

**THE EFFECT OF RELIGION ON POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIOLOGICAL
AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL MODELS**

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ABSTRACT

Religion which has always appealed to human nature's unalterable laws and particularly its existential desires and afflictions is no doubt one of the oldest and most deep-rooted institutions on Earth. It is a divine reflection of mankind's craving and effort to interrogate and understand the reasons of creation of the universe, the meaning of life on Earth and the life after death. Religion, as the most outstanding basis of tradition, law and politics at the same time, obviously deserves to be the most vigorous founding body of the society, as well as the individuals' ontological resource of peace and security provided with its heavenly, celestial knowledge references. Hence, having an important influence on forming the individuals' worldview in general and correspondingly their political perception and identities, it is widely taken into consideration as an efficient factor before all else in the processes of academic studies and scientific researches on political issues such as political attitude, voting behaviour and electoral behaviour.

Various theories or models have been produced concerning the relationship between religious belief and political behaviour so far. However, among all those others particularly "Sociological Model" and "Psycho-Social Model" (Michigan Model) are much more related to the issue. Thus, the relationship between them was examined in the light of those two models in this article.

KEYWORDS: Religion, Politics, Political behaviour, Sociological Model, Psycho-Social Model

INTRODUCTION

Politics is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that expresses a search for power and influence, and it's also a decision making process that determines the distribution of social assets and puts laws, rights and prohibitions.

On the other hand, because of its heavenly origin, religion is the most important and leading reference source at individual and social levels. Thus, there is no doubt that it serves as the most useful mediator in maintaining good relations between the state and society with its roles as "an important player of civil society", "a source of social transformation" "a common source of power that is widely utilized by states and the markets" with regard to opening the way to political power, legitimizing and maintaining the existing political order and also protecting public order and domestic peace. (Woodhead, 2009: 36).

Considering the religion politics interaction from this point of view, it can be said that in the democratic countries where the administrators are determined by public opinion, politics is inevitably interacting with the religion and religious masses of people when politicians have concerns about reconciliation with the people's religious beliefs. It is also worth mentioning that there are those who interpret this relationship as "making use of people's beliefs for power."

There are various models developed by writers and academicians studying on political behaviour. When examined from the Sociological Model and Psycho-Social Model perspective, the relations between one's religious beliefs and political attitudes can be seen more clearly.

1-THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

Numerous descriptions have been made about the concept of "religion" until now. However, it can be said that there is a certain depth and intensity in the definitions that religion history experts and researchers made. For example, the definition of Rudolph Otto is proportionally more concise and impressive. To him, religion is "the experience of the holy" (Bianchi, 1975: 172, quoted from Otto). According to another narrative and striking approach, religion is "a divine answer given to the true meaning or purpose of existence of human beings with their identity of the earth" (Nigosian, 1975; 2). According to Radcliffe and Reginald, religion is a feeling of commitment to a power everywhere beyond the human being, in one form or another, but everywhere, (Radcliffe and Reginald, 1956: 157). When considered from Fromm's point of view, religion can be defined as a set of ideas and actions initiated by a group presenting individuals an orientation framework and a devotion object (Fromm, 1950: 21).

Religion is a mighty social power if it is necessary to be evaluated in terms of the changes it makes in individual and social life. It is not only a dynamic social force but also a psychological energy which

influences and directs individual life from the beginning to the end. History witnesses what effective role religion plays in focusing and organizing the human effort, arousing fear and respect, starting war, ensuring peace, unifying and integrating social groups, provoking them on each other (McCullough and Willoughby, 2009: 69).

2- THE DEFINITION OF POLITICS

Beginning from Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu and many other thinkers and philosophers have expressed their opinions about what politics is and how the state administration should be. In this context, the first political scientist in human history must be Aristotle (Hix and Whiting, 2012: 12-13).

Politics can be viewed as a systematic examination of the concept of government, the methods the government uses to control the people and the techniques that the public applies to influence the government (DeLespinasse, 2008: 4). Politics is a science of how government decisions are made and how these decisions will be implemented to society. Political structure has some parts. These can be listed as government, political parties, interest groups, elections and lobbies (Easton, 1957: 383).

In this sense, if we need to define the concept more functionally in Margaret Thatcher's interesting words, "According to some, there is no such thing as 'people'. If this assumption is true, then we have to create it; but we will need some tools for that. 'Politics' is one of these means "(Latour, 2003: 143-164).

3-GENERAL OVERVIEW OF RELIGION-POLITICS

It is clear that religious beliefs are a strong determinant of many social and political attitudes and behaviours. This powerful impact has been revealed many times through researches in social sciences made over the last few decades in the United States and Europe. In terms of religion and political belief, desirable relationships can be established in societies that have a pluralistic structure, as in homogenous societies. However, the success of such a relationship requires the community and its citizens to make invaluable contributions to the practice of their own religious beliefs and ideals (Valenzuela et al., 2009: 1).

B. Alford expresses the possibility of effective communication between religion and politics in a pluralistic society. According to him, this relationship depends largely on the existence of certain conditions in society, such as the secularization of politics, the weakness of religious beliefs, and the separation of religion from other areas of life. Pluralistic religious ideologies may exist in religiously homogeneous societies, and when the doctrines and practices of all religions provide consensus, integration in the political purposes is possible (Alford, 1981: 164). Once Gandhi is reported to have said: "Those who think that religion has nothing to do with politics understand neither religion nor

politics" (Gandhi and Desai, 1966: 371). In this respect, it can be said that the practice of religion in the society in which the person is present is influential in the shaping of socio-political attitudes, the participation in religious worship and meetings and the formation of public opinion about certain political and social issues (Hülür and Kalender, 2003: 179).

At this point, it may be useful to underline the clear difference between Christianity and Islam in terms of tendency towards politics. The Christians base their views on the statement of Jesus Christ, "Give the right of Caesar to Caesar, and the right of God to God." This phrase, attributed to Jesus Christ, is used to keep out the clerics who want to be involved in the events with political structure. Judging from the viewpoint of J. K. Balogun, Islam, on the contrary, does not distinguish between religious matters and secular ones (Kukah, 1998: 17-22).

In this context, when we observe the world practice, it can be said that religion is in a position of effective turn to political arenas in almost all countries, especially in eastern countries. As a respected factor in the democratic legal order, religion, which is filled with radical claims and politicized except for individual belief or , grows secretly in all cultures, and it is understood that in some places it is in a stable march towards the point of controlling state governments (Meyer, 2007: 2).

3. A) COLOMBIAN MODEL / THE EFFECT OF RELIGION ON POLITICAL CHOICE IN TERMS OF SOCIOLOGICAL MODEL

It is argued that variables such as religion, family, socio-economic status, belonging group are influential in the decision of the electorate in the sociological approach which sees voting behaviour as a preference among the parties rather than a choice among the candidates. Researchers who adopt this approach think that demographic characteristics of people can be a guide for the prediction of election, since individuals tend to follow the people they live and work with in the same place. Accordingly, voting behaviour is essentially a group experience. This approach has brought a sociological dimension to voting behaviour. In Lazarsfeld's researches, he argued that groups are primarily active in preferences and behaviours, not in ideologies or rational choices, and he described voting as a "tribal issue" in his studies in 1954. Because, the analyses made reveal that people vote by taking into account the views and attitudes of the group they feel attached to. Hence, the influence of ideology is deactivated. He puts emphasis on the same points by saying "If we regard the ideology as a system of thinking based on a theory, then there is no such theoretical choice." (Boiney and Paletz, 1991: 5).

In the studies of Lazarsfeld and Columbia, the understanding of study of his colleagues has revealed the richness of the work areas of election campaigns and election polls. In this context, a formulation

which can be summarized as "political monotony of social groups" has been reached. According to him, the main finding is the fact that the majority of voters vote according to their original political tendencies. Of the six hundred participants who adopted a particular political opinion, only fifty-four were seen to change positions during the campaign period. The parallelism between voter behaviour and the social groups they belonged to was so strong that it was possible to explain voter choice according to only three factors defined in the Political Tendency Index: religion, socio-economic status and the place of residence. In terms of context, Lazarsfeld says: "There is a saying in the American folk culture that expresses that the person is what he thinks about himself. It is a typical American concept that describes unlimited opportunities and the self-development efforts of the person. At the moment it seems that the opposite of this saying is correct. It means that the person is the same in terms of social and political stance. Social characteristics determine political choices. The results clearly refuted the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of the study that the act of voting was "individual" because voting decisions are not individual actions, but processes related to group harmony or integrity. Lazarsfeld clarifies the subject at the final stage as follows: "The fact that the field of political behaviour is significant and important is revealed by our study. However, it is also clear that further studies and researches are needed to make this more powerful and stronger (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968: 69-148).

The Colombian model focuses on the connection between different social groups and certain political parties and states that the voting behaviour of the person takes place naturally through the social group to which it belongs. If a person is dependent on a particular social group or has any class status, then voting preference is obvious (Bélanger and Stephenson, 2010: 7).

Given the fact that the social groups are generally based on a religious understanding in the cognitive background, it is clearly seen that religion is an important factor in voter behaviour in terms of the sociological model.

3. B) MICHIGAN MODEL / THE EFFECT OF RELIGION ON POLITICAL CHOICE IN TERMS OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL APPROACH

According to the "psycho-social model", which is also known as the "Michigan Model" but which is sometimes called the "model of identification with the party", political affiliation and religious affiliation are almost identical in terms of content and functioning. It is possible to say that religious affiliation or identity plays a more decisive role on political identity because it is more rooted and dominant.

In fact, the concept of "partisanship" or "identification with the party" has a central weight in this model, which is also expressed as a "psycho-social model" or "identification with the party". The

model is essentially based on the love, sympathy and devotion the voter has for a party, and this partisanship is likened to devotion or a commitment to a religion or a football team (Kalender, 2005: 45).

According to the members of Michigan School, most voters have an established "psychological love attachment" to a party. The formation of this attachment extends to childhood. It has been argued that this commitment, expressed in a concrete term as party identity, evidently resembles a religious commitment. According to these determinations, it is desired to emphasize the permanence of voter behaviour (Fiorina, 1997: 400, Akgün, 2006: 67).

As mentioned, political identity as a phenomenon similar to the feeling of religious affiliation is acquired in the process of socialization and influenced by the values and attitudes of the family, colleagues and peers. Thus, partisanship turns into a pure form of social identity, where citizens have a persistent perception of who belongs to which political parties and whether they can be identified with these groups (Green et al., 2002: ix). Partisanship, however, is not a variable that expresses how the voting preference of a voter will become concrete in a direct and ambiguous manner. Given the fact that the political life in the democratic societies is particularly party-based and the promises and proposals in the political program offered by the parties often require news and information that citizens are deprived of, it is a central variable in the political experience of subjects that act as a means of reading partisanship and candidates' suggestions (Campbell et al., 1960, 121-122).

In this sense, "party identity" or "identification with the party" is the most famous concept used by the model (Curtice, 2002: 8). Campbell and colleagues made the most effective definition of the role of party affiliation in voting decisions as "a tight but unstable attachment" (Campbell et al., 1980: 148). "Identification with the party" follows a relatively stable course in time, though not entirely, and it strongly determines the decisions of the voters. It's usually a persistent attitude. When voters meet a new or familiar candidate choice decision, they will return to their starting point in their political stance and make a decision as similar as possible (Conover and Stanley, 1989: 912-940; Rahn, 1993: 472-496); but in spite of all the power of the party identity, voters can be persuaded to vote for another political party for reasonable and convincing reasons. New information from the media that one of the competing candidates will be relatively useful can prompt some of the voters to give support to a different candidate by leaving their starting points (Ladd, 2006: 4).

CONCLUSION

In today's world, information accumulates at an incredible pace, spreads, and is instantly shared on a global scale at extremely low costs. The political establishment has to act more responsibly and respectfully towards a modern society and its judgments, where every kind of information needed can be accessed with such great ease.

The existence of a certain transparency in the functioning of the political institution in democratic political regimes based on public opinion is a generally accepted practice. Any decision that the elected government makes has a positive or negative reflection in the everyday life of voters. In this context, the attempts to intervene in the decision-making process of the administration of those social parts that determine the political power and are influenced by its decisions and practices must be regarded as understandable and legitimate. Therefore, it is possible to talk about the existence of many actors who are striving to influence the views of the administration, the political agenda and the official decision-making processes in relation to the political people. The most important of these actors is the religious institution itself, with many established foundations, sociological communities, and non-governmental organizations.

From this point of view, this article aimed at revealing the relationship between political behaviour and religious beliefs in terms of sociological model and psycho-social model. Accordingly, there is a close relationship between religious belief and political behaviour in the axis of both models.

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