

RELIGION, SECULARISM AND POLITICAL SYSTEM – STATE

Flora Kadriu

UBT – Higher Education Institution – Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo, flora.kadriu@ubt-uni.net

Leon Kadri

Leonkadriu92@gmail.com

Abstract: The aim of this research paper is to attempt to explore the issues related to the relationships between: state - religion; state - freedom of religion; political culture - religion; political system – religion. These concepts are important because of their actuality and the peace and security which they can bring on an international, national and European level.

Considering the fact that we are living in a contradictory world which is in need of a *dialogue of civilizations and religions*, we decided to explore exactly this topic which poses itself as a great challenge.

It is indisputable that religion is an important element of the political culture and an important factor in the political system, which is all due to the fact that the political tradition is inseparable from the cultural and religious aspects. Religion is an active element of social dynamics, often conditioning social processes and at the same time conditioned by them. Many social changes affect religion and its location. Religion is often a geopolitical factor, as well as a factor of national (dis)integration.

In this scientific paper, we will try to emphasize religion as an element of political culture and a factor or determinant of the political system. By doing so, we will contribute to our thesis that: secularism and religious pluralism should be viewed as a solution to a dialogue rather than a clash which may arise between religions, cultures, and civilizations.

Keywords: religion, secularism, political culture, religious pluralism, political system

INTRODUCTION

For religion as a social and sociological phenomenon, the maxim is that there are as many definitions and interpretations as there are sociologists and their position is supported by certain facts. Definitions relating to religion are not just academic controversies about religion, but they are also the subject of an intense and non-existent debate. Namely, religion is a crucial issue especially for religious experts, an issue that has never been resolved and may never be solved.

Religion not only exists in the social and political context, but is also shaped according to the social and political environment, while at the same time affecting them both. Social and political changes also affect religion and its location. It is an active element of social and political dynamics. Therefore, scientific research equally addresses the circumstances and possible reasons for general understanding and politics, that is, political culture, which is often found in the specific historical, institutional, ideological development and religious norms and socio-economic conditions

Religion influencing the individual also affects the wider sense and the political culture and political system of a state. We can rightly point out that religion is an influential element of the political culture and at the same time it is a factor or determinant of the political system.

RELIGION AS AN ELEMENT OF POLITICAL CULTURE AND A FACTOR / DETERMINANT OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The term *religion* is the dominant notion of this paper, and it is therefore important for us to maintain the definition of the term religion. The term originates from the word "religio", which can be summarized as a belief in and worship of a superhuman ruling power, especially a personal god or gods. But if one defines religion then he forms his explanation for its role in the social and political context. In general, there are two main definitions of religion: the *substantive* one that seeks to determine what is a religion, and a *functional* definition describing what religion actually does.

The subtle definition that defines religion makes an attempt at identifying categories of religious content that are characterized as: religion and other categories that are determine as non-religion. Namely, in formulating substantive definitions of religion, one of the most important concepts is "power," but similar concepts are used, including "supernatural domain", "up-to-date reality", "prosperous reality", "inhuman advocates" and "world cosmos." On the other hand, the functional definition of religion emphasizes what religion does for the individual and the social group. The most important element in formulating the functional definition of religion is securing meaning. These

types of definitions tend to cover cross-cultural, trans-historical and changing aspects of religion, and they often include "religion" as phenomena such as: Maoism, Marxism, psychology, spiritualism, and even atheism.

Clifford Girz defines religions as follows: "Religion is (1) a system of symbols that act to (2) form powerful, longitudinal and long-lasting moods and motivations in man by (3) formulating concepts of a general order of existence; and (4) covering these concepts with such aura of factuality that (5) moods and motivations look equally realistic."¹⁷⁵

Unlike Girz, Peter Berger argues that "it is necessary to separate the question of the status of the religious claims by postponing the adoption of the judgments of whether the essence of those claims is based on what is unfeasible and inexplicable."¹⁷⁶

While Vuko Pavicevic points out that "religion is a set of beliefs, feelings, symbols, cult activities and moral regulations related to the idea or thought of the supernatural being."¹⁷⁷

However, it is considered that Emile Durkheim presented the most influential interpretation of religion by stating that "religion is a unified composition of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is, with what is singled out and forbidden. And under that which is sacred, man must not comprehend simply what shows particularity such as spirits, gods, stones, sand, house ... because in fact anything can be sacred."¹⁷⁸

All these definitions indicate that there is no unified attitude in determining the religious phenomenon, but it can also be drawn from the components and functions of religion. The basic components of each religion are: the concept of the supernatural being, symbols, feelings, rituals, and a specific religious organization. However, from the many functions that religion has, the most specific are: a religious function of a worldview, the individual-psychological function, the compensation function, the social-integrative function and the ethical function.

Unlike religion which has an objective dimension and which is considered an institution of the same level as the institution of state, society, science, technology and art¹⁷⁹; religiosity is a subjective state that gives (a subjective) sense to certain life needs and influences the way of thinking, feelings, behavior and everyday life to a greater or lesser extent. Religion and religiosity are in a ratio of mutual constitution: religion is created from the religious needs which appear in man since his existence, which are again institutionalized in the religion itself.

If religion is not systematically outlawed and sanctioned in a particular environment for a longer period of time, it can permanently and systematically affect the society as a whole.

The notion of political culture was created when trying to explain why formally the same institutional and legislative models in different societies do not produce equal results. In that attempt, Gabriel Almond, as an inevitable variant in the analysis of the functioning of the political community, introduced the role of the individual, that is, the political orientation of the individual, and the sum of individuals (society). He defined the classical typology of political systems according to criteria closely related to the democratic stability of countries: the political culture and role-setting.¹⁸⁰

Accordingly, he defined political culture in two-dimensions: on one hand he states that political culture relates to the attitudes of individuals towards the political system, and on the other hand to the interpretation of the individual's role in the system. Furthermore, political culture can also be defined as *the orientation of one nation's citizens towards politics, the perceptions of political legitimacy and the tradition of political practices*.

Both the phenomenon of religion and the phenomenon of politics are so present in the everyday life of the modern man, that one can rarely find two such similar phenomena whose relations are as close and reciprocal as the religion and politics relationship. It is considered that man is also a political (Homo politicus) and a religious (Homo religiosus) creature, and that it is therefore not possible to separate these two phenomena because they are connected right from the very beginnings.

Religions were created by states, but states also created religions. Religions with revolution or gradual influence, altered state regulation, but also state apparatus often changed, adapted or adopted religions. It must be noted that in different historical periods various powers ruled over the people. In some periods, the church dominated the politics, as it was expressed in the old and the middle ages, while in other periods, politics tried to rule with the church as an institution for easier control of believers and took full control over them by setting up political positions within the church, an aspect which can be seen during the Roman Empire, the Russian Empire,

¹⁷⁵ Meredith McGuire, "Religion, the social context", Waveland Pr Inc; 5 edition (April 10, 2008), pg. 19.

¹⁷⁶ Peter L. Berger, "The social reality of religion", Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973, pg. 182.

¹⁷⁷ Vuko Pavicevic, "Sociology Religion, Београдски Издавачко-Графички Завод, Belgrade, 1998, pg. 17.

¹⁷⁸ Emil Durkheim, "Elemental forms of religious life", Prosveta, Belgrade 1982 pg. 115.

¹⁷⁹ Hans Kipperberger/ Martin Reisebrodt (Ed), 2001, pg. 63.

¹⁸⁰ Gabriel A. Almond, "Comparative Political Systems", "Journal of Politics" 18, numb. 3, 1956, pg. 391-409.

and even after the Middle Ages. Of course, there were periods when the church attempted to separate itself from the state as it was seen during the French Revolution, which was later applied by many other states.

According to the above, it can be concluded that religion influencing the individual also affects the wider sense and the political culture and political system of a state. We can rightly point out that religion is an influential element of the political culture and at the same time it is a factor and determinant of the political system.

SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: A SOLUTION FOR DIALOGUE INSTEAD OF A CONFLICT OF RELIGIONS / CULTURES / CIVILIZATIONS

In order to better elaborate on our topic, it is necessary to precisely define the term secularization.

The term *secularization* derives from the Latin word “saecularis”, which means a century, a series of years, or from the new-Latin word “saecularistatio” which implies a blessing. The term *secularism* was introduced by George Jacob Holyoake in 1946. He undertook an intense social campaign for the strict and universal application of the principle of excluding all religious content from the system of public education and upbringing. However, the very idea of secularism, as a systematically elaborated proposal for the separation of the secular from religious education, was formulated around 700 years before by the philosopher Ibn-Rushd-Averroes. This clearly shows that religion was formerly perceived as a neuralgic problem, and its proper dismissal was seen as imperative for every organized society.

But, depending on the attitude towards religion, different authors interpret this term differently. In this context, I will highlight the numerous approaches through five possible approaches:

The first approach, with emphasized legal conclusions, defines the process of secularization as the transition of church property to the state.

The second one refers to the emphasis on the autonomy of secular activities (culture, art, science, different techniques), which take place according to their own laws and developmental methods.

The third, represented by religious dogmatists, sees secularization as a nihilistic act leading to the complete destruction of humanity.

The fourth approach, on the other hand, implies that in a situation where secularization and religion are present, religious opinion, forms and rituals, that is, any religious institutions, have no immediate legal and political consequences, with religion having guaranteed autonomy.

The fifth approach in determining secularization is based on the fact that it is a process of separating the state (its institutions) from religion.

Taking into account the aforementioned approaches, it may be noted that secularization, basically, is the process of separating religion and state, with its primary goal being to prevent and curb the misuse of religious teachings in society, ie, preventing indoctrination of the citizens by a particular religion.

Harvey Cox defines secularization as a process where humanity (self) releases from religious aspects and then also from the metaphysical control over reason and tongue. Moreover secularization frees the world of religious and quasi-religious self-understanding by decisively abandoning all theories about the world which stem from religious beliefs, breaking all supernatural myths and sacred symbols, which basically leads to countering the attacks of religion on history.¹⁸¹

Meanwhile, Noah Feldman emphasized secularization as follows: “In political terms, secularism is a movement toward the division of religion and government (often referred to as separation of church and state). This may refer to the reduction of relations between the government and the state religion, and then in place of the laws adopted on the basis of Scripture (such as Halakha and Sharia law), civil laws are established and the elimination of discrimination on a religious basis are also addressed.”¹⁸² Malcolm Hamilton concludes that the advocates of the thesis on secularization are unlikely to be attracted by it, while those who oppose it are more inclined towards religion.¹⁸³

However, differentiation is the most important part of all the secularization theories, and this most important element, in fact, is a process in which religion and religious institutions are monitored as separate areas. Hence, secularization is increasingly gaining importance in reducing the influence of religion and religious institutions on public life – emphasizing that citizens are neither under the dictatorship of the state, nor by the religious communities. At the same time, it implies the state's neutrality on religious issues, which does not mean a denial of

¹⁸¹ Harvey Cox, “The Secular City“, Harvard University Press, 1965, pg. 2.

¹⁸² Noah Feldman, “Divided by God“. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, pg. 14.

¹⁸³ Malcolm Hamilton, “The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives“Routledge; 2 edition, 2001, pg. 305.

religion. It can also be seen as a dialogue between society and religion, a dialogue that, in relation to different religions in different countries, depending on the level of social development, occurs in different forms. Namely, as a result of different socio-historical conditions, various concepts of states, religions and their interrelations developed in different parts of the world.

The development of secularization, especially in Western Europe, has been influenced by the appearance of reformation, the creation of modern states, the development of religious pluralism, the growth of capitalism, the development of social knowledge, and the development of beliefs that religion is a result of ignorance and superstition on the part of the religious leadership. Hence, some authors suggest that the birthplace of secularization is clericalism. Namely, secularism was a rebellion against clericalism and violence done in the name of the religion. The Reformation strengthened religious pluralism; it removed the modern state from the monopolistic position of the church, while at the same time knowledge itself opened up the way to new ways of enlightenment.

An idea of greater importance originating from Europe of the Reformation, which is primarily related to religious practices and beliefs, is the idea of tolerance. Historically, the idea of tolerance is divided by strong controversies and struggles.¹⁸⁴

There are forms of religious tolerance that are based on the idea that every religious group should be free to organize its community as it wants, including non-liberal methods.¹⁸⁵ Here, for example, we can see the Millet system, which was, in fact, a federation of theocracy and which is probably one of the most developed models of non-liberal religious tolerance.

It is more than clear that different religious communities exist because of the differences they possess, but they should be religiously tolerant and open to others. However, for them to survive, it is logical that they insist on their own differences. Each religious community starts from being in the service of God (or Gods), but in order to preserve its values, it must emphasize its differences in relation to others. If in this way religion starts to produce impatience and hatred for others, it will not only betray the divine, but in the name of God will create the basis and conditions for a tragedy.

History recounts the tragedies that arose precisely as a result of religious intolerance and hatred towards others produced by certain religious communities, but today we are also witnessing the tragedies that occur in the name of God and as a result of an extremely religious belief. For example, the former relations of Christian and Islamic states that have been so long prevented for religious reasons, that is, due to various religious beliefs. There were disagreements that later turned into a regional problem, later to become a global problem and represent a means of intimidation and exploitation in the interests of their goals (the so-called "holy wars"). But there are many examples of the tragedies that man is facing today: the events of October 11, 2001 in New York; as well as more frequent terrorist attacks by the Islamic State who call upon Allah during these attacks such as is in Paris; Brussels; Nice, Istanbul, Munich and many other places where innocent people lost their lives.

Religion is always ready to use the state and politics for its own purposes. But every policy is willing to use all possible tools that will allow it power and it is no wonder that religion is often a means of realizing various political projects. However, religion should be a personal and free choice of the individual, while religious leaders should engage in the interaction within their own religious communities and relationships with other religions.

It is logical that most countries in the world are heterogeneous, that is, they are characterized by cultural, religious, ideological, linguistic, linguistic-regional, racial or ethnic diversity. In such plural societies and states, John Sydenham Furnivall believes: "Each group adheres to its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and customs."¹⁸⁶ While Michael Garfield Smith believes that pluralism unconditionally entails maintaining the political order with the help of domination and power: "Pluralism automatically imposes a structural need for the supremacy of one of the cultures [and] religions."¹⁸⁷

It is considered that in order to establish order among the different religions within one state there must be a strong political power. Without a strong state policy, any of the religions will only create problems for the state, and if they are not resolved, the state can lead to conflict. For example, the military conflicts that took place on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia, according to a number of experts in this field, besides the political element, religious intolerance and hatred were of great importance. Such an example is the military conflict in Bosnia and

¹⁸⁴ David Miller, "Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought", MI-AN, Skopje, 2002, pg. 454.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, pg. 453 – 454.

¹⁸⁶ John S. Furnivall, "Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India", Cambridge, 1948, pg. 304.

¹⁸⁷ Michael G. Smith, "The Plural Society in the British West Indies" Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1965, pg. 359.

Herzegovina, but also the one in the Republic of Macedonia. “The ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity of Yugoslavia did not cause the war per se, but was a fertile ground for violent dissolution, in which a crucial role was played by nationalist and chauvinist [political elites]”.¹⁸⁸

The recognition and acceptance of religious pluralism by the state and the differentiation of the state from religious communities and their actions will enable respecting diversity and resolving open issues through essential dialogue. The principles of neutrality and respect for the individual are particularly prominent in the more recent liberal theories about the corresponding role of the state. Nevertheless, since each culture is naturally limited, dialogue between cultures is mutually beneficial. Through dialogue, one can be aware of various prejudices – which is a benefit in itself – in effect reducing prejudices and expand the horizon of opinions.

Therefore, we can conclude that religious pluralism and secularism should not be represented as a border in the development of the interrelationship between religions, cultures, states and civilizations, but they should be seen as a solution for a dialogue between them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this research paper, we began to separate the notion of religion and its interpretations. We have also attempted to prove that religion not only exists in the social and political context, but it is also shaped according to the social and political environment, while also affecting them in turn. At the same time, social and political changes also affect religion and its location. Religion is an active element of social and political dynamics. Namely, the phenomenon of religion and the phenomenon of politics are phenomena whose relations are close and reciprocal. Religions were created by states, but states also created religions. By influencing the individual, religion also affects the wider sense of the political culture and political system of a state. Hence we can conclude that religion is an influential element of political culture and at the same time a factor or determinant of the political system.

In the paper, we also deal with the definition of the term secularization, which is essentially a process of separating the religion from the state, with its main purpose being to prevent and limit the abuse of religious dogmas in the social life. In this sense we also present the concepts of religious pluralism. As a result of different socio-historical conditions, various concepts of states, religions and their interrelations have developed in different parts of the world. The various religious communities exist because of the differences they possess, and they are persistent on insisting to show these differences in order to survive. Recognition and acceptance of religious pluralism by the state and the differentiation of the state from religious communities and their actions allows for respect of diversity and solving open issues through essential dialogues. Namely, the conclusion is not that religious pluralism and secularism should be divided in the development of the interrelationships between religions, cultures, states and civilizations, but instead they should exist as a solution for a dialogue. Nevertheless, a dialogue is possible only if each culture accepts the other as an equal partner for a conversation, an aspect which should seriously be considered as a source of new ideas and to whom we are obliged to explain ourselves.

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