



The impact of contemporary religious revivals on political and strategic relations

Prof. Olivier Roy

First term seminar - autumn 2009

Thursdays 15:00 – 17:00, seminar room 2, Badia

Please register with

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The so-called “return of the sacred” is in fact a consequence of secularization and globalization. Are the religions that are successful today the same, apart from their labels (Christianity, Islam), as those on which the great civilizations we are familiar with were based? We are witnessing a shift of the traditional forms of religious practice – Catholicism, Hanafi Islam, classic Protestant denominations such as Anglicanism and Methodism – towards more fundamentalist and charismatic forms of religiosity (evangelism, Pentecostalism, Salafism, Tablighi Jamaat, neo-Sufism, Lubavich). But these movements are relatively recent. Salafism derives from Wahhabism which was founded at the end of the 18th century. The Hasidim and Haredim were born in the 17th and 18th centuries. The various evangelisms belong to the tradition of Protestant “awakenings” which began during the 18th century, while Pentecostalism dates from the early 20th century. Similarly the forms of Buddhism and Hinduism that recruit and export themselves are recent reformulations, from the late 19th to the late 20th century (Soka Gakkai, Falun Gong and Hare Krishna, as well as the political Hinduism of the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Sri Lankan theravada Buddhism). Secularization has disconnected religions from their cultural context, globalization has created a “religious market” where the successful products are de-culturated and de-territorialized. Although they are competing and fighting each other, they share common forms of religiosity (individualization of faith, anti-intellectualism, stress on salvation and realization of the self, rejection of the surrounding culture as pagan...).

The different themes will correspond to one or two classes.

1) Studying religion in social sciences : issues, and stakes (two classes).

2) The concept of clash/ dialogue of civilization:

Both are based on common premises: a direct and stable link between religion and culture, expressed by territorial and historical continuity.

The impact of the paradigm of clash and dialogue on the Mediterranean space: historical myths and paradigms.

3) From religious homogeneity to the construction of the paradigm of “religious minority”: from the Reconquista to the millet model, from assimilation to multi-culturalism.



- 4) Is there a Western model? Christendom, secularization and the Enlightenment paradigm. The debate on separation of Church and State and on ideological secularism (laïcité).
- 5) Immigration, the European construction and globalisation: the crisis of the nation state and the impact on the definition of “minorities”. The present debate on multi-culturalism.
- 6) The new religious movements and the crisis of traditional and established churches. The disconnection between religion and culture and its impact on the definition of religion.
- 7) Formatting of religion: how courts and social practices format the different religious under a common paradigm, socially acceptable and leading to institutionalization. Could this paradigm be called “Christian”?
- 8) How the different religions adapt? The case of the Catholic Church.
A new religious landscape around the Mediterranean: an assessment.