



# **STATES, RELIGIONS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

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**“Religion and government will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together.”**

**- President James Madison, Letter to Edward Livingston (1822)**

# THESIS

**Any form of state-religion alignment  
threatens epistemic vulnerability and  
cognitive diversity**

# OVERVIEW

Background



Theory



The Model



Implications

# BACKGROUND

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**Religions:** informal, humanly devised constraints that provide existential resources and are based on metaphysical assumptions

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**States:** formal sets of constraints and rules that structure political, economic, and social interactions

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**Mental Models:** *cognitive bundles* of myths, dogmas, and ideologies (ideas)

# THEORY

- **Susceptibility to new knowledge (epistemic vulnerability) and cognitive diversity are threatened by state-religion alignment**
- **Epistemic vulnerability: A cognitive disposition to evaluate and categorize one's knowledge and to be open to assessing new knowledge before adoption**

# THE MODEL

		State	
Religion		Vulnerable	Invulnerable
	Vulnerable	Social malleability (Maximum arbitrage)	Legal entrenchment (Limited arbitrage)
	Invulnerable	Teleological entrenchment (Limited arbitrage)	Path-dependency (Zero arbitrage)

# IMPLICATIONS

- Legal entrenchment: Increased barriers to legal change
- Teleological entrenchment: Increased barriers to religious/cultural change
- Path-dependency: Minimal to no legal and cultural change; lock-in state
- Social malleability: Maximum arbitrage between *all* mental model groups (legal, social, cultural, etc.)



**THANK YOU!**

**QUESTIONS?**