

## **„POLITOLOGY OF RELIGION“**

***Center For Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade, 2009***

...and they marched on Linz like a stream, chanting mystically „Our lives, our faith, hang on our sword, Endue us with courage, Lord“. The Protestant peasants rightly prophesied as their defeat came to a murderous end on the open hills near Gmunden at the hands of the deeply Catholic Count Pappenheim who occasioned to mark his victory by presenting a gilded statue of Saint George to the Church at Gmunden.

Nor was the murderous campaign at Gmunden to be the last one of this imperial field marshal in the Thirty Years' War. Together with Count Tilly, Pappenheim entered the Protestant city of Magdeburg in 1631 to claim victory for the Catholic League.

„Hungarians, Croats, Poles, Walloons, Italians, Spaniards, French“, wrote Otto von Gericke, Magdeburg Burgomeister in 1631, „whose violence and cruelty were due in part to their common hatred of the adherents of the Augsburg Confession... Then was there naught but beating and burning, plundering, torture, rape and murder... and thousands of innocent men, women and children, in the midst of a horrible din of heartrending shrieks and cries, were tortured and put to death in so cruel and shameful a manner that no words would suffice to describe“.

Like the Count Pappenheim, inspired by the purity of the religious conviction, many a men across the globe unleashed waves of catastrophe upon populace who, despite the longing for peace, look at their religion as the treasure of their being.

Yet, not all consequence of religious fervor are as lachrymal.

„Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid;“ reads the Mayflower Compact, a document full of enchantment of Christian glory and one that President John Adams referred to as the foundation of the U.S. Constitution.

„Simply put, despite the attempt to sidestep religion as the source of political behavior, it is clear that, indeed, it is a determinant of politics“, writes Professor Miroljub Jevtic in his new book *Politology of Religion* (Jevtic 2009).

In this ambitious book, Professor Jevtic lays out a powerful argument that today's prevailing approach to the study of the impact religion has on politics is inadequate because it treats religion as a separate sociological entity that, like an ebb and tide, brushes against the secular political process. Departments and university classes called Religion and Politics reflect this divide as though religion is not political - as though politics is not religious.

„That is why a new science has been born, *Politology of Religion*“, tells me Professor

Jevtic and adds that Politology needs to „formulate theoretical contours and the subject of examination in order to separate itself from the other sciences about religion that are not political, like philosophy and sociology on one hand, and theology, on the other“.

So with the new discipline comes new terminology.

A composite, politology is a semantic splice of politics and logic, that seeks to reserve its new English name for the disciplinary connotation on the examination that religion, as the motive and source of human action, has in politics. Modeled after the continental European languages some that form a convenient one word such as the German *Religionspolitologie*, the semantic composite implies that there is a certain degree of political logic that is exclusively derived from religious convictions of the participants and that such conviction is an intrinsic, and not secular, part of politics, understood to be a political process that defines the nature of governing.

As an implicit attempt at a new paradigm, *Politology of Religion*, through its examination of instances of political behavior across the globe, argues that Political Science must departmentalize in an additional scientific set because the existing political anomalies, derived from religion and its doctrines, can no longer be evaded. These anomalies, as a result of human action, may not necessarily be by human or religious design but are, indeed, real outcomes, both fatal as the sack of Magdeburg as well as glorious like the Mayflower Compact.

In the subsequent 500 pages, the book then seeks to live up to the expectations of a new paradigm by focusing on the functions it seeks to perform. It tells, as Thomas S. Kuhn (1996) outlined, the types of religious entities the world contains, posits the legitimate problem for the political science and calls upon the scientists to attempt to derive solutions to these issues. As such, *Politology of Religion* is a scientific work that seeks to mobilize and catalyze new research but one based on the premise that human action is not just a political event but that such action has an additional, implied component that can be extrapolated from examination of the complexities of religion.

The author thus departs from the mainstream political thinkers, deeply influence by positivist and behaviorist methodological principles, and resembling the thinkers of the Austrian school of economics, believes that the “explanation in terms of events alone cannot tell the whole story, because it necessarily omits an important component of reality - the concept of purposive action“. (Dolan 1976). The book thus indirectly argues that the second, counterfactual component of politics is often evaded in the mainstream political science because, as directly unobservable phenomena, it makes scientists uncomfortable.

Yet the author, apropos this methodological subtlety, is meticulous at inventory of the religiously motivated purposive action. Consider toleration, for example, a civic virtue many today view as an offspring of secularism but whose absolutist roots are in Christianity and imbued in the very fate of Jesus. „On the other hand, while in Christianity the intolerance of others was a result of a departure from the example of Jesus conditioned by the change in the role of religion in the state, among other great world religions the intolerance against different religious teachings was implanted in the very fundamentals of the faith“, writes the author. „Precisely because of this, the basic subject of this contribution must be the assessment of real and apparent

parameters through which we can analyze whether religion, at all, allows or not that which we call religious and political toleration" (Jevtic 2009).

Or the paradox of the German post WWI Protestantism that facilitated the rise of Hitler: „All of this is especially important in light of the fact that Adolph Hitler was not sympathetic to Christianity. On the contrary, numerous sources and his statements show that he was antagonistic to the Christian teaching“, writes the author and juxtaposes the German Protestant paradox. „By supporting Hitler, a large majority of Protestants, perhaps unconsciously, supported the destruction of the Christian character of Germany and created the preconditions for a process that is unavailing today“ (Jevtic 2009).

Against this Protestant backdrop in Germany, the author also takes inventory of the industrious and stabilizing role Protestantism played in the US. Seeking refuge from persecution, and liberty to exercise its brand of Christian tradition, various denominations in the US accepted toleration not just as an absolutist principle rooted in their own religious doctrine but also as a necessity for the tranquility of their social compact. The result of extreme religious diversity that necessitated tolerance in the US, warns the author, is not a result of diversity per se, but a product of a common absolutist doctrinaire guidepost present in all of disparate Christian denominations in the US. The common theological guidepost of tolerance, over time, morphed into secular social mores that have tamed the political discourse.

The author notes that, while western countries imported Christian conceptualization of tolerance not just into their legal codex but also into cultural mores of everyday behavior, the situation with Islam is much different. In Islam, the doctrine of its own superiority formulates implicit social hierarchies so that the concept of tolerance, unlike in the West where it is absolute, is relative, changing notion of what constitutes toleration. For a non Muslim in an Islamic society, absence of existential security is a reflection of relative and perceived absence of salvation of Islam itself hence, for example, modern era pogroms of Coptic Christians in Egypt and a harsh, often bloody, internal political discourse among Muslims themselves.

As a result, the legal concept of rights, which West treats as the foundation of a modern civil society, is much different in Islam than in the Western societies. While in the West a right is an intrinsic endowment any human being possesses whether there be God or not, in Islam a right is granted by God exclusively so that, say, the United Nations charter of rights cannot compare with the rights sanctioned by God. Holy Quran is unequivocal on this: „Whoever (declines to confirm and) does not judge by what God has sent down, those are indeed unbelievers“ (5:44) and „wrongdoers“ (5:45) (Unal 2008).

On the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights the author writes: „The position of the majority of the Islamic countries is precisely opposite to it. Even a light analysis of the Declaration OIC [Organization of Islamic Conference] made shows that there is no conversation of concrete rights of humans in it, as in majority of documents of that type. Precisely such watered down text allows for implementation of rights that particular categories of citizen find discriminatory. The human rights that OIC talks about are mentioned in the context of the Islamic ideology and not in the context of human rights that makes up the doctrine of the UN“ (Jevtic 2009).

The author also puts to the test Samuel P. Huntington's theses that the war in

Bosnia is an example of the *clash of civilizations*. „Our goal will be to examine whether Huntington was correct to characterize the Bosnian episode“, as such writes the author.

The author is detailed in explicating the Islamic doctrine as the inspiration for Bosnian Muslim struggle to create a first Islamic state in Europe as well as Islam as the motivating factor behind Kosovo Albanian Muslims and their separatism. The high level of detail in this analysis suggests that the author seeks to reach his Serbo-Croatian speaking audience in the region and point to them the religious dimension behind the conflicts involving Bosnian Muslims and those in Kosovo. After considering the evidence, the author concludes that the policy of the Islamic Community in former Yugoslavia that incorporated both the Bosnian Muslims and the Kosovo Albanian Muslims „announced an offensive and destruction of all secular institutions and discrimination against all who are against that. Particular importance in the Islamic Community’s media is the talk of Jihad as the means for achieving such objectives“ (Jevtic 2009).

For the purposes of reaching out to its Balkan audience, the book dwindles off into, what some in the West may consider, minutia: Ecumenical separatism among the orthodox Christians in Montenegro, or the decrees of the International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality. As such, along with the style of writing, the work resembles a regional university level student textbook.

By the end of the work, it is hard to escape the dual sentiment of the read: besides implicitly seeking a new analytical paradigm, the work also seeks to reach out to the local audience yet the enormity of the paradigm leaves a reader wanting more details for every section that seeks to illustrate the paradigm sought. One wants to know more about Hitler’s vows to destroy Christianity just as much as about Bahmani sultans whose Islamic policy in India was to kill 100,000 Hindus every year.

Short on policy prescriptions, *Politology of Religion* achieves what it was after - to raise new questions and to look at the religious phenomena through the prism of dual components that comprise human behavior - events and the motivation.

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