

RELIGION IN MULTIETHNIC STATE AND SOCIETY

Panel at the Conference *Democracy and Human Rights in Multi-ethnic Societies*

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General information:

The eighth international seminar is organized in co-operation with the Dept. of Comparative Politics and the Rokkan Centre, Univ. of Bergen, Norway, and supported by the Project *The Politics of Democratic and Welfare Development in South Eastern Europe: A Network for Research and Education*, backed by the Center for International Univ. Cooperation and the Norwegian Research Council, Oslo.

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Location: Cultural House, Konjic, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Although there is no set deadline for the submission of papers, we encourage you to apply as soon as possible.

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Transport and accommodation information is available at the Institute's web site:
<http://www.rokkan.uib.no/bihdemocracy/>

While much is written and discussed about multiculturalism in our day and age, very little concerns religion's role within a multiethnic or multicultural state or society. Some of the only references to religion relate to religious human rights or the protection of minorities that happen to identify themselves by a religious affiliation. While these provisions are indeed important, there is a lack of attention paid to religious multiculturalism, or pluralism, particularly in the fields of political science and law as well as foreign policy and diplomacy. This oversight harkens back to the Enlightenment intellectual disregard for the spiritual, devotional, or religiously motivated as a medieval remnants, contrived, and even barbaric. Perhaps surprising, this prejudice remains in contemporary politics and conflict studies. We are »therefore confronted with a learned repugnance to contend intellectually with all that is religion or belongs to it [...] out of the mistaken Enlightenment predictions that the progress of knowledge and the influence of religion were mutually exclusive [...] and sometimes out of a willful cynicism that illegitimately claims the virtue of realism.« Citing numerous recent situations across the globe, from the Middle East to Asia and Africa, scholars concerned with religion and politics or international relations highlight the various misunderstandings and mistaken foreign policy decisions that failed to consider religion as a legitimate element.

Given this gap in intellectual consideration, I propose to assemble a panel at the Seminar on *Democracy and Human Rights in Multiethnic Societies* to discuss religion's »place«, its needs, and its contributions to such societies. I am interested to consider a variety of dimensions of religion in the democratic state and the multiethnic society, for example: the role of religion in the multiethnic state (legally, politically, etc.); religious pluralism; concepts of public and private or the secular in contemporary society; church-state relations; civil society and faith-based NGOs; religious human rights and religious minority protection. As a student of conflict and peace studies, I am personally interested in religion's capacity for building peace, as opposed to provoking conflict. In this strain, it would be interesting to hear about cases of religious and inter-religious peacebuilding (for example, Pontanima Inter-religious Chorus of Bosnia-Herzegovina) as well as partnership efforts for peace between religious groups and the state (such as the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in South Africa). These are merely a few possible topics for presentation and discussion and I welcome other similar papers to this panel.