” (Habermas, 2006).

Such has also been the case in the Arab world. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and other countries, indirectly affected by the riots like Morocco, have seen the rise of Islamic parties – both belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood or to the Salafi form of political Islam – establishing themselves as key players in the transition. This has created new internal divisions and disagreements that seemed sedated or had never existed before. Out of more than a hundred parties that were established in Poland in the early 1990s there were none as outright emanations of religious institutions as the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt but, toutes proportions gardées, one could certainly find religiously inspired parties. In the 1991 elections the radical Catholic Christian National Union (ZChN), a marginal offshoot of Solidarity that had religious elements in its agenda, won 8.7%. The ZChN ideological declaration stated that the “only axiom guiding public and private life are the norms of the Catholic religion, which is the epitome of truth” (Kowalczyk, 2014).

The 2011 Arab uprisings have re-opened the global debate on the role of religion in public life and, more precisely, on how Islam and politics can be reconciled.

In the processes in all countries that erupted in the Middle East in 2011 religion played an important role but two of them stand out as opposing examples of the ‘end result’ for religious parties: Egypt and Tunisia. The main Egyptian Islamist party is banned and since December 2013 considered a terrorist entity, while its Tunisian counterpart came second in the October 2014 parliamentary elections and stands firm as a major political force. The developments after 2011 have shown more than just these two – Tunisian and Egyptian – modes of relationship between political actors and religious principles in the Arab world. They
can be conceptualized into four distinctive models of relationship between religion and state:
• Integration via consensus – governing in a coalition that necessitates dialogue and concessions to survive politically in a divided society. For example, the Tunisian Ennahda has been actively involved in the constitutional process of the country, forming a united majority front with other secular forces. In Poland, no similar religious parties were established but religion was present in the programmes of many parties, while some – like the aforementioned ZChN – made it a basis for its agenda altogether.3
• Antagonization – governing unilaterally in a divided society, relying on the former system’s bureaucratic behemoth (Egypt) or relying on a new system (Iraq). In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood did not rule in a political coalition, which encouraged it to act unilaterally.
• Imposition through authority – prevalent in monarchies, allows the rulers to retain both their autocratic and religious rule (i.e. Saudi Arabia);
• Integration via confessionalism – (Lebanon, failed in Iraq).
The first two modes beg the following question: is there a significant ideological difference between Ennahda and the Law and Justice Party (the Egyptian MB) or did political circumstances decide the fate of the two organizations? What are the religious principles that guide some political parties both in Islam and Christianity?
Religion is an important part of life and for many people an indispensable feature of their everyday existence. Muslim societies are religious – their religiosity is measured above 80% (World Values Survey, Gallup). 95% of Poles declare themselves religious (and Catholic) compared to 98% of Egyptians. It is not the religiosity that may prove problematic in times of transition but the religious principles that a society deems indispensable.

“In all its forms Islam claims to be able to legislate for the whole of human activity” (Halliday, 2003). Islam encompasses and thus regulates all spheres of life: It is din (religion), dawla (state), and dunya (world). It therefore raises questions about whether a secular system is attainable for a Muslim society and puts arguments in the hands of those who object to such a system. On the other hand, there are principles in Islam that mimic those of a democratic order, i.e. shura.

The definition of religious principles in Islam is problematic. Islam is not static but has various schools of thought and interpretation. Depending on a political actor’s intentions, that actor may promote either tolerance or Jihad. The bigger debate about the compatibility of Islam with democracy has no tangible application because (1) it is a theological debate that was already discussed by Islamic scholars in the 19th/20th centuries – many of whom claimed that Islam is democratic in its nature and (2) most political parties with religious agendas explicitly endorse democracy – those that do not are Salafi and often do not take part in the political process at all. And so it is more logical to argue that political circumstances decide the fate of religious parties rather than differences in their ideology. If it is not about religious principles then how does a political party fit in a democratic order? What are the concrete challenges for a state?

MODERN DEMOCRATIC ORDER. HOW DOES RELIGION FIT IN IT?
A democratic order in Western political thought requires that the church be separated from the state, primarily for the sake of inclusiveness of the latter as a society is made up of people with different world views, religions, needs and so on. The Arab world is religiously diverse – often numerous denominations, both Muslim and Christian, coexist within a country –, which logically calls for a secular system. “No society

---
or culture exists in isolation, but they borrow from each other. Thus, even if the concept of the secular was originally a Christian concept, or a modern Western concept, this does not mean that it is illegitimate in a Muslim society (any more than the use of the number zero, for example, is illegitimate in a Western culture)” (Brown, 2008).

In order to assess how much of religion in a political programme and system does not compromise the foundations of freedom and tolerance let us again look at Poland, a religious and democratic country (a ‘flawed democracy’ according to the Economist Democracy Index). Polish experience in transition shows that ideological inclinations of political parties come to the fore in the process of drafting a constitution and in its final stipulations.

The Arab world is religiously diverse – often numerous denominations, both Muslim and Christian, coexist within a country – which logically calls for a secular system.

In order to assess how different the levels of religious presence in public sphere are in Egypt and Tunisia, certain elements of that presence and visibility need to be identified: invocation to God in the preamble; Sharia as a foundation of state legislature; impact on citizen’s freedoms – i.e. abortion, inheritance laws, equality of men and women in court, freedom of belief, religion classes in public schools or religious elements in the curricula.

The following examples help to estimate the level of ‘safe’ religious presence and some of the rules guiding state-religion relations:

• Invocation to God in the preamble or lack thereof is less important than the constitutional process itself. There is no invocation in the 1997 Polish Constitution and the preamble is a great example of ideological consensus but it had been preceded by a vehement debate about the wording of the preamble. Moreover, it mentions faith in God and Christian heritage. The two 2014 Constitutions of Egypt and Tunisia clearly refer to Islam. However, while the Tunisian preamble is a good example of a modern, consensual and well-written text, the Egyptian one seems more like an exercise in specifically antagonizing the part of the society that supported the MB. This exclusive character is in this case much more important than an invocation to God, etc.

• The indication in the Constitution that Sharia, or other religious law, be a foundation of state legislature only matters in as much as it has practical influence over the jurisdiction of the courts. There is no such indication in the Polish Constitution but on 28 July 1993 a Concordat was signed between the Vatican and Poland, an agreement that does bind religious and civil law in certain circumstances. 4 Art. 12 of the Concordat stipulated that religion was to be introduced to schools in accordance with the principle that the parents decide upon their children upbringing. 5 It also stipulated that a canonical marriage has almost the same legal effects as a civilian marriage. The Concordat was signed by a transitional government when the parliament was dissolved by the president, which also stirred controversy over whether the government had the necessary legitimacy. In Egypt, for example, as stated in Art. 2 of the Constitution "the principles of Islamic Sharia are the main source of legislation" (Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2014). In practice, it means that family affairs are handled by family courts in accordance with religious law. It can lead to inconsistencies that verge on breaching democratic rules. For example, in Islam a man can divorce his wife simply by announcing it to her, she cannot do the same but has to go to the court to

get a divorce. It is problematic to explain in this case that the constitutional rule of equality between men and women is upheld.

- Religion promotes certain values and hence can influence the legal system but cannot limit citizens' freedom. In Poland in the 1990s, the Catholic Church influenced the right wing, which accentuated the role and rights of the family and the nation, not the state or the individual. That characteristic is yet another analogy with what Islam prioritizes: the umma, the Muslim family/community as opposed to individualistic liberal thought. And so abortion was made illegal in Poland in 1993 as a result of church activism. However, fundamental rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights cannot be legally threatened by limiting inheritance rights for women, questioning equality of men and women or the freedom of belief itself.

- Religion classes in public schools and religious elements in the school curricula do not improve tolerance or democracy but are a common feature in many democratic countries. In 1990 the Catholic religion was introduced in public schools, with two classes per week for an overall period of 12 years. The problem with teaching religion in public schools in homogenous societies, such as the Polish one, is that it outcasts those individuals who do not wish to attend. They are few and stigmatized, hence the issue has never left public debate in Poland. In Egypt religious instruction (At-tarbiyya al-islamiyya) is part of the obligatory national curriculum – made mandatory by art. 24 of the Constitution – and there are very frequent references to the Quran in textbooks. Copts are taught their own religion but everyone – Muslims, Copts and others – use the same Arabic and social sciences textbooks that are full of the Sunni Muslim religion.

- Religious signs in public places can be considered offensive. Since 1997 there has been a cross on the wall in the Polish parliament, placed unofficially at night by two right-wing parliamentarians. Even though 70% of Poles in 2011 were in favour of it hanging there, 20% would still like it taken down (Szacki, 2011). If the cross had not been put up and a major state institution were free of religious designates, there would be no need to engage in a fiery debate about taking it down, which if done now would be a strong, almost anti-Catholic, statement in itself for some. In the Arab world religious insignia are present in public institutions but the scale of their presence differs from country to country. In many republics their presence is not significantly higher than in Poland. However, people bring religion with them to state institutions. For example, they interrupt work to pray, which does not happen in Poland.

- Religious invocations in public speeches do not compromise democracy as long as they are not derogatory but they can be and often are populist. Such references are commonly used, for example very often by presidents of the United States. Moreover, Polish politicians on both sides of the political spectrum play on the religious sentiments of Poles. For example, some politicians will go to church to be seen attending mass to appeal to the more rightist constituency. Similarly, in the Arab world religious language is commonly used by politicians and people in the public sphere in general. Moreover, as in Poland, giving an aura of religiosity in certain circumstances becomes a political necessity in

---

6. For example, according to Art. 9 of the Agreement Between the Italian Republic and the Holy See of 1985 amending the Lateran Treaty, Italian state provides religious education in all public schools below university level. In the same article, the Italian government guarantees the right “to choose whether or not to receive religious instruction.” Likewise in Greece on the basis of the Law of Education (1985), religious education is compulsory for all Greeks in primary and secondary school. Everyone has a right to be exempted from these classes through an application submitted by parents. In Ireland religious classes are optional but the Catholic Church runs 90% of all primary schools.

7. Saudi Arabia is roughly on one end of this spectrum with the whole country being a religious symbol. On the other hand, in the Tunisian parliament there are no apparent religious symbols. The main symbolic element is the emblem, with a crescent and a star above. These are the symbols of the Tunisian flag.
order to rally support. One good example of such behaviour, strengthened by the need to rid the MB of their monopoly of religion, is President of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who frequently uses religious references in his speeches. Tunisian politicians are no different in this regard.

• Sermons (and khutbas) have a direct impact on how people think and what they do politically. For example, in Poland on the occasion of the 2003 referendum, which asked if Poland should join the European Union, the bishops wrote a letter based on the words of Pope John Paul II to be read out as sermons during the Sunday mass to convince people to vote ‘yes’. Some ultraconservative and rightist priests chose not to read it in their parishes. This example shows that in fact there are two churches in the Catholic Church – there is the Episkopat (the authoritative body) and there are the parishes and priests in them who, to a large extent, remain independent, free to say, advocate and promote whatever they see fit. They may have the utmost influence on the people, their lives and decisions. In the Arab world there is a similar division, already recognized by prominent scholars such as Maxime Rodinson, between official and popular Islam. The authorities are well aware of the influence that preachers (khutaba’) exert on the people. This is why the Ministry of Endowments in Egypt pre-ordains the topic for every Friday sermon on its website. It is then easier to control the mosques and promote whatever they see fit. They may have the utmost influence on the people, their lives and decisions. In the Arab world there is a similar division, already recognized by prominent scholars such as Maxime Rodinson, between official and popular Islam. The authorities are well aware of the influence that preachers (khutaba’) exert on the people. This is why the Ministry of Endowments in Egypt pre-ordains the topic for every Friday sermon on its website. It is then easier to control the mosques and promote whatever they see fit. They may have the utmost influence on the people, their lives and decisions.

SENSITIVITIES TO PLAY ON

Authoritarian regimes keep convincing people that they are the only real bulwarks against the alarming rise of extremist Islam. Is there really no middle ground between an anti-Islamist authoritarian regime and extreme Islam? If religious Poland was to be taken as an example, there certainly is a middle ground for a moderate religious role in a democratic system. Rather than religion itself, there are other obstacles to democracy in the Arab world. Modern citizenship requires a sense of belonging and responsibility for the common good. The phenomenon of religion as identity has the potential of resurging and thus taking a centrestage at the time of crisis. Perhaps national identities and citizenship are not yet strong enough to overpower religious affinity in the Arab countries, which at the same time does not mean that the two cannot be reconciled. In Poland, religious ethos is identified in the Polish mind with the national ethos, not so much with private or social life ethos. There are specific arguments in favour of separating religion from the state in a religious society (with a high level of religiosity); in other words, if religion is removed from political narrative there are fewer tools of political manipulation left for the politicians to use. Furthermore, secularism safeguards against exclusion on religious grounds and it protects religion itself from being pauperized or impoverished. These arguments need to be known to the public, otherwise separating religion from the state will be seen as a strange West-
ern' invention. It goes without saying that secularization was socially much easier for Poland. It aspired to a bloc – European Union, the Western model – that was already secularized. That was the model Poland wanted to emulate – it might have influenced the way people saw religion in their new post-1989 lives. That is not (yet) the case in the Arab world.

CONCLUSION

Religion has been a significant factor in political transitional processes in the post World War II period: from the Indian peninsula to Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/1990. In Asia there are numerous examples of transitions in countries with a Muslim majority and minorities: India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia. In Europe there are already various levels of secularization of political systems, roughly with France at the one end and Poland at the other. The case of religious Poland, which had recently gone through a transition, is of particular interest here but there are also other examples of similarly democratic and religious countries: Ireland and Italy. In the Middle East, Israel is a democracy with active religious parties such as Shas – an ultra-orthodox party that advocates a state run according to Jewish law – there is also an ultraorthodox group that does not recognize the state. Nevertheless, Israel has remained a very pluralistic society.

Overall then, regardless of the kind of religion, religious societies can and should form democratic systems of power. The following is a list of religious societies and their countries’ ranking in the Economist Democracy Index 2012: Ireland (ranked 13), Italy (32), Greece (33), Israel (37), India (38), Poland (44), Indonesia (53), Malaysia (64), Turkey (88). Unfortunately, Arab countries only start with Tunisia at 90 and end with Saudi Arabia at 163 and Syria at 164!

In Poland, secularization came with time as a new generation was brought up in a different system and richer society. Simultaneously, the church has struggled to find its proper place in the public sphere in Poland. Fewer and fewer people go to church on Sunday.\textsuperscript{11} This process was already predicted in the transition period. Polish sociologists in 1990 posed the following question: is the Polish Church ready to confront a pluralistic liberal society based on rules of competition? In short, in Poland changes in the relationship between religion and the state occurred out of demographic and economic necessity. The former is there in the Arab world – more than 70% of its inhabitants are less than 30 years old – but the latter is not, and there is no certain promise of a better future, which eventually may make changes in the sensitive religion-state duo slower. Neither the state nor religion, and certainly not society, remain constant though, which makes these changes certain to occur, albeit slowly.

\textbf{In Poland, secularization came with time as a new generation was brought up in a different system and richer society.}

\textsuperscript{11} The principle of separation of church and state demands that the institution of the state operate with strict impartiality vis-à-vis religious communities; parliaments, courts, and the administration must not violate the prescription not to privilege one side at the cost of another (Habermas, 2006). But in the Arab world there is no other side for the moment. Atheist coming-outs do happen more and more often – in absolute numbers they are insignificant but they stir up a dis-proportionally large debate, a debate that in Poland started in 1990s and still continues to this very day.

\textsuperscript{11} According to official church data, only 40% of Poles are churchgoers while at the beginning of the 1990s it was around 70%.
REFERENCES


