FROM SECULARISM TO THE POST-SECULAR: MODELS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS AND THE SECULAR IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article examines the intellectual transition from classical secularism of the modern era to post-secular forms of religious–secular interaction in the 21st century. Drawing on the works of C. Taylor, H. Cox, B. Anderson, J. Habermas, H. de Vries and J. Casanova, it analyzes key concepts describing the transformation of religion under modernization, globalization and cultural pluralism. A comparative analysis is offered of national models of secularism. The study explores the formation of the post-secular condition.

The findings are relevant for understanding contemporary religion–state relations and for analyzing societies in search of balanced models of secularism.

Keywords (EN): Secularization; post-secularity; laïcité; Anglo-Saxon model; de-privatization of religion; Habermas; Taylor; religion and the public sphere.

Introduction
Annotatsiya

Maqola modern davridagi klassik sekulyarizm konsepsiyasidan XXI asrda shakllanayotgan postsekulyar diniy-dunyoviy o'zaro ta'sir shakllarigacha bo'lgan intellektual evolyutsiyani tahlil qilishga bag'ishlangan. Ch. Teylor, H. Koks, B. Anderson, Yu. Xabermas, X. de Vris va X. Kasanova asarlari asosida modernizatsiya, globallashuv va madaniy plyuralizm sharoitida dinning transformatsiyasini tavsiflovchi asosiy konseptlar ko'rib chiqiladi. Sekulyarlikning milliy modellari taqqoslanadi, shuningdek postsekulyar holatning shakllanishi muhokama etiladi.

Olingan xulosalar zamonaviy dunyoda din va davlat munosabatlarini tushunish, shuningdek, muvozanatli sekulyarlik modelini izlayotgan mamlakatlardagi ijtimoiy jarayonlarni tahlil qilish uchun muhimdir.

Kalit so'zlar (UZ): sekulyarizatsiya; postsekulyarlik; laitsizm; anglosakson modeli; dinning de-privatizatsiyasi; Xabermas; Teylor; din va davlat; jamoat maydoni.

Introduction

Secularism, as a key ideological and institutional foundation of modern society, has long been perceived as a universal and irreversible process that pushes religion out of the public sphere. However, since the second half of the 20th century, signs have emerged that classical theories of secularization fail to capture the complexity of contemporary transformations in religiosity. Religion does not disappear; rather, it changes its forms, re-enters the political sphere, participates in the formation of identities, and becomes part of global cultural processes. These changes have shaped the intellectual framework of the post-secular, which presupposes the coexistence and dialogue between the religious and the secular, rather than their mutual exclusion.

The aim of this article is to explore the historical and theoretical evolution from secularism to the post-secular and to analyze contemporary models of religious-secular interaction. The material is based on primary sources, complemented by current scholarly debates and analytical interpretations.

The methodological framework of this study includes a theoretical analysis of classical and contemporary approaches to secularization and the post-secular, drawing on the works of C. Taylor, H. Cox, B. Anderson, J. Habermas, H. de Vries, and J. Casanova. Special attention is given to the evolution of the concepts of "secularization," "post-secular," and "de-privatization of religion," as well as their practical application in various national contexts [1].

Additionally, comparative, historical-documentary, and content analysis methods are employed. The comparative approach allows for the juxtaposition of the French, Anglo-Saxon, and Soviet models of secularity in terms of institutional, cultural, and legal characteristics. The historical-documentary analysis focuses on normative acts regulating the religious sphere (the 1905 Law in France, the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Soviet legislation, and ideological documents). Content analysis of scholarly literature and empirical research has helped identify trends in the transformation of religious institutions and religious activity in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The combination of these methods makes it possible to identify key trends in secularization and post-secularity and to describe new forms of interaction between the religious and the secular in contemporary society.

Discussion

The classical model of secularism emerged during the era of modernization and the Enlightenment as a concept of the separation of religion and the state. It was assumed that the development of science and rational thinking would inevitably lead to a weakening of religion's influence on social, political, and cultural life. The dominant theory of secularization in the 19th and 20th centuries posited that modernization and rationalization would result in the gradual and irreversible decline of religion. Since the second half of the 20th century, this linear perspective has come under critique. Scholars such as Charles Taylor, Harvey Cox, and Benedict Anderson have shown that secularization is not simply a loss of faith but a profound

cultural transformation that changes ways of self-understanding, perceptions of life's meaning, and the nature of social institutions [2].

For instance, the Canadian philosopher and political thinker Charles Taylor interprets secularization as a change in the "conditions of belief" rather than merely a reduction in the number of believers. In his book *A Secular Age*, he describes the transition of Western societies from an era in which a religious worldview was practically unquestioned to a situation in which belief and non-belief become equally valid and competing options [3]. Taylor criticizes the "subtraction theory," according to which scientific explanations of the world automatically displace religion, and demonstrates that secularization is associated with the emergence of a particular type of "exclusive humanism," which allows individuals to live a "full" life without reference to the transcendent. In this context, religion ceases to be taken for granted as a social norm but remains a conscious and reflective choice of the individual.

Harvey Cox, an American theologian, offers a theological reinterpretation of secularization. In his book *The Secular City* (1965), he understands it not as the decline of religion but as a process of liberating humans and the world from the sacralization of political power and nature [4]. According to Cox, biblical monotheism dismantled the notion of nature as a mystical space and transformed it into a sphere of human responsibility, while the prophetic tradition undermined the legitimacy of absolute political authority and idolatry. In this sense, secularization is a consequence of Christianity rather than its antagonist. Cox argues that the Church must learn to operate in a secular world on equal terms with other social actors, participating in politics and social life without claiming a monopoly.

The American political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson interprets secularization through the lens of nationalism. In his work *Imagined Communities*, he demonstrates how, against the backdrop of the decline of religious and dynastic legitimacies, the nation becomes a new form of "sacred community," offering myths of a shared past, symbols of loyalty, and collective identity [5]. Religious functions are partially transferred to the nation-state, and secularism generates a new ideology with elements of sacralization. Thus, secularization does not so much destroy religion as redistribute the sacred among new forms of social and political identity.

National Models of Secularity

National models are particularly significant for understanding secularity, among which the French laïcité, the Anglo-Saxon model, and the Soviet variant of "state atheism" stand out.

French secularism developed on the basis of the 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State, which legally enshrined freedom of conscience and prohibited the official recognition or financing of religions [6]. Its core principles are freedom of conscience, equality of citizens before the law, and strict state neutrality in religious matters. The state must not demonstrate allegiance to any particular faith, and religious practices are significantly restricted in public institutions, especially in education. The ban on wearing "conspicuous religious symbols" in schools (2004 law) and restrictions on certain forms of religious clothing illustrate the aim of preventing the dominance of any religious group. Laïcité, however, is not a form of state

atheism: its purpose is not to suppress faith but to legally ensure a neutral public space in which individual religious and non-religious practices are protected without being imposed on others. The **Anglo-Saxon model**, characteristic of the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia, combines institutional separation of church and state with a high degree of freedom for religious expression in the public sphere [7]. It can be summarized by the formula *institutional separation but public accommodation*: the state does not establish an official religion, does not subsidize religious organizations, and does not interfere in the internal affairs of religious communities, while simultaneously guaranteeing freedom of belief and expression. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1791) enshrines the prohibition of establishing a state religion and protects the practice of religion, creating a legal basis for extensive religious pluralism. Unlike French laïcité, religious symbols and rhetoric are actively present in the public sphere, including politics and the media. Thus, the Anglo-Saxon model demonstrates the possibility of secularity that does not displace religion but provides safe and institutionally guaranteed frameworks that promote social integration and recognition of diversity.

The Soviet model of secularity represented a radical form of state atheism aimed at the maximal exclusion of religion from public life [8]. Unlike the French or Anglo-Saxon models, where the leading principles are state neutrality or protection of freedom of conscience, the Soviet approach was based on the thesis that religion was an ideological opponent of the socialist project. The state sought to dismantle the institutional foundations of religion and replace religious forms of solidarity with communist ideology. Three main groups of tools were employed: repression of religious leaders and organizations, strict administrative control over religious activity, and large-scale atheist propaganda portraying atheism as the normative worldview. As a result, religion was largely pushed into the private sphere, formally retaining the right to exist but practically losing influence over the public space. Long-term consequences included low levels of religious literacy, a disruption of institutional continuity, and persistent distrust of religious organizations. The Soviet experience demonstrated that enforced secularization may temporarily reduce the social influence of religion but cannot completely eliminate it from cultural memory and personal experience.

A comparative analysis of the French, Anglo-Saxon, and Soviet models indicates that secularism is not a uniform or universal principle, but rather is always embedded within specific historical and political contexts. In several post-Soviet states, including Uzbekistan, a moderate, institutionally oriented form of secularity is emerging. In this model, the state legally affirms the secular character of the political system while simultaneously recognizing religion as a significant element of cultural identity, seeking to balance the principles of secular governance with the objectives of social stability and civic education.

The concept of the post-secular describes a situation in which the predictions of classical secularization theory regarding the inevitable decline of religion fail to materialize. Despite processes of modernization and rationalization, religious practices and organizations continue to play a significant role in political, cultural, and social life.

Post-secularity marks the transition to a society in which religion and secular knowledge coexist and engage in complex forms of interaction. Key trends include the return of religion
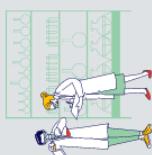
to the public sphere, the intensification of spiritual pluralism, and the emergence of hybrid forms combining the rational and the sacred. Religious organizations become important participants in public debates, social and charitable activities, and the media landscape. At the same time, there is a growing number of new religious movements, individualized practices, and mixed forms that go beyond traditional denominational structures. Individuals construct worldview systems in which scientific reasoning does not displace religious or spiritual orientations but complements them where answers to questions of meaning, moral responsibility, and the common good are required.

In post-secular discourse, particular attention is given to the interpretations of Jürgen Habermas, Hent de Vries, and José Casanova [9]. For instance, J. Habermas views religion as an important resource for moral motivation and a partner in the democratic public sphere. He argues that universal values—human rights, personal dignity, and ideas of solidarity—were, in part, shaped within religious traditions, and their secular versions retain traces of this origin. Rational discourse within the state and civil society is insufficient to sustain moral motivation; religion can strengthen a sense of responsibility and orient citizens toward the common good while remaining one of the equal participants in public communication rather than asserting dominance [10].

Hent de Vries proposes the concept of the "normal return" of religion. He emphasizes that religious practices do not disappear under modernization but adapt to new social conditions as a resilient element of human experience. The return of religion to the public sphere does not imply a restoration of former forms of dominance; rather, it indicates the capacity of spiritual orientations to integrate into a pluralistic cultural field while coexisting with scientific and rational knowledge [11].

José Casanova introduces the concept of the de-privatization of religion, referring to its emergence beyond the strictly private sphere and its transformation into an active participant in public processes. Religious organizations and believers act as actors influencing the formation of social norms, political decisions, and value debates, without seeking theocratic control over the state. As illustrations, Casanova cites the role of Catholicism in the social transformations of Poland and Latin America, as well as the activities of transnational religious networks [12].

The interpretations of Habermas, de Vries, and Casanova demonstrate that in a post-secular society, religion does not disappear but transforms its modes of presence, fulfilling at least three key functions: strengthening moral frameworks and democratic values; adapting to cultural diversity and participating in public life; and expanding the space for dialogue and social interaction.

Against this background, models of interaction between the religious and the secular are emerging, reflecting various ways of integrating faith into public life while maintaining pluralism.

For example, the **dialogical model** assumes equality between religious and secular positions and is based on inter-worldview dialogue, in which neither side holds a monopoly on truth, and religious arguments are considered a legitimate resource for public debate and the formation

of shared moral frameworks. The **regulatory model** emphasizes the role of the state in ensuring equal conditions for different confessions, setting the boundaries for the public presence of religion, and preventing its excessive politicization. This model allows the secular character of the political system to be preserved while simultaneously protecting freedom of conscience. The **integrative model** views religion as a factor of social cohesion and cultural identity, allowing the inclusion of religious values in the activities of educational and social institutions without claims to political dominance. Finally, the **communicative model**, associated with Habermas's concept, focuses on translating religious arguments into a language understandable to all participants in public discourse, thus enabling the reconciliation of norms in a context of worldview pluralism and supporting the democratic nature of the public sphere.

The analysis of all these models demonstrates that post-secularity cannot be reduced to a simple "return of religion" following a period of secularization. Rather, it represents a complex and multifaceted process of coexistence, interaction, and mutual adaptation between religious and secular worldviews, during which hybrid regimes of religious-state relations are formed. Religion extends beyond the strictly private sphere and integrates into the public domain, participating in political, social, and cultural life. At the same time, there is an increasing individualization of faith, the emergence of new and hybrid forms of spirituality, and an ongoing search for a balance between the rational and the sacred.

Conclusion

Secularization in the 19th and 20th centuries laid the groundwork for the establishment of secular institutions; however, the expectations of classical theory regarding the inevitable decline of religion have not materialized. Post-secularity captures the return of religion to the public sphere, its adaptation to contemporary social and political conditions, and the coexistence of multiple worldviews. Understanding these processes is essential for analyzing religious-state relations in the 21st century and for anticipating further transformations in the models of interaction between the religious and the secular in both global and national contexts.

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