



PRESS RELEASE

Florence, 08 June 2015

FREEDOM OF RELIGION, OR FROM RELIGION? THE GOVERNANCE OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY TO BE DISCUSSED WITH PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS AT A ROUNDTABLE HOSTED BY THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME

Religious diversity appears to be one of the most critical challenges that societies face today in their search for identity, equality and cohesion.

Against this background, the opening roundtable of the conference “The Governance of Religious Diversity More or Less Secularism?”, will see distinguished scholars and eminent voices in the academic and political scenario, **Gurpreet Mahajan, Tariq Modood, Bhikhu Parekh, Tariq Ramadan** and **J. H.H. Weiler**, address fundamental questions of our times:

- *Should our societies aim to “Freedom of Religion” or “Freedom from Religion”?*
- *Which is the best way to deal in pluralistic societies with religious diversity?*
- *Is a “third road” between laïcité and state religion possible?*

“Religion can neither be wholly privatised nor allowed to dominate political life”, says Professor Anna Triandafyllidou, scientific organiser of the conference, ahead of the debate. “Western societies should look closer at countries where religious plurality has for long periods been the norm rather than the exception and learn from their experience”.

A Roundtable on “The Governance of Religious Diversity: Freedom of Religion or Freedom from Religion” chaired by Bhikhu Parekh with the participation of Tariq Ramadan, Tariq Modood, Gurpreet Mahajan and J. H.H. Weiler will be live [web streamed](#) on 10 June from 16.15 to 19.00.

Conference: “The Governance of Religious Diversity More or Less Secularism?”

Sala Europa, Villa Schifanoia – Via Boccaccio, 121 – Florence
Wednesday 10, Thursday 11 and Friday 12 June 2015

For further information on the event including the agenda please visit:

<http://globalgovernanceprogramme.eui.eu/the-governance-of-religious-diversity-more-or-less-secularism/>

To attend the event, please register [online](#).

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Scientific Organiser:

Anna Triandafyllidou is Professor at the EUI's Robert Schuman Centre's Global Governance Programme, where she coordinates the Research Area on Cultural Pluralism. Previously, she was part time professor at the RSCAS (2010-2012) and Senior Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (2004-2012). She has been Visiting Professor at the College of Europe in Bruges since 2002 and a member of the Spinelli Group since its foundation. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies. Her main areas of research and teaching are the governance of cultural diversity, migration, and nationalism from a European and international perspective. Her publications include more than 120 articles in refereed journals and chapters in collective volumes, five authored books and 19 edited and co-edited volumes. For a full list see www.annatriandafyllidou.com.

Speakers:

Gurpreet Mahajan is Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She teaches courses in Philosophy of Social Sciences, Political Thought and Theory, Hermeneutics and Multiculturalism, and has written extensively on issues relating to minorities, cultural diversity, religion and state, secularism, civil society and notions of public and private. Her publications include *Explanation and Understanding in the Human Sciences* (OUP 1992; 1997; 2011), *Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India* (OUP 1998), *Accommodating Diversity: Ideas and Institutional Practices* (ed.) (OUP 2011) and *India: Political Ideas and the Making of a Democratic Discourse* (Zed Books 2013).

Bhikhu Parekh is an eminent political theorist in Britain and an active member in the House of Lords. Educated at the Universities of Bombay and London, he held academic positions in various universities in the UK and in India. He has held membership of several bodies concerned with issues of racial equality and multiculturalism. As Chairman of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, he contributed to the so called "Parekh Report" which has been the basis for much of the debate on multiculturalism in the UK in the early 21st century. He authored several books, the latest being *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World* (2008), and received many awards, including the BBC's Lifetime Achievement Award (1999), the Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for Lifetime Contribution to Political Philosophy by the Political Studies Association (2002) and the Padma Bhushan honours in the 2007 Indian Republic Day Honours list.

Tariq Modood is Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy at the University of Bristol and the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship. He is a regular contributor to the media and policy debates in Britain, and has held over 40 grants and consultancies in Europe and the US. He is the co-founding editor of the international journal *Ethnicities*, and has authored and edited over 30 books and 150 articles in political philosophy, sociology and public policy, the latest including *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (2013); *Tolerance, Intolerance and Respect* (co-edited, 2013), *Religion in a Liberal State* (2013) and *Multiculturalism Rethought* (2015). He is currently a member of the Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life. His website is www.tariqmodood.com

Tariq Ramadan is Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies teaching in two Faculties of Oriental Studies and Theology at Oxford University; Senior Research Fellow at St Antony's College (Oxford) and Doshisha University (Kyoto, Japan); Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies (Doha, Qatar); Director of the Research Centre of Islamic Legislation and Ethics (Qatar) and President of the think tank European Muslim Network (EMN) in Brussels. He is the author of *Au péril des idées* with Edgar Morin; *The Arab Awakening: Islam and the New Middle East*; *The Quest for Meaning: Developing a Philosophy of Pluralism*; *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*; *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad*; and *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. His website is <http://www.tariqramadan.com>

J.H.H. Weiler is President of the European University Institute. He has held positions at Harvard Law School and the NYU School of Law, is editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of International Law and the International Journal of Constitutional Law, and is Honorary Professor at the University College London and the University of Copenhagen, and Co-Director of the Academy of International Trade Law in Macao, China. He holds a PhD in European Law from the EUI and honorary doctorates from several universities. He has written several books and articles, notably *The Constitution of Europe: Do the new clothes have an emperor?* (OUP) and *Un'Europa cristiana: Un saggio esplorativo* (BUR-Rizzoli), both of which have been widely translated. He is currently completing a book entitled *Reconsidering the Trial of Jesus – A Reading for Our Times*.