



Religion, Religious Spaces and Conflict: Cyprus, Lebanon, Bosnia



International Conference

**Friday, 1 November 2019
Nicosia, Cyprus**

**University of Nicosia
UNESCO Amphitheatre
Makedonitissis 46, 2417 Nicosia**

PROGRAMME Friday 1 November 2019

- 10:00 Registration
- 10:30–11:00 **Opening and Welcome**
Prof. Andreas Theophanous, Head of the Department of Politics and Governance at the University of Nicosia and President of the Center for European International Affairs
Prof. Hubert Faustmann, University of Nicosia and Director of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Nicosia Office Cyprus
Dr Sabine Rogge, Managing Director of the Institute for Interdisciplinary Cypriot Studies, University of Münster
- 11:00–12:30 **Panel 1: Lebanon** (chair: Prof. Hubert Faustmann)
Dr Dima de Clerck
The place of the Christian dead in southern Mount Lebanon
Dr Ziad Fahed
From war to reconciliation, lessons from and for Lebanon: The role of religions in peace building in time of war...
Dr Elie Al Hindy
The role of religious leadership in breaking the cycle of fear and building long-term peace and stability in post-conflict divided societies
- 12:30–13:30 Lunch break
- 13:30–14:45 **Panel 2: Bosnia** (chair: Prof. Farid Mirbagheri)
Amra Pandžo
Religion and conflict in Bosnia
Alen Kristić
Sacred spaces: Between nationalist triumphalism and humble turn toward the humanization of society
- 14:45–15:15 Coffee break
- 15:15–16:45 **Panel 3: Cyprus** (chair: Dr Sabine Rogge)
Dr Ali Dayioğlu
The religious effect of Turkey in north Cyprus during the Justice and Development Party government
Dr Petros Savvides
The politics of religion in the Cyprus Problem
Dr Thorsten Kruse
The fate of Christian and Muslim heritage in the districts of Kyrenia and Larnaca
- 16:45–17:30 **Round table discussion between the participants**
Closing remarks by Dr Thorsten Kruse and Dr Petros Savvides

PROGRAMME Saturday 2 November 2019

- 08:30–21:00 Day field trip to Christian and Muslim religious spaces
(only for participating speakers and organizers)

PANEL 1: LEBANON

Dr Dima de Clerck

Lecturer and Researcher, American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon

The place of the Christian dead in southern Mount Lebanon

The presentation discusses the “place” of the dead in the specific context of the mixed Druze and Christian region of southern Mount Lebanon, where the link to the dead is at the heart of the relationship between the living. The return of the Christians, driven out by war and massacres, was contingent to the reconciliation between Druze and Christians. But in order to achieve reconciliation, it was first required to “put the dead in their place”. In the mixed Druze and Christian villages, where official reconciliations had been organized by the Ministry of the Displaced, the return of the dead Christians, whether the physical return of their remains or their symbolic reintegration into their community (when no remains were found), was a return negotiated between villagers and between political forces. It had almost become a prerequisite to the return of the living. The return of the dead adjoins the symbolic marking of territory or the repair of a sacrilegious violence (desecration and profanation of tombs, churches, etc.), beyond the variety of cases and forms of political use likely to result from it, and which are also mentioned in the presentation. Moreover, war and displacement have led to changes in funeral and commemorative practices of Christians. Those modifications appear as the best indicator of the link to the origin, between a desire of rupture and a will to reconnect with the village and the land of the ancestors.

Dr Ziad Fahed

Associate Professor, Notre Dame University Louaize, Lebanon

From war to reconciliation, lessons from and for Lebanon: The role of religions in peace building in time of war ...

“No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions” wrote the theologian Hans Küng. The role that religions are called to assume in peace building is an essential part of the “raison d’être” of each religion. This mission is more relevant in societies that are willing to assume their role in pluralistic societies where different religions coexist since hundreds of year.

The role that religions are called to play can be assumed at many levels. Because of the evil and injustice that accompany all wars, Christian theology calls for forbidding the intentional destruction of human life. The Catholic social teaching emphasises the importance of taking all necessary actions to prevent any type of conflict escalation and limit injustice that can lead to war. The role that religious leaders can assume is thus well needed to promote peace and justice. In this presentation we will discuss the role assumed by the church during the Lebanese war. What are the lessons that can remain for us today? How can the church be more implicated in avoiding injustice that could lead to war and in peace building? What role can the interreligious dialogue assume to promote bridge building?

Dr Elie Al Hindy*Associate Professor, Notre Dame University Louaize, Lebanon****The role of religious leadership in breaking the cycle of fear and building long-term peace and stability in post-conflict divided societies***

Religious identities are an integral part of the political life and political practice in the Middle East and notably in Lebanon. These religious identities have long pre-existed the formation of states. The creation of state political system put the different groups in confrontation with each other creating fear, mistrust and reciprocal accusation of treason and lack of patriotism. This in turn made every group seek external support to improve its national positioning at the expense of competitors. The only way to break this cycle is to diminish the fear and build bridges and common grounds, among the different religious communities. Religious institutions here have a great role and responsibility as they are the most qualified and best equipped to take lead in this endeavor. Breaking the cycle of fear and establishing fraternal relations transforms religious belonging into a catalyst for peace and harmony rather than a catalyst for wars. To achieve this, leaders of every religious group must explore ways to do the following: First, reassure the “different other” from a religious perspective, that there is no hate or animosity or aggressiveness towards him and this requires, in itself, a new tolerant and open reading of his religious books and teachings; second, to be willing to engage in an inter-religious dialogue on theology, and more importantly on life and coexistence, and this requires the religious leader to understand the importance of such a step and be willing to get out of his comfort zone and take the challenge of meeting the other and lead by example; third, it requires a serious effort from all sides to find issues of common interest/concern that can present a common space of meeting, but also working together, and this is what actually builds long term peace and social cohesion.

This presentation takes the Lebanese society as a case study and tries to explore the existing experiences in peace building, and argues that political reconciliations and theoretical religious/theological dialogue have been much less successful in breaking the cycle of fear and thus less successful in building peace than other initiatives that are based on the deep religious conviction that the other is a brother in humanity and that a lot can be shared in a way to advance national peace and stability.

PANEL 2: BOSNIA**Amra Pandžo***Peace-building Activist, PhD Cand., University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina****Religion and conflict in Bosnia***

The multi-religious state of Bosnia and Herzegovina plunged into violence, following the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, when nationalist leaders emerged and stoked ethnic tensions. By the time the Dayton Peace Agreement ended hostilities in 1995, over 250,000 Bosnians were dead, thousands of women had been raped, and some two million people had been driven from their homes. During the conflict, public statements by the various religious communities called for an end of fighting. On the other hand, there were many “unofficial” statements and actions by religious leaders that legitimized the violence. This was largely because religion was braided into ethnic identity. As religious leaders legitimized the aspirations and fears of their own ethnic group, nationalist politicians manipulated those

religion sentiments. The manipulations were visible in the process of burying in the cemetery of one ethnic group and moving it in another after the conflict. The cemeteries were attacked, bombed, destroyed. First steps in reconciliation started with fixing and reconstruction of cemeteries. Religious narratives are used for reconciliation process in postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina: forgiveness, interfaith dialogue, spiritual support to trauma healing.

Alen Kristić

Theologian and Peace-building Activist, PhD Cand., University of Zagreb, Croatia

Sacred spaces: Between nationalist triumphalism and humble turn toward the humanization of society

Religious ambivalence becomes particularly obvious in times of socio-political crises, especially before, during and after wars. However, the ability of heterogeneous religious and spiritual resources (such as symbols, rites, prayers, myths, music) to encourage something extremely good on the one hand and something extremely evil on the other cannot only be noticed in religious discourses and practices but in sacred spaces as well. This is mainly reflected in the way we use our sacred places and how we deal with the sacred spaces of the others. In this paper we will try to detect the main strategy behind the positive and negative attitudes towards sacred spaces before, during and after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992 to 1995) through the use of specific examples.

PANEL 3: CYPRUS

Dr Ali Dayioğlu

Associate Professor, European University of Lefke, Cyprus

The religious effect of Turkey in north Cyprus during the Justice and Development Party government

Even though it defines itself as a “Conservative-Democratic” party, with its practices in particular regarding domestic and foreign policies, especially in recent years, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP) in Turkey has started to look like an “Islamic” party. Correspondingly, the Hanafi-Sunni belief, which is the state’s dominant religious doctrine in Turkey, has gained strength and the rise of political Islam based on this belief has been witnessed. The neoliberal economic policies and neoliberal populism implemented under the AKP rule also had significant consequences. One of the main consequences of the AKP government regarding north Cyprus, which is under the influence of Turkey both politically and economically, is the intensification of Hanafi-Sunni based Islamic activities especially in the period after 2009. It is possible to summarize these consequences as follows: 1) As of summer of 2009, Qur’an courses are permitted; 2) Religious culture and morality courses are made compulsory as of the 2009-2010 school year; 3) Hala Sultan Divinity College was opened in the 2012-2013 school year; 4) The Turkish Embassy Aid Committee allocated huge budgets to “TRNC” as part of the “Improvement of Religious Services Project”. By explaining these developments, this paper discusses the religious effect of AKP governments in north Cyprus.

Dr Petros Savvides

Research Fellow, Center for Security and Intelligence Studies, University of Buckingham, United Kingdom

The politics of religion in the Cyprus Problem

Although the Cyprus Problem has not been a religiously-based conflict, religion and religious spaces have been used by the two Cypriot communities – the Greek Christian Orthodox majority (77%) and the Turkish Muslim minority (18%) – in different roles beyond the context of religious affairs. The role of religion, in the traditionally more religious Greek Cypriot community, was vital for the sustainment of its national character during the Ottoman conquest of the island (1571-1878) as well as the development of its political identity and the birth of its national cause for *Enosis* (union of Cyprus with Greece) during the British rule (1878-1960). Religion itself has played a more limited role in the secular Turkish Cypriot community (one of the more secular in the Islamic world), but its religious spaces were often used in political and paramilitary roles and as instruments for anti-Greek propaganda during the post-independence period (1960-1974). The Turkish invasion of 1974, which brought the de facto division of the island, led to the cultural cleansing and “institutional obliteration” (*Washington Post*, 1976) of Greek Christian Orthodox heritage from occupied space and to the forced Islamization of tens of churches. Since then, religion has been systematically used, by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot religious authorities, as a political tool for the implantation of an artificial Islamic identity over occupied space while Evkaf, the Turkish Cypriot authority for religious properties, adopted political tactics in the context of the property issue of the Cyprus Problem.

Dr Thorsten Kruse

Research Associate, Institute for Interdisciplinary Cypriot Studies, University of Münster

The fate of Christian and Muslim heritage in the districts of Kyrenia and Larnaca

The unsettled times in the 1960s and 1970s on the island of Cyprus resulted in the tragic losses of life, the internal displacement of thousands of Cypriots and the persistent spatial separation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

In most cases the internal refugees not only left most of their properties and belongings behind, but also their religious and sacred spaces such as churches/mosques and cemeteries. As a consequence, many of these places were abandoned for decades, and exposed to deterioration or destruction by natural or other forces. Until recently, there was no comprehensive public study that reflects the present condition of the places of religious heritage of both Christians and Muslims on the island.

The paper will present the results of a recently completed project documenting the condition of the religious heritage in two districts of the island – namely the Kyrenia district for the Christian places of religious heritage and the Larnaca district for the Muslim ones.

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Cover photos (from left to right)

Bosanska Krupa, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Mazble/Wikimedia, 2007

Karavas, Cyprus: P. Savvides/Armatolos, 2018

Beirut, Lebanon: Rami Rizk Aerial/Lebanon in Picture, [undated]

Agios Nikolaos cathedral/Lala Mustafa Paşa mosque, Famagusta, Cyprus: Gerhard Haubold/Wikimedia, 2008