

## DE-PRIVATIZATION OF RELIGION AS A FORM OF RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

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**Abstract:** *Many social theorists accept the idea that secularization is a simple, inherent, linear process leading to progress, modernization, and development. Adopting what is variously called traditional religion, religious extremism, or fundamentalism is considered to be like other forms of "irrationalism". On the other hand, the global resurgence of religion can be seen as part of the larger crisis of modernity. The resurgence of religious faith is a type of cultural critique of the kind of world modernity has brought us. Religion provides safety. Modern society is a society of risk. De-privatization of religion and its reemergence on the public scene as a consequence of its role to solve the dissatisfaction with modernization effects. Religion finds a new social role here – that of suggesting that society is moving in the wrong direction. The return to the sacred/religion is through the satisfaction of two needs, which are a part of the conditio humana: security and meaning. De-privatization is the repeated influence of religion on secularized domains and politics. Religion finds roles to play in generating policy decisions, mobilizing moral commitments, defending human rights, legitimating ethnic or national identities, instilling work ethics, and otherwise influencing sociocultural affairs. Religion also involves into new forms like the one of cultural defense, preventing national, ethnic, local or other culture from decay/vanishing in the era of global identities. This reality imposes the need of including the religion in the intercultural dialogue as a way of securing peace and cooperation.*

**Keywords:** *religion, secularization, modernity, de-privatization, public space.*

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## 1. Introduction

On October 14, 2001, in the Church of St. Paul in Frankfurt, Jürgen Habermas, for many years a supporter of secularist theory of modernity, delivered his famous lecture: Faith and Knowledge (Habermas, 2003:101-115). This lecture was commonly considered a breakthrough in thinking about the relationship between religion and reason, or faith and the Enlightenment. For the first time, it was noticed, in such a clear and emphatic way, that Enlightenment secularism had not been completed. As a result, religion will not disappear from the public sphere, and proponents of the Enlightenment should learn to coexist with it. In this way, Habermas publicly denied faith in the Enlightenment secularism project. For this reason, the social sciences faced with the task of elaborating a new place for religion within modern societies.

## 2. Religion and the public sphere

### 2.1. Secularization in the classic point of view

Once upon a time the world was filled with the sacred, encompassing thought, practice, and institutional existence. After the Reformation and the Renaissance, the forces of modernization flooded the world and secularization, a consequential historical process, loosened the domination of religion in the world. Over time the sacred will obviously disappeared except probably in the private sphere.

This view was dominant in the theories of sociologists who held that religion would continue to exist quietly in personal human relations, it will become invisible.

The conviction that religion was dying was accepted as conventional wisdom (a widely accepted view) in the social sciences for most of the twentieth century. They were not alone. From the time of the Enlightenment, leading authorities in philosophy, anthropology, and psychology have postulated that theological superstitions, symbolic liturgical rituals, and sacred practices are the product of the past and will be overcome in the modern age. Secularization, along with bureaucratization, rationalization, and urbanization, were part of the main model of sociological research and ranked as one of the key historical revolutions that transformed medieval agrarian societies into modern industrial nations.

Many social theorists accepted the idea that secularization is a simple, inherent, linear process leading to progress, modernization, and development. According to them traditional religion, and other “systems of belief and praxis” are considered as manifestations of “irrationalism”.

Secularization, as the privatization of religion, often understood both as a general modern historical trend and as a normative condition, indeed was considered as a precondition for modern liberal democratic politics.

This concept of more modernization, industrialization, progress, will result in less religion was defined as the theory of secularization, and became the dominant style of

thinking about religion in the 20th century (Davie, 2007:46-66). Quantitative research seemed to confirm it as in Europe in particular, surveys and statistical data recorded declining levels of church involvement of the believers (Luckmann, 1967:28-40). Many, as for an example, Peter Berger uncritically accepted the theory of secularization. Some researchers even announced the end of religion in general. Anthony Wallace, an anthropologist of religion, stated: „Belief in supernatural beings and in supernatural forces that affect nature without obeying nature’s laws will erode and become only interesting historical memory. To be sure, this event is not likely to occur in the next hundred year (...) But as a cultural trait, belief in supernatural power is doomed to die out, all over the world, as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge and the realization by secular faiths that supernatural belief is not necessary to the effective use of ritual (Wallace, 1966:265).

## *2.2. Challenging the secularization paradigm*

The situation began to change in the seventies and eighties. The Islamic Revolution in Iran, the emergence of a new Christian right in the US public sphere, or the role of churches in the collapse of communist systems in Eastern Europe, followed by a religious revival in many of these countries, forced researchers to revise the theory of secularization and sometimes its rejection. The first significant work directed against the dominant theory of secularization was the Stark and Bainbridge’s book “A Theory of Religion”, which interpreted the secularization as a self-limiting phenomenon of traditional churches. In the long run, these processes lead to the appearance of new religious organizations: sects and cults, and so new religious phenomena. This work also initiated a new trend in the study of religions, rejecting the basic assumptions of the theory of secularization, namely the economic theory of religion, and its coauthor became an intense critic of the theory of secularization.

However, the “myth” that religion has become irrelevant dies hard especially among university elites who consider themselves too enlightened to be bothered with religion. It’s a fact that modernization does have secularizing effects, but it also provokes a reaction that more often strengthens religion. Religion has not only survived, it is flourishing. In many places of the world religion is having an impact on political life and must be reckoned by any serious student of human affairs.

The global resurgence of religion can be seen as part of the larger crisis of modernity. The resurgence of religious faith is a type of cultural critique of the kind of world modernity has brought us. Religion provides safety. Modern society is a society of risk. Religion provides meaning, a coherent context for understanding the world, especially matters of life and death.

More and more empirically confirmed revival of religious life in many parts of the world, including the very modernized ones, falsified not only the belief in the end of religion, but also forced some sociologists to develop a concept that would make a place for religion in the public sphere. This concept has been worked out by the renowned researcher of religious life – José Casanova.

### 3. The de-privatization of religion

#### 3.1. Basic aspects of the process of de-privatization

By „de-privatization” Casanova considers the fact that the traditional religions of the world reject the marginalized and privatized role that modernization and secularization theories have given them. By „de-privatization” it also refers to the emergence of social movements, which are religious in nature, or in the name of religion, question the legitimacy and autonomy of the state and market economy, as primary secular areas. Another sign of the process of “de-privatization” is the rejection of the self-limitation of religious institutions and organizations in the pastoral care of “individual souls” and the question of the connection between private and public morality. One consequence of the aforementioned process is the re-politicization of the private religious and moral realm, and the renormalization of public economic and political realms (Casanova, 1994:5-6). Casanova emphasizes the simultaneity of the process of „privatization” and „de-privatization” of religion in the modern world, and the social role of religion in terms of normative integration, the importance of moral norms, and the defense of basic human rights and freedoms (Casanova, 1994:41, 43, 57).

While searching for a place for religion in the public sphere, Casanova begins by using Habermas’s analytical model of dividing the public sphere of democratic states into three parts: a) the state level; b) the political society level; c) the civil society level. Casanova has no doubt that the action of churches and religious communities can take place in a post-secular society only at the civil society level. The church’s relationship with the state as established state churches, until recently present in the Scandinavian countries, and still is in the UK, is an anachronism. It is also adverse, both for the state and for religious institutions. Using the support of state institutions for years makes these churches unprepared for the situation of freedom and religious diversity. Therefore, when this situation arises, they pay for it declining the number of practicing believers. The best proof of this is the situation of the former State Lutheran Churches in the Scandinavian countries or the Anglican Church in the UK. According to Casanova, it was the strong relationship of the Franco’s state with Spanish Catholic Church that contributed to its rapid secularization after changing systems of government. So, judging from the sociology of religion, the special relationship between the state and the church in modern societies, sooner or later for the religious institution ends it unfavorably (Casanova, 1994:219).

De-privatization of religion and its reemergence on the public scene is also considered as a consequence of its role in solving the dissatisfaction with modernization effects. Religion finds a new social role here – that of suggesting that society is moving in the wrong direction. The return to the sacred/religion is happening through the satisfaction of two needs which are a part of the *conditio humana*: security and meaning. De-privatization is the repeated influence of religion on secularized domains and politics. „Religion finds its place and plays an important role in generating political decisions, mobilizing moral commitments, protecting human rights, legitimizing ethnic or national identities, instilling work ethics and other ways of influencing societal cultural issues.” (Woodhead & Heelas, 2000:430).

Religion also involves into new forms like the one of cultural defense (Steve Bruce), preventing national, ethnic, local or other culture from decay/vanishing in the era of global identities. „Preventing the degradation of national, ethnic, local or other cultures. In this situation, religious identity is symbiotic with ethnic identity, which is still strongly emotionally legitimated in modern society. In such cases, religion becomes the main social force. The church allies itself with forces fighting for the defense of national identity, and the clergy speak in favor of this struggle and sometimes act as its leaders” (Gavrilović, 2008:71).

„The role of religion in cultural defense can be described as such. Where there are two (or more) communities in conflict and they are adherents of different religions (e.g. Protestants and Catholics in Ulster, or Serbs, Croats and Muslims in what was once Yugoslavia), then the religious identity of any group may it acquires new meaning and calls for new loyalty, as religious identity becomes a way of affirming ethnic pride and is a presumption of what Max Weber called ethnic honor” (Bruce, 1996: 96).

Religion becomes environmentally conscious and points to threats to the human race. In this process, religion finds its role in the domain of social justice, points to the inhumanity of the market, advocates for the rights of the subordinates, and emphasizes inequalities in distribution. She warns of the inhumanity of the capitalist system, criticizing the state and the market based on immoral principles. „Religion can remind individuals and societies of the need to examine and regulate these impersonal market mechanisms so it can be safely claimed that those mechanisms are to be held responsible for human, social and environmental damage”

Religion provides security. Modern society is a society of risks (Giddens, Beck). “Modernity, for completely understandable reasons, undermines the old state of certainty; uncertainty is a condition many people find difficult to deal with” (Woodhead, & Heelas, 2000: 461).

In his work *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens discusses the problem of establishing trust in modern society. In this type of society, it is particularly difficult to establish a relationship of „spontaneous confidentiality”, as the cores of trust and ontological security are marginalized. Such nuclei are family and kinship, place of residence, religion and tradition.

„Trying to think about the essence and meaning of life in a moral vacuum and personal insignificance, we will feel that our lives too cannot offer us anything worth the effort, and this is becoming a fundamental psychological problem in late modernity” (Giddens, 1998:78).

### *3.2. De-privatization and the political impact of religion*

The process of de-privatization is visible in international politics through political movements that are genuinely inspired by religion and those that use religion as a convenient legitimation for political agendas based on quite non-religious interests.

Religious institutions are also very public in managing the conflicts (real and latent). We have moments when religion fosters wars and situations when the religious

institutions try to resist warlike policies or to mediate between conflicting parties (The Middle East, The Balkans, Indian Subcontinent, Latin America...)

There is also a confirmed fact of the relation between religion and economic development. As an example, Spain experienced a remarkably successful period of economic development beginning in the waning years of the Franco regime. One of the important factors was the influence of Opus Dei which combined righteous theological orthodoxy with a market-friendly openness in economic matters.

Religious institutions have made many statements on human rights and social justice. Some of these have had important political consequences, as in the civil-rights struggle in the US and the collapse of Communist regimes in Europe. But there are different religiously articulated views about the nature of human rights. The same goes for ideas about social justice (Berger, 1999: 14-18)

A significant shift from religion in its traditional form of „I believe in God“, and this effect is particularly evident in Protestant countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, but also in countries with strong secular traditions such as France and Belgium.

At the same time there is an affirmation of traditional religious beliefs in countries where churches and religious institutions have been historically strong, and this is notable in Greece, Cyprus, Portugal and Ireland.

In some Eastern European countries, despite the period of communist domination over four to five decades, there is a strong attachment to religion, especially in countries with a Catholic majority such as Poland, Croatia and Slovakia.

The third tendency is the development of a new type of religion characterized by the conviction that there is a certain „spiritual and life force“. This new religion and spirituality are more pronounced in certain Protestant countries such as Sweden, Denmark, but also in the Czech Republic and Estonia (Social values, Science and Technology, 2005:98). In countries where Orthodox Christianity makes up the majority, on average (70%) of respondents say being an Orthodox Christian is an expression of true national identity (you are not a true Russian if you are not Orthodox, nor a true Greek if you are not an Orthodox Christian). The comparative median for this claim is (57%) in the four countries with a Catholic majority.

Attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe generally confirm that the church and other religious institutions are again part of the public sphere, even though they were marginalized during communism. According to these views, they make a positive contribution to society.

The tendency of respondents in the region is to affirm the church's positive role in strengthening social ties and helping the poor in their countries. At the same time, a significant share in many countries, and some in the majority, find that religious institutions are too focused on money and power, overly focused on rules, and too involved in politics.

The majority in most of the countries surveyed prefer religion to be separate from government policies and that religious leaders should have little or no influence on

political issues (although they do note that some religious leaders do have, or even have, little political influence).

Adults in the majority of Orthodox countries feel „more comfortable” on the question of state support for religion than in the majority of the Catholic and mixed countries surveyed. Georgia and Armenia, for example, are dominated by the view that the state should promote religious beliefs and values. Respondents in the majority of Orthodox countries, more than others, are of the opinion that the state should fund the main religious denomination in their country, most commonly the Orthodox Church, such as the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). Less than half support in most cases state aid for other religious groups or claim that Muslims should be allowed to receive funds from abroad (Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe, 2017:92).

#### 4. The case of Macedonia

The revitalization of religion in Macedonian society can be seen through the process of de-privatization of religion, i.e. the abandonment of the private, often called the invisible sphere, and its apparent and zealous manifestation on the public stage. The intensification of religious life within the religious collectivities themselves is increasingly being pushed and penetrated in the public sphere, followed, for example, by their general presence in the media, the rise of the place and position of religion in the structuring of national collectivity itself, the animating of questions about restitution of confiscated property, further religious education or religious education, as well as many other issues that are of interest to believers and citizens in general. The public role of religion is obviously oriented in general to its ethical dimension and need to design, develop and realize the engagement of religious communities in the spectrum of social activities (Cacanoska, 2008:140).

The vast majority of citizens think that religion is an important part of their lives, for 97% of ethnic Albanians (91% in 2006) and 70% of ethnic Macedonians (74% in 2006). According to the same source, on average (39.1%) of the respondents stated that they have attended religious ritual in the last 7 days, while on average (65%) believe that God is directly involved in the events (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2010: 32).

Another important indicator is the social standing of religious institutions expressed through their confidence in them. According to Gallup’s monitoring of the army in the period 2008-2010, after the army, the MOC-OA was an institution in which Macedonian citizens highly trusted (on average 34.6% while 40.6% had some confidence). According to the same report, trust in religious institutions among Albanian respondents ranks third (after NATO and EU) institutions and equals (35% much confidence and 37.3% confidence to some extent), the first system and government for which there is a lower percentage of expressed confidence (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2010: 31).

The influence of religious principles and values on decision-making centers is a claim that is frequently mentioned in public. Some decisions, such as ignoring the Constitutional Court’s recommendation to repeal Article 8 of the Law on Religious

Communities and Religious Groups, which retains the monopoly of the MOC-OA and the IVZ, promoting ethnophyletism, which disputes the national identity of all those Macedonians who do not belong to the MOC-OA, the decision to introduce religious education in public education, the controversial anti-discrimination law that wiped out sexual orientation, as well as the religious communities' demand for changes in the Constitution by marriages will be defined as a union between a man and a woman (Vangeli, 2010: 38-44). This establishes religious communities as an important factor in determining the political discourse of the state.

Research conducted in 2016 entitled „Citizens' Perception of Religion and Its Role in Multicultural Societies” conducted by IPIS (Institute for Political Research - Skopje) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation provides the following data:

On the question „Can you say for yourself that you are religious?” The following results were obtained: high 52.4% said they were religious and additional 30.6% stated that they were somewhat religious. 16.5% of the respondents stated that they were slightly religious or not religious at all. However, the influence of religious teachings in daily life is much smaller, i.e. for 25% it is large, for 30.3% somewhat large, while for 27.7% it is small or religion has no influence at all, 8%. Among Muslims, religion has a greater impact on daily life 58.3% and 15.8% to a large extent than Christians 15.6% and respectively, 35.1% (Bozinovski & Nikolovski, 2016:6-7).

The responses on the question „On a scale of one (lowest) to five highest (1-5) rate the influence of religion on the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia” gave the following results: 54.4% chose the grades (3), (4) and (5) on a scale of one as the lowest and five as the highest. It is a respectable percentage and refers to an attitude that assesses the influence of religion on the Government in the Republic of North Macedonia. It points to the continuity of the stability of the religious identity or in other words to the revitalization of the social role and position of religion, by influencing the political entities.

## Conclusion

The classical point of view about the social position and function of religion has been questioned by the authors that confirm the reemergence of religion on a global level. One of those theories is the one known as the process of de-privatization of religion. Many forms of moving of religion from the private sphere in that public have been confirmed by many studies. We have to acknowledge that religion in its many forms and functions is visible and present in the public and social life in many countries. The dilemma is how to limit this impact on particular parts of the public sphere.

We may also conclude that the de-privatization of religion as a form of religious revival in Macedonia as an example hasn't been limited in the field of civil and non-governmental spheres of the social life, but has also had implications on the state and government level. So contrary to what Casanova stated, this process is a much broader one with a high level of influence and mutual relationship between religion and politics.



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