Workshop 10

Globalization, Secularization and Religion – A Changing Terrain?

directed by

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Workshop abstract

Economic and demographic changes associated with globalization significantly alter the relations between religion, state and society. This workshop proposes a comparative study of globalization's impact on religious change and the evolution of new identities, struggles and political arrangements. The chief theme is globalization because the economic changes it carries are often associated with a process of sustained secularization, unleashing market forces that are said significantly to undermine previous arrangements involving religion, state and society. Recent accounts of secularization open the way for more nuanced and empirical research of the declining role of religion in society vis-à-vis other systems (political and economic), the role of religion in individual lives (beliefs, practices and values) and the re-assertion of religion in political life. Accordingly, this workshop will engage with different accounts of religious belief and secularization as they relate to economic and demographic changes, associated with globalization, and the way they are translated into political agendas, in the overall context of deepening globalization. Specifically, papers in this workshop will focus on: (a) Effects of globalization—including, economic, demographic, political and cultural ramifications that affect on religious institutions and belief systems; (b) secular struggles related to globalization that affect religion's status in state and society; (c) religious struggles within and against globalization and associated attempts to reassert religion's status in society; and, (d) new political arrangements involving religion, society and state.
Workshop description

Many conflicts between and within states in recent years involve religion or are underscored by secularization and religious change. Economic and demographic changes associated with globalization significantly alter the relations between religion, state and society. This workshop proposes a theoretical and comparative study of globalization's impact on religious change and the evolution of new identities, struggles and political arrangements. This timely subject often captures public attention, especially when religious conflicts escalate as has happened recently in various places. This workshop will provide important theoretical and comparative insights across countries, cultures and religions. We wish to attract scholars from different disciplines who study various aspects—including, political, economic, social and cultural—links between globalization and religion(s) in different locations.

Contemporary states face a multicultural reality that includes, on the one hand, a variety of religions that often compete with each other, and, on the other hand, a variety of struggles between religious and secular actors over the definition of the public sphere. Thus, as a consequence of, for example, immigration and ethno-cultural revival state religions often lose their hegemonic position as other religious groups compete for their own status. In addition, economic changes and growing consumer culture—often said to be characteristic of the multifaceted process known as ‘globalization’—present increased challenges to religion, not least because it is said to undermine traditional arrangements. Yet, as the rise of religious fundamentalism and religious-secular struggles indicate this is not a linear process of religious decline but rather a complex process of identity (re)formation and associated political changes.

The chief aim of the workshop is to provide, in relation to globalization: (1) opportunity for scholars to engage in comparative and theoretical studies of secular-religious engagements in a variety of countries, and (2) identify and examine political, cultural, economic and demographic changes associated with it. Accordingly, we are interested in papers that engage with the issue of change in the status of religion in relation to state and society, formation or reformation of secular/religious identities, of evolution of religious and secular identities in relation to political struggles, and formation of new arrangements involving state and religious institutions.

Secularization is said to be a process whereby religion loses some of its significance in the operation of the social system, either in the general disengagement from churches or other religious institutions, or in the subordination of religious values to secular ones. Moreover, secularization entails partial or total disengagement of religion from the public sphere, political life and aesthetic life and retreat to a private world where it retains authority only over its followers. As a result, religion becomes just one institution among others and loses its overarching claims. Earlier accounts of secularization, known as "secularization theory" were located within the broader theoretical framework of modernization theory that proposed that as industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, and religious pluralism all

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3 Dobbelaere, Karl 1981 "Secularization: A Multi-dimensional Concept" Current Sociology 29,2 p.21
increase, then religiosity must, inevitably, decline. 4 Secularization, according to this thesis, was a prerequisite for the modern state 5 and the source of personal freedom, social tolerance and pluralism. Secularization is often presented either as an ideological victory of liberalism that ends with a pluralist public sphere with a shared and neutralized language that secures individual freedom or as the deterministic outcome of modernization that transforms church-state relations. Critical accounts of secularization doubt both claims. Secularism, it is argued, has often been a consequence of changes in social structure and technology, and the endorsement of rational procedures in modern social systems, rather than an ideological change related to liberal values. While secularists often challenge church dogma and the dominance in society of religion, the factors that stimulate the secularization of society are said to owe more to socio-economic changes which have "occurred involuntarily as an autonomous and largely endogenous process, and as an unintended and perhaps unanticipated consequence of that more fundamental process of change." 6 Therefore, according to the critics of secularization theory, secularism often advances not as an ideological battle of tolerance and liberalism but as a set of practices associated with everyday life and, more recently, an emerging consumer culture often associated with globalization.

The chief theme of this workshop is globalization because the demographic and economic changes it carries are often associated with a process of sustained secularization, unleashing market forces that are said significantly to undermine previous arrangements involving religion, state and society, while supposedly allowing greater individual choice, including religious choice. Emerging consumer culture and other associated changes are often said to heighten tensions between economic practices and religious mores. This is because religious values and norms often appear to clash with the hedonistic consumer culture as the market economy frees itself from earlier constraints, religious arrangements among them, in favor of rules of demand and supply. The struggle to change restriction of retail hours is an example of this debate as these public policy initiatives involve various debates. Restrictions were used to protect not only religious norms and values—but also, more generally, employees, small businesses and the family unit. However, longer working hours, the entry of more women to the labor market and changes in consumption habits, on the one hand, and competition between entrepreneurs, on the other hand, have all created demands to extend the hours of retail activity, including the weekends. 7 Key questions that the workshop would seek to address include: How does economic change affect the status of religion? How do religious institutions and agents re-assert their position as a result of such changes?

New tensions are also brought to the fore in state-church-society relations with the advent of globalization as a result of mass immigration that can challenge existing state-church arrangements/institutions like marriage and its regulation, as well as the spread of liberal ideologies. For example, demands for the recognition of gay marriage, teen marriage and inter-marriage can undermine existing church-state agreements and often rule out the liberal solution of non-intervention. Contrary to the expectations of secularization theory religious politics and tensions between religion

and secular tendencies have never disappeared—and even re-emerged to become a key characteristic of contemporary politics in many countries. This salience can be observed not only in the rise of anti-secular ideologies and religious parties but also in a pronounced persistence of personal religious belief. Thus, if in the rise of post-industrial society allegiance to established religious institutions continues to decline, as appears to be the case in many such countries, although not in the USA, then how best to explain the continued importance of spiritual concerns and religious beliefs, as well as "residual" forms of religiosity that are not controlled by the prevailing religious institutions? Many recent accounts of secularism have sought to unpack the process and separate analytically between the decline of religion and that of religious authority and to examine separately the institutional aspect of secularism and the individual religious beliefs and practices. In a recent comparative study of secularization on a global scale, Norris and Inglehart suggest three dimensions for the measurement of secularization: (a) religious participation that involves collective religious practices and the erosion of individual religious practices, (b) religious values that pertain to the goals that people prioritize for their society, community and themselves and, (c) religious beliefs that refer to the faith in the core beliefs held by different world theologies.

Overall, dissaggregation of the concept of secularization opens the way for more nuanced and empirical research of the status and role of religion in society vis-à-vis other systems (political and economic), the role of religion in individual lives (beliefs, practices and values) and the re-assertion of religion in political life. We leave all levels of research as open-ended questions to be explored in this session. Accordingly, we are interested in different accounts of religious belief and secularization as they relate to economic and demographic changes and the way they are translated into political agendas, in the overall context of deepening globalization. Specifically, we are interested in papers based on empirical and theoretical research that focus on the following:

- Effects of globalization—including, economic, demographic, political and cultural ramifications that affect on religious institutions and belief systems
- Secular struggles related to globalization that affect religion's status in state and society
- Religious struggles within and against globalization and associated attempts to reassert religion's status in society
- New political arrangements involving religion, society and state.

Overall, this comparative framework across countries and religions will provide significant insights related to the impact of globalization while identifying new possibilities for present and future research focusing on between religion, state and society.

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Directors’ individual paper abstracts

Takes Two for a Culture War

Guy Ben-Porat

A culture war has often been raised to describe the evolving relations between religious and secular and especially the advent of fundamentalism in Israel and elsewhere. While certain incidents and clashes seem to validate the culture war description it is questionable whether the concept captures the complexity of the religious-secular divide and its relation to globalization's impacts. The culture war alludes to a growing schism between two poles separated by values and moving towards an inevitable clash. But, in practice this scenario might exaggerate the actual developments for several reasons. Not only is the secular-religious division a continuum rather than a dichotomous divide as many people describe themselves as in between or traditional, but it is also multidimensional as religious and secular have different meanings. The "culture war" description, therefore, can miss out the both the shared grounds of many religious and secular and the complex nature of these two categories. This paper follows recent works on secularization that defines the process as a "bricolage" of beliefs and practices and proposes an analytical distinction between two identified forms of secularization: a "principled" secularism and secularism associated with "practices of every-day life". Specifically, because secularization is driven by different interests and agendas it does not constitute a coherent ideology and, consequently translates into different struggles waged at different levels and intensities rather than a culture war.

Islam, Pluralism and Politics in the MENA: The impact of globalisation

Jeff Haynes

The issue of political pluralism in the ‘Islamic world’, including the MENA, is a defining concern when addressing the wider issue of democracy in a global context. While some scholars contend that there are inherent factors within Islam that deny the possibility of democracy, others contend that there is nothing within Islam that means that Muslim countries will ‘inevitably’ have a lack of democratic credentials. The paper hypothesises that many Muslim countries have few structural characteristics conducive to both democratisation and democracy, and that things have been that way for a long time. This situation did not fundamentally change during the two decades of the ‘third wave of democracy’, from the mid-1970s to mid-1990s, although during this time there were some signs of political liberalisation and democratisation in some Muslim countries, including Turkey, Indonesia, Jordan and Kuwait. Recently, however the impact of globalisation has been notable. To explain the current picture regarding pluralism and democracy in the MENA, the paper highlights the importance of a combination of both internal and external factors.