


A Word From the Editor-in-Chief: The 23rd Birthday of the First Book in the World Titled *Politology of Religion*

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Twenty-three years ago, in 2002 to be exact, the Faculty of Political Science and the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade jointly published a book titled *Religion and Politics: An Introduction to the Politology of Religion*. The book was intended as a textbook for third-year students at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade who were enrolled in the course “Politology of Religion.” It was meant to serve as their primary study material for preparing for exams in this subject, which had been introduced into the curriculum in the 1993/94 academic year.

As such, the book had no special scientific ambitions. It was simply meant to be one of millions of university textbooks around the world. But the circumstances were different. From the founding of political science faculties—starting with the “Free School of Political Sciences” in Paris in 1872—Western political scientists were heavily influenced by French Enlightenment thinkers like Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau in matters of religion. These thinkers were highly critical of religion, often even hostile toward it. They believed religion would eventually disappear. In particular, they laid the groundwork for the idea that religion and politics must not be mixed.

This had a long-lasting effect on political scientists, who, after the establishment of political science faculties, largely neglected religion as a field of research. And yet, this neglect could not erase the obvious fact that religion continued to exist and influence politics. Over time, political scientists began exploring the relationship between religion and politics, and this field of inquiry gradually developed. Still, many of those who engaged in this research remained captive to Enlightenment ideas, as if waiting for religion to vanish. As a result, they didn’t consider religion a political phenomenon deserving its own distinct sub-discipline within political science, with its own research focus and clearly defined field of study—something necessary for any discipline to become fully recognized and distinguished from others within the field.

Political scientists who did study the relationship between religion and politics did so within the frameworks of their respective disciplines—political theory, political

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systems, comparative politics, international relations, and so on. They saw their (often considerable) contributions as part of those existing areas. In that sense, they were forerunners of the politology of religion, but not political scientists of religion in the strict sense. I myself have written about their valuable contributions—for example, about Alexis de Tocqueville and Vuk Karadžić (Jevtić 2012). It's similar to how, in medicine, internists initially wrote about gastrointestinal diseases within internal medicine and still considered themselves internists. But once the volume of research in that area grew and a specific methodology developed—different from those used to study, say, pulmonary diseases—a new discipline was born: gastroenterology.

The same thing happened with the politology of religion. When I first started writing about topics concerning the relationship between religion and politics, I did so within the framework of the subjects I was then teaching—subjects that had no formal link to the politology of religion, which at that time did not yet exist as a distinct discipline. But as the body of information and research grew, it became clear that it could no longer be contained within those subjects. So, in agreement with the Faculty, I created a new academic discipline—one that, at the time, did not exist in any political science faculty in the world.

I want to emphasize again that there were colleagues who worked on religion and politics within other political science or even non-political science disciplines. But that was not the politology of religion. When the need eventually arose for students to have a textbook for exam preparation, the aforementioned book was born. It was the first publication in the world to bear the term *politology of religion* in its title, clearly indicating that it dealt with the relationship between religion and politics—but that it approached this relationship strictly from a political science perspective. Not sociological, not philosophical, not anthropological—political. After that, I wrote several more books with the term *politology of religion* in the title, or titled solely *Politology of Religion* (Jevtić 2008; Jevtić 2009; 2012; 2014).

What this means for the development and place of this discipline in the scientific world is perhaps best illustrated by the following example: Max Weber and Émile Durkheim were forerunners of the sociology of religion. Yet neither of them ever established a course by that name, despite being intellectual giants. Furthermore, during their lifetimes, neither of them wrote a book with the term *sociology of religion* in the title. Only after Weber's death did his wife and a group of collaborators collect his outstanding essays on the social significance of religion and, in 1920, publish—for the first time in the world—a book titled *Sociology of Religion* (Weber 1920).

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