
THE WORD OF GUEST EDITOR

Ever since George Holyoake first coined and used the term „Secularism“ in 1851, it has been debated in various contexts but mainly in the context of Church and the State. The concept of secularism envisages that government or other entities should exist separately from religion and/or religious beliefs. While most of the western states and many other states in the world subscribe to the philosophy of secularism as a state policy, there are several other states which take pride in branding themselves as ‘religious ones’ subscribing to a particular religion. However, in several, rather in almost all the proclaimed secular states what is also encountered at the practical level is pseudo secularism. Religion and religious denominations regularly try to influence the proclaimed secular states, thus, undermining its secular character.

As such, it is in the fitness of things that the present issue of the Politics and Religion Journal is devoted to the main theme of secularism versus religion. As per its established tradition, this issue of the journal has also been organized in three sections comprising the main topic of the issue, analyses and the book reviews. This special issue of the journal consists of three research articles, three analyses and four comprehensive reviews of books published during the last two years.

Though all the three research articles are basically focused on the main theme of secularism versus religion, the first article on „Secular Roots of Religious Rage: Shaping Religious Identities in the Middle-East“ by U.S. based scholars Philip W. Barker and William J. Muck hold the view that in historic cases of religious conflict, religion was not necessarily the original source of the conflict, but was eventually established as the focal point around which individuals defined their identity and draws parallels between intractable religious conflicts and the current developing conflict between the United States and the Islamic world. According to Barker and Muck, the United States has made a concerted effort to declare a war on „terror“ and not Islam, the perceived threat associated with current U.S. foreign policy behavior is encouraging the redefinition of Middle Eastern identity in Islamic terms and creating the possibility of intractable religious conflict on a global scale. Consequently, while many within the region may not have initially seen this conflict along religious lines, Islam has provided the most prominent and convenient form for articulating their frustrations.

The second article „Relations between Church and State in Republic of Croatia“ by Biljana Ribic offers an analysis of the relation between the state and the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia in the end of 20th and in the beginning of 21st century and shows how political pluralism and democracy have created conditions for a new, greater and more important role of religion in Croatian society and politics. It may be seen as *re-catholisation* of public space and public life thus also indicating undermining of secularism.

The third article by U.K. based scholar Adrian Pabst on „Unholy War and Just Peace:

Religious Alternatives to Secular Warfare" argues that contemporary warfare seems to be religious but is in fact secular in nature and as such calls forth religious alternatives. Divided into five parts, the first part of this essay compares and contrasts two false universalisms, that of global market democracy and a revived pan-Islamic Ummah. The second part explores the classical and modern origins of Islamic terrorism. The third part examines the perverted theology at the heart of the neo-conservative 'global war on terror'. The fourth part analyses the permanent 'state of exception' which underpins the modern state and licenses unrestricted violence by the sovereign who stands outside and above the constitutional order of legality and legitimacy. The fifth and final part outlines religious alternatives to secular warfare, with specific reference to Islam and Christianity.

The three analyses are focused more on religion and politics rather than secularism. However, one of these pieces by Serbian scholar Dragoljub B. Đorđević deals with the sociological understanding of the language of religion rather than its relationship with politics or secularism. Sociologists stress that the primary role of the sociology of religion is not to penetrate the „essence of the sacred“. They rather insist on the study of its more mundane ministry. Though it is difficult to distinguish between the transcendental and the mundane ministry of religion, the sociological understanding of the language of religion, in author's view, is not anything but its „translation“, direction at and accordance with (also) contemporary, even topical, burning issues of the universe, the concrete society, and concrete people being addressed. Among the other two analyses, the one by Japanese scholar Michiaki Okuyama deals with the problem of the Yasukuni Shrine in the broader context of religion and politics in modern Japan, first by contextualizing this problem in the East Asian settings, then by reviewing the recent court cases surrounding Yasukuni Shrine, and finally by commenting on two documentary films focusing on this problem. The other analysis by Russian scholar Alexander Sotnichenko while examining the relationship between Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church draws the attention to the fact that the leaders of the state in post-communist Russia tend to patronize Orthodox Christianity since 90% of Russian Christians are associated with its universally recognized center – Moscow Patriarchy, at the cost of Russian Islam in the absence of any universally recognized authority of Islam in Russia.

The four book reviews included in this issue of the journal are as profound as the research articles and the analytical pieces. The book „Politology of Religion“ by Miroslav Jevtic, recently published under the banner of Center for the Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance of Belgrade, asserts with conviction that „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“. It also lays the foundations of a new science under the title of „Politology of Religion“ since „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“. 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. Andrew Holmes' volume „The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice 1770-1840“ includes an overview of the historiography to the overall kaleidoscope of development in the Ulster Province and its long prevailing socio-

political and religious discontents. The author brings to fore that though Northern Ireland remains a complex and often miss-understood politico-religious embattlement is now showing some positive signs in the decline of warring sectarianism and the arrival of relatively peaceful community co-existence between Roman Catholics and Protestants in 'the Province'. The other two reviews of the books by Hojatollah Alimohammadi on „The Process of Velayat Faqih's Political Believes' Development in the Political Fegh of Shiite" and by Taleshian on „Transition of the Concept of Tyrant Ruler in Shiism Political Jurisprudence" being brought out by the Centre for Islamic Revolution Documents of Iran focus on Shiite jurisprudence. While Alimohammadi's book shows that the origin of Velayat Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) is deep-rooted, just as long to be as the Shiite's jurisprudence, on the other hand, it has constantly been exposed to growth and development and, like any other idea, it had gone through its own particular primary stages. In other words, his book emphasizes the importance of the governance and legitimacy of Velayat Faqih in the absence of Immaculate Imam. Accordingly, the opinions of jurists on the kind of guardianship and extent of authorities of the Islamic jurists during the Occultation is compiled and published in his book; Taleshian argues that discussion about tyrant ruler was always set forth in the thoughts of political jurisprudence Shiite clerics and each jurist made his theory with regard to his scientific perspectives and principles in this area. He further delineates how the concept of tyrant rulers has passed through different periods of transition in accordance with the Shiism political jurisprudence.

This special issue of the journal will be remembered not only for its profound debate on the issue of secularism versus religion and its highly informative and analytical pieces but also for the books that have been reviewed. The review section of this issue should particularly inspire a large number of scholars to undertake further research to explore and examine the relationship between religion, secularism and politics.

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