

**„POLITICS OF RELIGION AND NATIONALISM. FEDERALISM,
CONSOCIATIONALISM AND SECESSION“**

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It is risky, with just 16 years of this new millennium, talk about a *Zeitgeist*, but we are breaking through an historical and capital change indeed. This change shatters the evolution of the central political entity of the last five centuries, especially against the evolution of the last two hundred years.

The idea of Nation-State is been tested constantly, and it is no more a valid concept to analyze the inner reality of our countries. In recent history ethnic, religious, linguistic conflicts, among others, are regular. These supposedly solved issues reemerge nowadays – from under the surface, where they were beating.

With European, Asian, and North-American case studies, *Politics of Religion and Nationalism. Federalism, Consociationalism and Secession* is, today, one of the most interesting books on the topic of nationalism and religion, and how the federal and consensual tools can help in the management of the conflicts inside each State. Secession phenomenon, the books suggests, is what these elements pretend to avoid, being applied just in case of final stab to the State unity spirit.

However, as was said, we must reflect about these cases in light of the challenges that Nation-States have – something that can be mitigated or exacerbated by federal arrangements. The work does not focus in this particular federal capacity – to fulfill the own deficiencies of the Nation-State as national unified body -, but it gives rise to a fertile land to new studies and reflections in this way.

National or ethnic differences within a country can be in the capital focus of a given government, Brendan O’Leary remarks in *Governments and God(s): A Provisional Taxonomy*. When policies and instruments can be used in the regulation of differences two options appear: its elimination or management. Both of these choices can be suffocating for those who are out of power. These differences could be exterminated, homogenized (assimilated or integrated), expelled or eradicated, or – if managed- can be controlled, accommodated, arbitrated or permitted, and in the pluralism extreme case, States can recognize the heterogeneity. Along his text, the author asks if it is possible for a government to do the same with religious differences. With solid arguments, O’Leary answered that it is possible and, in fact, different moments and places in the world experienced these practices. This question will be the starting signal to explore *Politics of Religion and Nationalism. Federalism, Consociationalism and Secession*, work that surf

in several cases, by short and dynamic texts, organized according three criteria: i) contexts of nationalism with diminished or inexistent religious element; ii) domestic contexts of secessionist tensions by religious factors in religious diversity systems; and iii) secessionist tensions by religious elements in secularized States.

For its part, in *Religious Pluralism in Russia*, Anastassia Obydenkova exalts the Russian richness as one of the most heterogeneous States in modern world, with geographic, political and cultural (ethnic, linguistic, religious) diversities. After a brief review of the history of religions in the country, with control and regulation by the State, Obydenkova analyses the contemporary context of religions and followers in modern Russia. With the USSR dissolution, the logic of State has changed – restoring a place to religious pluralism – but also the religion as a cultural component has changed: the faiths increased their number of followers and power – especially, Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Paganism. Simultaneously, political power has being territorially centralized, with the abolition of elections and the lack of autonomy in some regions, among others. So, it seems that a secessionist trend with a religious component converges nowadays in Caucasus and Central Russia, where Muslims and Pagans are important groups. The work is not profound enough, but is a good introduction to Pavković's work, a few pages later in the book.

Pavković give us devices to understand the Chechen present. In Russian Federation, there are territories with a clear ethnic majority that are considered as Republic, something that happens in 21 cases. As in other 3 Russian Republics, Chechnya has Islam as predominating religion, with two peculiarities: it is the republic with the larger number of nationals living in the territory (95.3% of the total), and it is the only one who declared the war to federal forces twice, and proclaimed itself as an independent republic.

Taking into account different approaches about Chechnya issue – the Muslim factor that motivates actions of political leaders and followers; the chronological narrative, that takes Islam as one of several constitutive elements of Chechnya; and the current of thought who identify Islamist doctrines and practices to analyze the interaction between these and the involved actors –, the author seeks to disentangle three bodies of Islamic doctrine in the republic: i) traditional Sufism orders, anchored in the Ottoman Empire; ii) Salafism, which seeks to return to Islam purity of Koran; and iii) the political Islam – associated to Wahhabism –, which looks for that return to religious principles, but also heralds violent political action (the saint war, *Jihad*) as tool to constitute the Islamic State.

After two leaders' assassinations, and the consequences that they carried, Pavković suggests that the possibility of the Wahhabism-free Chechnya is opened, showing how the three bodies of Islamic doctrine were changing during the last two decades.

The paper of George Mathew brings tools of political accommodation to the religious pluralism in India. From its origin as an independent republic, India has

been in the light of studies about States survival: several intellectuals expected the collapse of this “unlikely” Nation, as the result of its religious (five main religions), linguistic (325 languages) and cultural diversity. Among religious groups, 80.5% of Indian population is Hinduist, a federation of beliefs with differentiated characteristics. Furthermore, the author makes a *racconto* of other religions: Buddhism – originated in India, but with a few followers nowadays, especially in the Himalaya –; the Christians in the Northeast; the Muslims in Kashmir and other states; Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and the Bahá’í faith. In this context, it is a strong increase of Islam followers and a modest growth of Christians, while Hinduists are decreasing in relative terms (from 83.5% in 1961 to 80.5% in 2001).

Suren Rāghavan’s text about Sri Lanka’s ethnic and religious conflict is stimulating. Focusing on the Tamil people the author signalizes what’s going on in the other shore of the Mannar Gulf. The question that guides the text is how the Sinhala Buddhist majority have brake the federalist impulses that could provide a breathing space to tension, conflict and civil wars against the Hinduist Tamils. The end of the secessionist movement of the Tamils has generated, the author says, a State re-centralization and the closure of any chance of implementing federal arrangements. Rāghavan concludes his work making an unnecessary and risky comparison between Sri Lanka, as the Sinhala’s Promised Land, and Israel. That last turn clashed and cheapened a work with a robust and tied conceptual and historical intellectual journey.

Alberto Spektorowski studies the always difficult relation between Judaism and the Israel State. The author shows a categorical point of view: he tries to demonstrate that an ethnical-Jewish democracy can be a liberal one, despite obstacles. This big assignment carry on two dilemmas: on the first side, the relation between the Jewish people and its relation with a State for Jewish citizens; on the other side, an element linked to the Promised Land and the consequent territorial nationalism. The author explains that meanwhile the country applied liberal policies, its received non-Jewish immigration that could integrated in a good way. But the Israeli colonization in the West Bank puts into question the status of liberal democracy as the Palestinian issue is still not solved.

Soeren Keil provides us a simplified view of one of the more complex ethnical conflicts in Europe: the religious topic and the federalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. With common tradition and history, the three main national groups in the country (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) try to heal the wounds and accommodate their interests in this emerging federal system. The constitutive ethnical-national element in these groups is the religion: the Bosniaks are mainly Muslim; Serbs are mainly Orthodox; and Croats are mainly Catholic. Although is not the first option to any contingent, the founded solution to it was the application of federal tools, imposed by international forces. There is no shortage of successful achievements of it, but there are vast challenges.

Louis-Philippe Lampron studies the Canadian multiculturalism focusing in the relation between the Quebecer reality and the central State. He reflects, through the Quebec Chart of Values, on the still beating tension between the Francophones and the rest of Country. The Quebecer party, with a clear majority of Christians (82%), tried to sensitize the inhabitants linking their beliefs and traditions by the proposal of the ban of the exhibition on any kind of religion element in the public space. The author remarks that this was a dangerous game: this law will be declared invalid by the Supreme Court increasing Quebecer's anger against the central government. Even the Canadian federalism is a solid one, the multiculturalism and the religious diversity are being tested.

Guelke and Rosie invite us to think about the revival of the nationalism in the countries of the United Kingdom. Rosie focuses in the relation between religion and nationalism in Scotland in a very dynamical way; meanwhile, Guelke explains the conflict in Northern Ireland inherited from the 2-decades *Troubles*. Guelke makes an historical path about the long ethnical-national conflict in the Northeast of Ireland Island. Showing the historical tension between Catholic and Protestant believers, the author insights the Belfast Agreement in order to comprehend its ability of twist the religious problematic. Even have reaching some goals – as the rapprochement between governments and parties –, the recent violent events are still pulsing the Northern Irish everyday life.

Absent of the Scottish ordinariness, but also party system and the constitutional affairs, the religious aspect is studied by Rosie from Middle Ages hitherto: starting with Apostol Andrews, the author passes through the disputes between the Catholics, Presbyterians and Episcopatism. Nowadays, Scotland perceives itself as secularizes: at first, opened to religious diversity, then widely pluralistic, and today, with a non-religious preponderance. Rosie shows that Scotland civic nationalism is not linked to a tough religious factor, using as input the 2014 Referendum surveys.

In *Accommodating Flemings and Francophones in a Federal Arrangement*, Frank Delmartino addresses the cultural and religious dimensions in Belgium. The main characteristic of the country is the complex overlap of cleavages along its history – even if its Independence was driven by Catholic and Latin particularity. Rapidly three cleavages emerge: a linguistic-cultural one (between Flemish and Francophones); a religious one (opposing Catholics and Free-thinkers); and a socio-economic one (dividing bourgeois and worker class). The three of them are interrelated with a *consociational* political system that tries to accommodate the differences. Several constitutional reforms have solved some of the demands, but the main issue in Belgium is that there are not political leaders that represent the federal country as a whole: the request for cultural, socio-economic, and territorial autonomy, undermine that possibility. One thing to highlight is that the strong adaptability of the Belgian system that is at the same time its weakness.

Religion, nationalism and political tools in Iberia peninsula are analyzed by Letamendia and Nagel. Letamendia studies the development of violent peripheral nationalist movements in Spain, taking into account the reaction to modernity of ethnical identities. In this process the relation between the citizens and government is lost, and emerge a quasi-religious identification with the leaders of the radical groups. The author emphasizes the complexity of the relation among the clerks and the Basque nationalism, and, in the second place, the Catholic nationalist elements in the *españolidad* during the Francoist Regime.

Nagel works on the links between the independence process of Catalonia and religion. The text is not as clear as others in the book, forcing the relations between the variables (one example is the relation between the Muslims migrants and the Spanish as principal language). Notwithstanding the author makes an interesting historical approach of the independence process and the position of the Roman Church. He emphasize that there is no religious cleavage in region, but he remarks that there is more atheists and agnostics in secular Catalonia than in the rest of Spain. As conclusion, Nagel suggests in a decentralised – but not federal - country, that the relations among the Catalan nationalism and the religion, in a laic and multicultural society – with a wide proportion of immigrants – could be key point for further analysis.

The book is not looking for exhaustiveness – it cannot be done in 200 pages -, and does not remedy two big issues. On first place, it shows an important geographic deficit: mostly centering its analysis on Europa and Asia. What happens in Africa or in the West besides Israel? There are not secessionist impulses with religious factors there? How do the Copts live in Egypt? What happens in the insular Asian Southeast with the Moors and Moluccas' Christians or in the Guinea Gulf countries? What are the relations among religious groups in the Islamist Republics?

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