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On: 26 June 2013, At: 05:32

Publisher: Routledge

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## Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ftmp20>

### Globalisation, Religion and Secularisation - Different States, Same Trajectories?

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Published online: 08 Sep 2010.

To cite this article: Jeffrey Haynes & Guy Ben-Porat (2010): Globalisation, Religion and Secularisation - Different States, Same Trajectories?, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11:2, 125-132

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14690764.2010.511464>

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## Introduction

# Globalisation, Religion and Secularisation – Different States, Same Trajectories?<sup>1</sup>

Around the world in countries at varying levels of development and different political systems, existing religion-state arrangements are challenged by changes associated with globalisation, including, *inter alia*, economic liberalisation, democratisation and the spread of human rights concerns. States and societies, many of which had previously seen themselves as rather homogenous, are now challenged by various cross-border flows associated with globalisation, that individually and collectively affect everyday life, as well as social and political structures. For example, immigrants bring with them religious beliefs and traditions that may challenge local ways of life, both religious and secular. In addition, economic liberalisation and increased consumer choice as a result of globalisation may also encourage apparent contradictions in traditional religious mores and norms and, as a result, can undermine or confront religious leaders and authorities. Further, changes associated with globalisation, and the reactions they evoke, may stimulate or encourage conflicts of various kinds in different states, both democratic and non-democratic, and pose significant political challenges to incumbent governments.

The aim of this special issue is two-fold. First, in the context of globalisation, the goal is to understand emerging global-local interactions between the religious and the secular in various countries. Second, specifically, the objective is to examine the social and political consequences of the interactions in a number of Muslim countries in various parts of the world (Bangladesh, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates) and non-Muslim states with significant Muslim minority populations (Bosnia and France). The special issue concentrates on both Muslim countries and on minority Muslim population in non-Muslim countries because they provide a useful focal point for the various impacts of current globalisation.

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<sup>1</sup>The editors and contributors to this special issue would like to thank the European University Institute in general and the organisers in particular of the Mediterranean Programme, 11th Mediterranean Research Meeting, Montecatini Terme, Italy, 24–27 March 2010 (details of the event in English can be found at [http://www.euromesco.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1194&Itemid=42&lang=en](http://www.euromesco.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1194&Itemid=42&lang=en)). The papers collected here were first written for and presented at this event. All have been revised and rewritten for this special issue. The editors of the special issue, Jeffrey Haynes and Guy Ben-Porat, organised a workshop at the event, entitled 'Globalization, Secularization and Religion', at which the articles collected here had their first airing.

The first task, however, is to establish why globalisation, which we understand as sometimes dramatic growth and intensification of various networks and flows that transcend national boundaries, is currently so significant when thinking about state–religion relations. It is important to note straightaway that the significance of globalisation in this relationship is both unclear and controversial. For some analysts globalisation means ultimately the end of the nation-state, so that we arrive at an unknown destination, what Ohmae has referred to as a ‘borderless world’.<sup>2</sup> For others, globalisation primarily signifies a global crisis, with the understanding that the nation-state will continue to be of key importance to international relations.<sup>3</sup>

The contributors to this special issue perceive globalisation as a multidimensional process that involves complex, overlapping networks whereby both state and non-state actors are part of ‘an evolving structure which both imposes constraints on, and empowers, communities, states and social forces’.<sup>4</sup> The understanding of this process and its consequences requires attention to its differential effects as well as awareness of a broad historical perspective. While this necessarily involves an overarching change of the ‘architecture’ of politics and the organisation of social space, globalisation does not ‘pound everything in the same mold’.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the consequences of contemporary global interactions are complex, diverse and unpredictable and, as a result, we need to study them in relation to ‘local’ – that is, national and sub-national – structures, processes and political agencies. Globalisation’s influence is, in other words, the result of specific interactions between global and local which provide a variety of outcomes affecting politics, religion and society.

What then is globalisation’s impact on religion and secularisation and how in turn does it affect relations between state and society? Is secularisation – that is, the public decline of religiosity – an *inevitable* outcome of a globalising and modernising world? Secularisation is a process whereby religion loses its public significance, affecting the operation of the social system, either through general popular disengagement from churches or mosques or other religious focal points, leading to subordination of religious values to secular ones.<sup>6</sup> Early secularisation theories, themselves influenced by modernisation theory, predicted the public demise of religion and its relegation to the private sphere. With the evolutionary model of modernisation, whereby human societies have changed from ‘simple’ to ‘complex’ forms, religion, supposedly a relic from man’s pre-modern past, was expected to vanish.<sup>7</sup> However, contrary to these predictions, religion has instead proved remarkably resilient, remaining a significant force in many social and political systems, not least in the countries of the Muslim world, our main focal

<sup>2</sup>Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation-State* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World 1914–1991* (New York: Vintage, 1994); James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: a Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>David Goldblatt, Jonathan Perraton, David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. xii; Jeffrey Haynes, *Comparative Politics in a Globalizing World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

<sup>4</sup>Goldblatt *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

<sup>5</sup>James Mittleman, *The Globalization Syndrome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup>Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, ‘Religion: The British Contribution’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 40:3 (1989), pp. 493–520.

<sup>7</sup>Jeffrey K. Hadden, ‘Towards Desacralizing Secularization Theory’, *Social Forces*, 56:3 (March 1987), pp. 587–611.

point in this special issue. In some countries, including Turkey, with the rise to current prominence of the current governing party, the pro-Islam Justice and Development Party, AKP) – pro-religion – or, put another way, anti-secular ideologies and parties – have recently emerged to oppose secularisation. More generally, however, even when the public expression of religion has declined, this has not usually been accompanied by declines in personal religious belief.<sup>8</sup> Thus, even when – as in many Muslim countries, such as Turkey – established religious institutions find themselves officially subservient to the state, this does not mean that spiritual concerns and religious beliefs fade; instead, religiosity often remains strong and at the popular level ‘subservient’ religious leaders and institutions retain loyalty among the mass of ordinary people.<sup>9</sup>

Contemporary theories of secularisation suggest a more multi-faceted view of the role of religion in ‘formal’ politics, as well as more generally in everyday life. These theories seek to disaggregate the secularisation process, in particular seeking to separate what has been understood as the decline of religion from that of religious authority. In addition, such studies seek to examine the institutional aspect of secularism separately from individual religious beliefs and practices.<sup>10</sup> Secularisation is seen as the result of a functional differentiation in which in many societies, formerly overarching and transcendent religious systems are reduced to a subsystem alongside, rather than above, others, but which can nevertheless remain significant, especially at the level of popular allegiance. Typically, in the West, the deregulation of the religious realm is combined with a cultural emphasis on freedom and choice, leading in some cases to intermingled and interfused forms of religion, a ‘bricolage’ of beliefs, practices and values. Thus, ‘believing without belonging’ and individualised patchworks of beliefs or – as it is sometimes expressed, ‘religion à la carte’ – underscores the individual and societal religious bricolage that defines many contemporary Western societies.<sup>11</sup> The description of contemporary religious life as based on free choice, however, overlooks religious–secular tensions in many societies, both Western and non-Western. Certainly, in the Muslim world there is not that much free choice in practical terms in many countries to pursue religious freedom. In many cases, people tend to find themselves squeezed between non-democratic governments on the one hand and traditional religious leaders, on the other.<sup>12</sup> This is partly because globalisation, on the one hand, fosters new opportunities to create personal religions with more choices made available, but, on the other, also presents new threats to political leaders and their supporters among religious leaders. In many countries in the Middle East and North Africa, such leaders have for decades relied upon state dominion of the body politic to bolster their own

<sup>8</sup>Nikki R. Keddie, ‘Secularism and its Discontents’, *Daedalus*, 132:3 (Summer 2003), pp.14–30; Peter L. Berger, ‘Secularism in Retreat’, *The National Interest* (Winter 1996/7), pp. 3–12; Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, ‘Religion: The British Contribution’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 40:3 (September 1989), pp.493–520.

<sup>9</sup>Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, ‘Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values’, *American Sociological Review*, 65 (February 2000), pp. 19–51; Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup>Mark Chaves, ‘Secularization as Declining Religious Authority’, *Social Forces*, 72:3 (March 1994), pp.749–774.

<sup>11</sup>James A. Beckford, *Social Theory and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Thomas Luckman, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 99.

<sup>12</sup>See Haynes’s contribution in this special issue.

personal and corporate positions, which has often allowed very little leeway for political opposition which can actually have a meaningful say in political outcomes, that is, if they happen to be against the state preferences. On the other hand, as several contributions in this special issue make clear, globalisation may well erode the capacity of the state to govern, although what then occurs will differ from country to country, reflecting variable political histories, traditions and cultures.

As already noted, globalisation is a powerful force that seems to erode religion's hold on private and public life. In a 'disjunctured'<sup>13</sup> globalisation process, religion is a significant yet variable political and social force that unsurprisingly strives not only to protect its societal position but also, when and where possible, to expand its spread, influence and followers.<sup>14</sup> This claim is demonstrated in all of the individual contributions to this special issue. It is perhaps most clearly seen in the activities of so-called Islamic fundamentalists (less pejoratively, Islamists) who feel that their traditions are at risk in a secularising world and seek to take measures to protect their way of life and social and religious position from such threats.<sup>15</sup> In addition, globalisation destabilises everyday life and, consequently, can encourage a search for identity and meaning, which many people find in their religion. Thus, globalisation, on the one hand, can create new demands on religion or intensify existing demands, while, on the other hand, provides both motivation and opportunities for religious agents and groups to organise and act against what they view as a threat to the existing order, within which they have a protected or privileged position. Finally, during these travails religious and secular struggles may shift into new realms, especially if existing political leaders and political structures seem to many people to lose their significance and purpose.<sup>16</sup>

The rise of religious fundamentalisms and religious–secular struggles indicates that globalisation 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 involve religion, underscored by issues concerning secularisation and associated religious change. This can be observed not only in the rise of anti-secular ideologies and religious parties – including but not restricted to religious fundamentalist entities – but also in relation to everyday state–religion–society interaction which are affected by global changes associated with globalisation. Specifically, the growing presence of immigrants of different religions or of 'western' commodities which are perceived by some 'fundamentalists' to 'offend' in the public sphere, represents a challenge to governments at different levels.

In sum, the individual contributions to this special issue collectively emphasise that globalisation – seen, *inter alia*, in increased economic liberalisation, demands for political changes, including democracy, and a more generalised spread of

<sup>13</sup>Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1990). Available at [http://www.intcul.tohoku.ac.jp/~holden/MediatedSociety/Readings/2003\\_04/Appadurai.html](http://www.intcul.tohoku.ac.jp/~holden/MediatedSociety/Readings/2003_04/Appadurai.html) (last accessed 20 July 2010).

<sup>14</sup>Scott Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 27.

<sup>15</sup>See in particular the contributions from Khondker, Christie and Karčić in this special issue.

<sup>16</sup>This is especially the case in relation to gender issues. See the contributions by Dalmasso and Cavatorta and by Barras in this special issue.

human rights concerns – has both secularising *and* ‘religionising’ influences upon states and societies. Religion may be strengthened by its reactions to global challenges, and religious actors may use global opportunities to deliver their message more effectively. For example, migrants with different religious affiliations – such as Muslims moving from North Africa to France – may present challenges – or to those in power at least *appear* to present such challenges – to existing religious and/or secular arrangements. Thus, societies can become more secular or display secular trends, while state institutions remain bound to religious norms (like in Morocco) or become more religious while states remain, or attempt to remain, secular in various ways (like in France or Turkey). The overall conclusion is that the various and variable interactions between globalisation (seen, *inter alia*, in increased economic liberalisation and more demands for democracy and improved human rights), societies (measured in relation to changes in religious beliefs and practices) and states (measured by the depth of religiosity/secularity of institutions) needs to be studied ‘locally’ against existing (or changing) institutions, personal beliefs, social norms and political arrangements.

In addition to this introductory article, this special issue comprises seven specially written contributions, all of which are concerned with the relationship between, on the one hand, globalisation, and on the other, the relationship between state and society in various Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries. The first contribution is by Jeffrey Haynes. Haynes is interested in the question of the relationship between ‘Islam’ and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He poses the question: ‘Is Islam inherently un- or anti-democratic?’ Is the fact that Islam is the majority religion in the MENA sufficient explanation as to why the region exhibits a decided lack of democracy? How, if at all, does globalisation affect democratisation in the MENA? Haynes’s argument is that globalisation – with both material and non-material characteristics – does not have a great impact on democratisation outcomes in the MENA. This is because the factors collected under the rubric of globalisation are ultimately less influential in individual MENA countries, which have highly influential sets of domestic factors reflecting long periods of internal social, cultural and political development, that are ultimately more important to explain extant political arrangements in the region.

Harun Karčić’s contribution examines the combined impact of four factors: the collapse of communism, war, globalisation and new Islamic ideas on the religious and political development of a Muslim-minority country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from central Muslim lands. According to Karčić, new Islamic ideas spread during the chaotic war years of the 1990s. Some of them managed to challenge the official Islamic Community and its erstwhile monopoly over the ‘proper’ interpretation of Islam. Karčić’s article identifies three main external factors active in Bosnia – related to Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran – and looks at how they made their way to Bosnia, how they work and how they managed to provide alternative Islamic teachings. Finally, his article examines how Bosnian Muslim intellectuals and the Islamic Community have reacted to such challenges.

Filiz Başkan is interested in the post-1980 period in Turkey, a time that has seen the political rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which achieved power in 2002. This period has also seen increasing visibility of various Islamic symbols – including the religious/cultural use of the ‘Islamic headscarf – and the growth of Islamic businesses and markets. These developments have caused



anxiety among secular groups in Turkey, concerned with a potential loss of both economic and social status. The religious challenge has led to an often fierce struggle involving secular and religious groups at both state and societal levels. According to Başkan, what this represents is not only a struggle between religious and secular actors in Turkey but also a competition between two rival (secular and religious) middle classes. The article looks at the issue, contextualising it in the influence of globalisation on both religious and secular groups. Başkan concludes that the Islamic middle class has benefitted most from globalisation, enabling it to increase its influence in the social, economic and political realms. However, with the growing visibility of Islamic actors, the secular middle class feel that they will lose their secular lifestyle so they have tried to demonstrate their determination to defend it.

Habibul Haque Khondker examines similar rivalries in Bangladesh, the second largest Muslim democracy in the world. He reminds us that more than 85 per cent of Bangladesh's 162 million people are Muslim. Khondker argues that Bangladesh is an interesting case study as it may be a model for other putative or actual secular states in other Muslim majority countries. He contends that Bangladesh presents the hope that, in theory, a Muslim majority country can have what he calls a 'functional' democracy. On the other hand, as in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Turkey, the temptation remains in Bangladesh of using religion for political ends. While secularism was one of the four state principles in Bangladesh's Constitution (1972), a changing political situation at home and the appearance of political Islam abroad as a consequence of the impact of globalisation has meant that the secular basis of politics in Bangladesh has become increasingly problematic. To illustrate this issue, Khondker's article examines tensions between secularist and Islamist forces in Bangladesh over time.

Kenneth Christie pursues the theme of political rivalries between secularists and Islamists in a comparative article focusing on Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Christie's aim is to elucidate a clear theory of state formation in the political and historical routes to modernity and identity in UAE and Pakistan. His particular focus is on the influence of Islam in state formation and politics in both countries. He emphasises the lessons that can be learned from a successful 'Muslim' state (such as the UAE) for a less successful state (such as Pakistan), which is continually undermined by both factionalism and religious/tribal formations, factors which have not been resolved in the context of globalisation. Although Christie stops short of calling Pakistan a 'failed' state, he does underline the increasingly serious problems and dilemmas the government faces in seeking to build the rule of law and control its territory in a polity increasing polarised between secular and (extremist) religious forces. He concludes that secularisation, which he understands as the public decline of religiosity, has resulted in a far more successful state in the UAE than in Pakistan. His article explains: (1) why this is the case; and (2) under what conditions it has taken place. Christie also examines what kinds of factors are most important to explain these outcomes. His article is one of the very few that have explicitly compared the UAE and Pakistan and yet these states enjoy close relations despite their distinctive differences. The comparative historical aspects of his account lead the reader to a fuller understanding of: (1) state formation and development in Pakistan and the UAE; and (2) the role of religion in that formation and development.

The final two articles by Emanuela Dalmaso and Francesco Cavatorta, and Amélie Barras focus explicitly on the relationship between Islam, the state and

gender. Dalmasso and Cavatorta opine that there is no more contentious terrain of contestation in the supposed clash of values between Islamism and Western values than the role of women in society. Consequently, the issue of women's rights has become the litmus test for Arab/Muslim societies with respect to the current global concerns with human rights, especially liberal democratic norms and values. They explain that there is today a stereotypical view in the West of debates surrounding women's rights in the Arab/Muslim world where two distinct camps are in conflict with each other. On the one hand, there are 'globalised' liberal and secular actors that strive for women's rights and therefore democracy, while on the other there are obscurantist Islamist movements anchored in religious tradition, which resist globalisation and are therefore autocratic by assumption. This article challenges this view and through an empirical study of the changes to the Code of Personal Status in Tunisia and Morocco it demonstrates that the issue of women's rights in the Arab/Muslim world is far more complex than many assume. In particular, Dalmasso and Cavatorta argue that there is a very significant decoupling between women's rights and democracy in the region despite a progressive liberal shift in the gender equality agenda.

Barras shifts the focus from North Africa to France. She explains that over recent decades, France has had to deal with the growing presence of immigrants from its North African ex-colonies – a phenomenon that has been affecting many former colonial powers and which has been accentuated by globalisation. Starting in the late 1980s, this presence translated itself, among other things, through an increased visibility of Islam. One result is that growing numbers of mainly second- and third-generation Muslim women in France, primarily of North African origin, now express their religiosity and cultural specificity by publicly wearing the 'Islamic headscarf'. Many members of the French state and ordinary French people perceive this act as a threat to France's hallowed secular settlement; they understand the headscarf to be a sign indicating that the believer's first allegiance does not lie with France's secular nation-state, but rather with God and the transnational Muslim community (the *ummah*).

Barras's article argues that the headscarf controversy in France has been a way for the French secular state and elites to reinforce a certain exclusive understanding of *laïcité* (secularism), as being more than a legal principle, which symbolises an ethic of collective life. This ethic succeeds in becoming stronger and more tangible because it is able to convey a sense of who can be included, and who has to be excluded from collective life. In this case women wearing headscarves have been identified as incapable of protecting and fostering French Republican values while, in addition, also becoming an external threat to French values more widely. They have therefore been slowly excluded from partaking in the activities of the polis, unable to claim full citizenship rights' and duties. To contextualise and focus her article, Barras examines in particular the March 2004 law – which banned visible religious symbols in public schools – and analyses how from then onwards petitions, law proposals and governmental reports have recommended, in the name of *laïcité*, excluding headscarf wearers from a variety of public spaces.

Combined, the articles in this special issue provide an understanding of the complexity and non-linearity of globalisation and secularisation. Globalisation, as many of the articles demonstrate, on the one hand, undermines religion's hold over public and private life by providing new ideas and opportunities. On the other hand, however, religious actors are in no way helpless against this tide. Rather, the changes provide them with their own opportunities to sustain and at



times even enhance their power. Secularisation, consequently, in spite of globalisation, is far from inevitable and remains one option among others for social and political life.

JEFFREY HAYNES AND GUY BEN-PORAT

Guest Editors

### Notes on Guest Editors

**Guy Ben-Porat** is a senior lecturer in the Department of Public Policy and Administration at Ben-Gurion University, Israel. He is the author of *Global Liberalism, Local Populism; Peace and Conflict in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland* (Syracuse University Press, 2006), editor of the *Failure of the Middle East Peace Process?* (Palgrave, 2008), and co-author of *Israel Since 1980* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

**Jeffrey Haynes** is associate dean of the Faculty of Law, Governance and International Relations, Professor of Politics, and Director of the Centre for the Study of Religion, Conflict and Cooperation at London Metropolitan University, UK. Professor Haynes is the author of 28 books, over 50 journal articles and more than 70 book chapters. His most recent books are: *Religion and Politics in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa* (Routledge, 2010); *Religion and Democratizations* (Routledge, 2010) *Religion and Politics: Critical Concepts* (four volumes) (Routledge, 2009).