



International conference within 12th Russian International Studies Association
Convention

POST-SECULAR WORLD AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
Conference Description

Organisers: RISA; MGIMO-University (Department of the International Journalism); Institute of socio-economic and political researches (Moscow); Russian Expert School (Moscow)

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Address: 76, Prospect Vernadskogo, Moscow, Russia

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The main problematic of current international studies is to reveal the nature of the future world order and answer the question: what definitive shape will the world take once the process of its transformation is over? So far, scholars have highlighted individual aspects of this transition. Culture researchers are talking about the crisis of postmodernity. Sociologists have discovered that modernization faces cultural limitations: it does not necessarily produce a Western European type of secular society. Most subjects of modernization processes retain and develop their own civilizational identity, while Western Europe stands out as an outlier that does not follow the rules it once established itself. Political scientists are concerned about the crisis of liberalism as the basic political philosophy in the modern era. The crisis has already distorted the common political scale: the left-right dichotomy, even if expanded to include the so-called populists, does no longer reflect the actual political landscape. The more comprehensively and extensively economists describe the nature of capitalism and the history of the global market, the more their studies look like closing remarks.

The dynamics of ongoing processes and unfolding debates suggests that the criticism of such issues as alienation of real authority from the public policy, speculative capital, increasing moral relativism, desacralization of culture — and the criticism of foundations of modern and postmodern eras in general — become a new standard. The discourse often associated with antiliberalism and antiglobalization movements is no longer deemed marginal. It develops along

similar lines both in countries of the 'West' and 'East', 'North' and 'South', 'Centre' and 'Periphery'. Not only political outsiders, but also political and economic establishments take interest in this discourse. Apparently, it has not yet reached its apogee. However, it is already becoming a tool of contemporary politics.

This strand of expert discussions is fueled not only by debates between liberals and conservatives (after all, these debates on topical issues of politics, economy, anthropology, culture and religion have been around for quite a while), but even more so by participants' dissatisfaction with the underlying principles and rules of the very debates. Basic unspoken understandings and unspoken conventions of the modernity lose credibility and are reconsidered as discussions are moving beyond the paradigm of modernity.

One of the conventions that no longer hold true concerns the notion of 'secular'.

An approach that views secularity as a direct consequence of modernization fails to adequately explain the processes underway not only in developing countries, but also in the Western world. The assumption that there is a simple cause-and-effect relationship between modernization and secularization dominated researches in humanities throughout the 20th century, but proved wrong and required substantial improvements. Social scientists argue that with modernization the world has not become less religious: the role of religion and the religious remains strong and even increases in certain aspects. The tensions along the 'secular/religious' line are further compounded by processes such as migration from countries with traditional culture, development of the mass media, and hostile attitudes of the secular culture. Among other things, Islamist movements often use the slogan of fighting against secular globalization for their own benefit, so that they attract adherents from within today's secularized societies. Certain dissatisfaction with the dominance of secular culture is evident in the West itself — among the Christian population. A number of countries, including Russia, experience a rise in cultural and social influence of religious institutions. The role of religious factors in current political and military conflicts is still significant.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult to unambiguously distinguish between the secular and the religious: not only does the religion influence politics, culture and society, but the secular intrudes upon the religious. A number of methodological problems still remain unsolved today, specifically — how to distinguish and reconcile the religious and the secular world. These problems are unlikely to be solved without an analysis of the basic modern concepts such as the 'secular' and the 'religious' from the perspective of the current scientific knowledge and political thought.

In the face of these difficulties, the early 21st century saw a rise in interdisciplinary discussions focusing on the 'post-secular society' and the 'post-secular world' and attempting to define the secular and reconsider the significance of this concept in the modern system of knowledge. Some influential strands of post-secular studies regard the secular as a form of the religious, thus overturning methodology of researches in humanities. The secular is a basic component of

modernity, and the revision of this concept significantly influences all modern institutions, including the system of international relations.

The thematic focus of the conference revolves around the following issues:

Etsi Deus non daretur. The theology of the modern world order
The genealogy of the secular. The secular as a form of the religious
Historical functions of secularism in the West and East
The crisis of secular foundations of liberalism and rationalism
The crisis of the language of modernity and a decline in the explanatory power of the basic modern concepts as an axiological issue
The post-secular turn: the social as a product of the theological
The post-secular approach: proclaiming the transformation of modernity
Post-secularity from the viewpoint of social science, philosophy, and theology
The influence of a post-secular perspective on researches in humanities
Theories of the liberal world order development: civilizational approach, neo-medievalism, new regionalism
The outlines of the post-secular world order and the issue of multipolarity
Political debate beyond modernity and left/right, liberal/conservative paradigm
The perspectives of the international anti-secular consensus and the tacit alliance against the late modernity
Russian philosophy and conceptualization of the post-secular world
The system of international relations from a post-secular perspective

Address for submissions:

mail@russian-expert.ru

Coordinator: V.A. Shchipkov

Ph.D. in Philosophy, Associate professor at Department Of The International Journalism, MGIMO-University; Director at Russian Expert School.