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Religion and Development
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Research Abstracts

Panel I – “The Role of Religion”

Efe Balikcioglu

From Reason to Faith: Habermas’ ‘Post-Secularism’

Coming from a tradition of German Idealism, Habermas is the last heir to the Enlightenment. In this vein, with his writings on the rationalization of technology (*Technik*) and science (*Wissenschaft*) in the late 60s, Habermas also started to theoritize how it is possible to create reconciliation between science and democratic institutions in liberal societies. However, with his latest article, “Notes on a Post-Secular Society”, Habermas has entered into a different realm, in which he seems to be contradicting his earlier project of rationalization; and distinct from his readings of technology and science, his primary concern has now become the interpretation of the relationship between reason and faith. In this essay, I will pursue how Habermas has changed his main concern from reason to religion and in what sense his political term, post-secularism, is actually related to today’s discussions about the reconciliation of reason and faith.

Katherina Ivayani

Changing Notions of Authority: Rida’s Tafsi r al-man r

My presentation will examine the issue of religious and political authority in modern Islam. In particular, I will discuss how an influential early twentieth century reformer from Egypt, Rashid

Rida, tried to answer questions such as “Who can speak for Islam?” and “Does Islam need to be expressed in political terms?” This will involve an examination of his definition of an “Islamic state,” as well as the concept of “shūra”.

Nicole Brunda

The Russian Orthodox Church – Its Resurgence and Reclaim of Influence

Since 1991 the Russian Orthodox Church has enjoyed a resurgence of both spiritual and political significance within the Russian state and the value of the church in reinvigorating national consciousness has not been lost on Russia’s leaders – in Putin’s most recent Easter Statement to the nation he praised the “great contribution made by the Russian Orthodox Church in consolidating state and society.” While to date much of these efforts have been undertaken domestically, there is widespread speculation that newly enthroned Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kiril will seek to expand the Church’s influence both within Russia’s officially secular borders and abroad, especially in the former states of the USSR whose Orthodox churches it believes to have a claim of leadership, despite the former’s allegiance to the Patriarch of Constantinople. These ambitions go hand-in-hand with the Kremlin’s geopolitical ambitions in the region and its attempts to exert increased control over its former empire, especially vis-à-vis Europe. This new partnership could have lasting implications for Russian foreign policy, especially insofar as the Orthodox Church uses its clout to give spiritual significance to Russia’s foreign policy, and especially militaristic, endeavors. It is vital that Western leaders understand and appreciate the significance of these movements and seek to engage the Russian Orthodox Church leadership as an increasingly important player in the Russian domestic and foreign relations political space.

Alicia Juskewycz

How America Sees Religious Freedom: A Snapshot From Newspapers, 1996-2006

American cultural understanding of religious freedom, central tonational history and shared identity, holds a weighty and expanding role in global advocacy around religion and human rights. How Americans deploy shared assumptions about the idea of religious freedom has broad political and conceptual consequences across diverse settings and complex types of social problems. Yet how we think about religious freedom is a negotiable problem, largely taken for granted outside of highly specialized and technical fields such as domestic law and regional international politics. This project adds one such critical perspective to the study of religion and politics by empirically examining how the phrase “religious freedom” is deployed in major American newspapers, identifying patterns in the role the concept plays or does not play in relation to specific political and demographic concerns. Log-linear models systematically identify major patterns in uses of the phrase: almost all foreign referents deal with the individual-centered right to safety, whereas domestic references instead discuss group-relational rights, in which religious identity leads to unique exceptions to rules and to the freedom to impact outgroup members. Furthermore, there is little variation in religious group focus by region, with a heavy focus on Christian groups across all settings.

Panel II – “Religion and Identity”

Uriel Abulof

‘Common Faith, Common Fate’ – The Role of Religion in the Rise and Demise of Modern Ethnies

Both French-Canadians and Afrikaners are immigrant-and-settler communities, originating in Europe and reaching newfound continents as part of the colonialist thrust of the 16th and 17th centuries. Both felt abandoned by their mother countries and, facing an indigenous population as well as British newcomers, opted to form and forge a distinct ethnic community (ethnie). Importantly and exceptionally, rather than projecting their past to premodernity, these communities developed a sense of extended kinship, beginning, according to their own members, in modernity.

My research compares between the two ethnies, addressing two puzzles: first, the emergence of their modern ethnic identities; second, the erosion of the French-Canadian ethnie and its persistence among Afrikaners. Here I focus on the role of religion. Anthony Smith famously argued, “The proximate cause of ethnic durability and survival was the rise and power of a myth of ‘ethnic chosenness’. Wherever such a myth occurs, the ethnie in question seems assured of a long life.” However, while both Afrikaners and French-Canadians are “chosen peoples,” the latter’s sense of chosenness has not warded off the erosion of their ethnie. I argue that while common faith played an important role in the rise of both modern ethnies, the French-Canadians’ inability to subordinate their (catholic) metaphysics to the ethno-national creed inhibited their ethnic endurance. On the other hand, by harnessing their (DRC) faith to the fate of the race, the Afrikaners facilitated the demise of their state (the Afrikanerdom).

Jaquilyn Waddell Boie

Dangerous Liaisons or Strategic Survival? Minority Alliances and State Repression

For scholars of minority rights, one of the most crucial tasks at hand is to understand what causes variation in state repression of minorities. Given that the most egregious violations of minority rights occur during war, an important endeavor within the broader project is to discern the relationship between state repression of minorities and war. The following study explores this relationship through a specific causal mechanism: ethnic minority alliances, religious minority alliances, and ethno-religious minority alliances with state and non-state actors. Within this framework, the study explores whether and why religious minority alliances pose a greater perceived threat to the state than ethnic minority alliances in a manner that causes the state to respond with more repressive tactics.

Ed Shin

Islam with Chinese Characteristics: A Case Study of the Uyghurs and the Hui

Article 36 of the constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) guarantees freedom of religion to its citizens, but it also prohibits religious activities that "disrupt public order." Therefore, Chinese authorities have cracked down on religious groups that are considered a threat to the key Chinese Communist Party (CCP) goal of domestic stability. In particular, the Chinese government has focused its effort on repressing what it considers to be the religious extremist, separatist, and terrorist activities of Uyghurs – a Turkic-speaking, Muslim ethnic group primarily residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. On the other hand, the Chinese government has permitted a higher degree of religious freedom for the Hui – Chinese Muslims who speak Mandarin, look like the majority Han Chinese, and have extensive historical and cultural ties to China. In fact, the Hui have begun to emerge as a key asset and source of soft power in China's diplomatic efforts to increase links with the Middle East. This paper examines the divergence between the Chinese government's policies towards the Uyghurs and the Hui, the contributions of the Hui to enhancing relations between China and the Middle East, and the potential societal tensions that can arise from the growing prominence of the Hui and their exposure to the greater Muslim world.

Rabia Ali and Rohan Mukherjee

Two Nations Under God: Religion & the India-Pakistan Conflict

This paper emphasizes the role of religion in the origins and persistence of conflict between India and Pakistan. Our central hypothesis is that, while most explanations of the conflict have tended to either gloss over religion or include it as an intervening variable in the dialectic between domestic and international politics, addressing the religious dimension of the conflict is a necessary condition for a sustainable resolution of the conflict. We show that religion has been used in both countries to legitimize certain undemocratic political processes and regressive social policies, albeit through different mechanisms that are in turn a function of a combination of factors both exogenous and endogenous to the countries' respective domestic spheres. Our approach suggests that all things being equal, an emphasis on the religious aspects of the conflict holds promise for its eventual resolution. On the one hand, it will be necessary to challenge through social and political mechanisms the extremist religious discourse prevalent at the community level. On the other hand, efforts to curb use of religion in legitimization of political processes based on fundamentalist ideologies should be complemented by efforts to arrive at new ideologies of legitimization through enhancing demand for government accountability for socioeconomic progress. Both approaches will necessitate significant involvement of the respective governments, civil societies and the international community.

Panel III – “Religion, Migration, and Politics”

Asher Hildebrand

Holy Land or Homestead: The Mixed Motivations of the Israeli Settler Movement

The presence of nearly 475,000 settlers on lands occupied by Israel in 1967 has been one of the most intractable challenges confronting efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli peace. Yet despite its salience as an issue in the peace process, few policymakers seem to have made any real attempt to understand who the settlers *are*, or to incorporate this understanding into their peacemaking efforts in a systematic way. Revered by some, reviled by many, but talked to by few, Israel’s settlers are often treated as a monolith of messianic religious extremists – a population upon whom a solution will have to be imposed, but not a partner at the negotiating table. This research project attempts to test this common perception by asking five basic questions about the Israeli settler population: first, who *are* the settlers (demographically, geographically, and ideologically); second, what is the settler “movement,” and to what degree does it represent the interests of the settler population as a whole; third, what are their motivations for settling; fourth, under what conditions might they leave; and fifth, how do “mainstream” Israelis view the settler population? Drawing on demographic and public opinion data as well as historical sources, I find that the settler population is diverse ethnically and ideologically; that a plurality of settlers are motivated primarily by economic concerns; that a sizable minority would leave voluntarily; that the settler “movement” no longer speaks with a unified voice; and that mainstream Israelis have become less supportive of the settlers over time.

Alen Verskin

Holy Emigration (Hijrah) in Islam

My presentation is about how Muslim religious scholars deal with the question of whether Muslims can live under the rule of non-Muslims. This question touches upon some fundamental questions about the nature of Islam – does Islam have an existence aside from its political teaching? Can Islam only be practiced under a Muslim political power? Is the fact that Muslims had almost always lived under Muslim rule merely an accident of history which has no implications for religious observance, or does it represent a necessary religious ideal?

In formulating answers, many Muslim scholars have looked back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad for inspiration. The Prophet had lived in a world in which Islam was not the dominant power. His response was to emigrate from his native Mecca because its political system was idolatrous and unjust. He established himself in Medina and founded his own political system, enjoining those sympathetic to his message who lived among non-Muslims to emigrate to the Muslim community. The Prophet’s emigration (*hijrah*), is a central event in Islamic sacred history and it is from this date that the Islamic calendar is dated. What this *hijrah* implied for later Muslims was subject to debate. Were all Muslims who live under non-Muslim rule effectively living in the same predicament as the Prophet? Did this mean that they, like the Prophet, were obligated to immigrate to Muslim lands and abandon their homes?

The answer was complicated. The concept of *hijrah* was both of powerful religious resonance and deeply problematic. *Hijrah* required Muslims to abandon unjust rulers and join, or like the prophet, found, a just society. The hope was that this new society would one day be powerful enough to

make war on their former lands, overthrow their tyrants, and bring them justice. When Muslims ceased to be religious minorities and instead held the reins of power, this principle became awkward to endorse as it potentially gave religious justification to any secessionist revolutionaries dissatisfied with the Muslim polities in which they lived. It is perhaps for this reason that many mainstream Muslim scholars decided while *hijrah* was originally obligatory, the injunction had been abrogated after Muhammad had conquered Mecca. However, despite the efforts of these jurists, the concept continued to have great resonance and survived in the works of many subsequent Muslim scholars. In this presentation, I show how the concept continued to resurface throughout Islamic history in revolutionary contexts and how it survives to the present day.

Deepa Iyer

The Hindu Diaspora: A Need for Empirical Analysis

My paper analyzes the literature concerning Hindu Nationalism in the Indian American diaspora, and attempts to assess whether the common belief that the diaspora exhibits strong Hindu fundamentalist leanings is empirically proven.

Panel IV – “Religion, Economics, and Development”

Daniel Nikbakht

The Aga Khan Network: When Development and Business Meet Religion

The Aga Khan Network is one of the most powerful non-state actors in world. The Ismaili organization, led by the Aga Khan himself, has invested in strategic business opportunities on a global scale, built economic development organizations in the third world, and supported cultural preservation. The Aga Khan is dedicated to a business philosophy of investing in the developing world. The result has been spectacular gains in standards of living and returns on investment. Despite such progress, this research seeks to understand the implications of such an amalgam between religion and business as it relates to political interests and sway over international events. Moreover, the dualistic identity of religion and business appears to be problematic in terms of accountability and transparency. The Aga Khan is symptomatic of a growing trend in international relations that has yet to be fully understood—the role of non-state entities in the relations between states.

Jan Thomas Otte

Faith and Finance. Perspectives from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Most problems on this globe have economic and religious foundations. Assuming that the issues around faith and finance play a big role globally and locally, they offer strategic impact towards an ethical improvement of human actions, cultures, and characters. Both religion and economics share the hope towards a better future and are totally built upon trustworthy relationships, which imply faith. The financial crisis has shown that the international capitalism has brought much wealth, such

as the rising middle-classes in India and China, but also much social injustice. In other parts, the Gulen Movement in Turkey (Islam) and the Evangelical Bible-Belt in the USA (Christianity) should make this broad overview, based on religious Scriptures and interviews with managers on their faith traditions, more tangible.

Daniel Polk

Environmental Ethics and the Future of Sustainability

To better face the global ecological challenges of the 21st century, environmental ethics offers a starting point for the creation of common goals and guiding principles. With the widely-recognized necessity to adopt new lifestyles and sustainable models for growth, environmental ethics can provide a starting point for the global conversation surrounding how diverse interests, groups and politics can unite for a common cause of sustainability. An exploration of the religious foundations and contributions to environmental ethics is provided, opening up questions of how people of various faiths and backgrounds have come to understand our common ethical and moral challenges of living in a peaceful, sustainable world.

Lachlyn Soper

Jihad Rehab? Yemen's Guantanamo Detainees

A number of states faced or concerned with the destabilizing effects of militant Islamic groups have initiated “reeducation” (*mowe'bil*) and “counseling” (*monasaha*) initiatives to change the ideologies and incentive structures of members, or would-be members. A number of countries in the Gulf/Arabian Peninsula, most noticeably, Yemen in 2002, and Saudi Arabia in 2004, have developed such programs to address militant Islam within its borders and also for nationals released from detention from the US detainment camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In my paper I examine the components of existing rehabilitation programs in GCC states, with a focus on Saudi Arabia, which as aforementioned, is considered as one of the most successful of the initiatives. According to Ken Gude, an associate director at the Center for American Progress, the future of Yemen's Guantanamo detainees “is integral to the process of closing Guantánamo.” I point out lessons learned from this experience. I also examine the Yemeni context of detainee rehabilitation, and consider policy options for the repatriation of their nationals from Guantanamo.