



Workshop 01

Globalization, Secularization and Religion – Different States, Same Trajectories?

directed by

Jeffrey Haynes

London Metropolitan University, UK

jeff.haynes@londonmet.ac.uk

Guy Ben-Porat

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

gbp@som.bgu.ac.il

Workshop abstract

Economic and demographic changes associated with globalization significantly alter the relations between religion, state and society in many countries in the MENA region. The economic changes globalization carries are often associated with a process of sustained secularization, unleashing of market forces and changed demographics that can significantly undermine existing 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) as well as the re-assertion of religion in political and social life. The central aim of the workshop is a comparative empirical study that would answer the following questions:

- What is the influence of globalization on religious institutions and belief systems?;
- How do secular groups organize to take advantage of these changes?;
- How do religious groups struggle to preserve or enhance the status of religion?;
- What new political arrangements involving religion, society and state are formed in response to those change and how well do they cope with them?

Workshop description

Existing religion-state arrangements in states around the world are challenged by changes associated with globalization, specifically economic liberalization and migration. In addition, economic liberalization and consumer hedonism associated with globalization often contradict religious mores and norms. Shopping, as Benjamin Barber notes, "has little tolerance for blue laws, whether dictated by pub-closing British paternalism, Sabbath-observing Jewish Orthodox, or no-Sunday liquor-sale Massachusetts Puritanism".¹ Immigration often changes the demographic and religious make-up of the state, introducing new religions that may challenge existing religion-state relations in various ways. Thus, societies change their make-up and state institutions have to respond to these challenges presented by both religious and secular groups. The rise of religious fundamentalisms and religious-secular struggles indicate that globalization is not a linear process of religious decline but rather a complex process of identity (re)formation and associated political changes. Many conflicts between and within states in recent years, both in the MENA region and elsewhere, involve religion or are underscored by secularization and religious change. 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 in different countries in the MENA. The chief aim of the workshop is to (1) identify and examine political, cultural, economic and demographic changes associated with globalization and examine their impact on religion-state and religion-society relations and (2) develop comparative and theoretical studies of secular-religious engagements in specific locations in the region.

Globalization is commonly described as an intensification or explosion in the growth of various networks and flows that transcend national boundaries. The significance of this process, however, is highly contested. For some authors globalization is the end of the nation-state, in favor of a "borderless world", while for others it signifies a global crisis.² A working definition describes globalization as a complex overlapping network in which state and non-state actors are part of "an evolving structure which both imposes constraints on, and empowers, communities, states and social forces."³ The understanding of this process and its consequences requires attention to its differential effects as well as a broad historical perspective. While there is an overarching macro change of the "architecture" of politics and in the organization of social space, globalization does not "pound

¹ Benjamin Barber, "Jihad vs. McWorld" *The Atlantic Monthly*, (March 1992).

² Ohmae, Kenichi 1995 *The End of the Nation-State* New York: Free Press; Hobsbawm, Eric 1994 *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World 1914-1991* New York: Vintage; Rosenau, James N. 1990 *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* Princeton: Princeton University Press; Fukuyama, Francis 1989 "The end of history?" *The National Interest* 16

³ Held et al 1999 *Global Transformations*, Polity Press, Cambridge

everything in the same mold.”⁴ The consequences of contemporary global interactions are therefore complex, diverse and unpredictable, and need to be studied in relation to micro “local” structures and political agency. Globalization's influence, in other words, is the result of specific interactions between global and local.

Secularization is said to be a process whereby religion loses some of its significance in the operation of the social and political systems, either in the sense of general disengagement of religious institutions from public life, or in the subordination of religious values to secular ones.⁵ 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 increase, then religiosity must, inevitably, decline.⁶ While secularization theory was criticized and discarded, much like modernization theory, its themes resonate in some accounts of globalization. Global capitalism, on the one hand, introduces consumer culture to more and more societies at the expense of traditional values and, on the other hand, liberal ideologies suggest to many freedom from older, limiting traditions. 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 weekends⁷, often at the expense of religious participation or against religious rules.

Yet, accounts of globalization are mixed, as secularization is challenged by a resurgence of religion in different formations in many parts of the world, including the MENA. While religious politics and tensions between religion and secular tendencies have never disappeared – in many cases they have now re-emerged to become a key characteristic of contemporary politics. 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.⁸ New tensions are also brought to the fore in

⁴ Mittleman, 2000, p.7

⁵ Wallis, Roy and Bruce, Steve 1989 "Religion: The British Contribution" *The British Journal of Sociology*, 40, 3, pp.493-520.

⁶ McClay, Wilfred M. 2001 "Two concepts of Secularization", *Journal of Policy History* 13, 1 pp.47-72.

⁷ Grunhagen, M; Grove, S. and Gentry J., 2003, "The dynamics of store hour changes and consumption behavior" *European Journal of Marketing* 37(11), 1801-20.

⁸ Keddie, Nikkie R. 2003 "Secularism & its Discontents" *Daedalus* 132, 3 pp.14-30; Berger, Peter L. 1996 "Secularism in Retreat" *The National Interest* Winter 1996/7 pp.3-12; Wallis, Roy and Bruce, Steve 1989 "Religion: The British Contribution" *The British Journal of Sociology*, 40, 3, pp.493-520

state-religion-society relations with the impact of globalization as a result of mass immigration that can challenge existing state-religion 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 religion-state agreements and often rule out the liberal solution of non-intervention. Accordingly, the impact of globalization needs to be studied "locally" against existing (or changing) personal beliefs, social norms and political arrangements.

Many recent accounts of secularism seek 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.⁹ In a recent comparative study of secularization on a global scale, Norris and Inglehart¹⁰ 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, disaggregation 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.

In sum, globalization - measured primarily in terms of economic liberalization and increased migration – has both secularizing *and* religionizing influences upon states and societies in the MENA. Religion may be strengthened by reactions to global challenges, and religious actors may use global opportunities to deliver their message more effectively. Similarly, religious migrations – like Muslims from North Africa – can present challenges to existine religious or secular. Thus, societies can become more secular or display secular trends, while state institutions remain bound to religious norms (like in Israel) or become more religious while states remain, or attempt to remain, secular in various ways (like France or Turkey). The interaction between globalization (measured in terms of economic liberalization and migration), societies (measured in relation to religious beliefs and practices) and states (measured by the depth of religiosity/secularity of institutions) is at the core of this proposed study.

⁹ Chaves, Mark 1994 "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority" *Social Forces* 72, 3 pp.749-774.

¹⁰ Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald (2004) *Sacred and Secular* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This study of globalization and religion-state-societal relations aims to bring together scholars working on different case studies for a comparative study of the processes described in detail above. Specifically, we are interested in the following developments in each case study:

- 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.

For this purpose we will seek scholars working in different locations to provide answers to questions circulated prior to the workshop; its overall aim is to work towards a theoretically rigorous book on this timely subject. Prior to the meeting the workshop directors will distribute a paper providing a consistent theoretical framework for participants to frame their individual contributions. Each participant, in turn, will submit a paper that will engage with one case study. Finally, the meeting itself will be divided between discussing the common theoretical framework and the specific case studies presented by participants. Proposals submitted to this workshop should be empirical, focus on a specific case study and engage with the following questions:

- What is the influence of globalization on religious institutions and belief systems?;
- How do secular groups organize to take advantage of these changes?;
- How do religious groups struggle to preserve or enhance the status of religion?;
- What new political arrangements involving religion, society and state are formed in response to those change and how well do they cope with them?