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Politics in Religion, Religion in Politics

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In social sciences, there is no consensus on the definition of religion and therefore, defining religion has always been a problematic issue. Yet, it might be possible to argue that; fundamentally, religion is a system of beliefs, rituals and practices, usually institutionalised in one manner or another, which connects this world with the beyond. This system gives all sorts of religions a particular layout, ordinance, and pedestal. Furthermore, religion provides the bridge that allows humans to approach the divine, the universal life force that both encompasses yet transcends the world. More elaborate definitions discuss dimensions of religion that range from the mythical and narrative to the social and material. Religion is a multifaceted phenomenon that has various impacts on the different levels of society, and on internal and external politics. Therefore, it can be seen as an independent, intervening and dependent variable in various types of studies and this structural flexibility brings scholars freedom of specification regarding what religion means.

In the various disciplines of social sciences, religion is related with worldviews, decisions, and ranges of motivation. In this regard, there can be different reflections and categorizations of groups and individuals regarding their positions in relation to religion. Believing in the basic tenets of a religion, belonging to a religion and behaving according to the laws/rules of that religion could comprise some of the fundamental categorizations in terms of the impact factor of religion on individuals and groups. Therefore, every single category and the intersections between them would be seen identity determinants.

In a more comprehensive way, the faith system might establish an autocephalous structure in respect of behaviours: 'I believe, therefore I behave according to the main orders of my belief'. However, this situation would not be spatio-temporally the same for all societies and individuals. The exact opposite is also possible; 'I believe, but I can not behave according to the main orders of my belief'. Finally, religion might be defined as being on a horizontal basis, in its placing of individuals in one particular sect, community or a group. In this regard, with a direct and positive correlation between belief and behaviour, it is possible to establish this proposition: 'I believe, therefore I behave and so I belong'. But this situation can be also affected by different conditions and times. Therefore, one may argue that religion can manifest in various forms and affect societies in different ways.

As a consequence of the effective role of religion, it is clear that religion can influence individuals (including political actors), society (including socio-political groups) and politics (both domestic and foreign) in five different ways: as a basis of identity, as a belief system that influences behaviour, through formal religious doctrines, as a source of legitimacy and through religious institutions. Moreover, the impact of religions on politics includes both international and domestic aspects that

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can cross borders, and transnational issues which impact multiple states. In this regard, religion is an important issue that has to be scrutinised in various ways.

To discuss all of these issues *International Journal of Religion*, (IJOR) was established in 2020 and it is a multidisciplinary peer-reviewed Open Access journal aiming to offer a venue for scholarly discussion on religion in reference to the social sciences and humanities. *International Journal of Religion* aims to fulfil the need for critical discussion on how religion affects economics, society, politics, international relations, geography, anthropology, education, business and management, health, and the arts. *International Journal of Religion* invites articles with rigorous analysis, reflecting theoretical insights or persuasive empirical evidence. The journal aims to bring into mutually beneficial dialogue, all those - including, policymakers, practitioners, educators, scholars, researchers, and students - interested in these crucial, controversial and topical conversations. The overall objective is to inform understanding of how religion impacts on many areas of human interaction.

