



International Workshop and Publishing Project

**Religion, State, and Society in Post-Communist Countries:
Thirty Years after the End of the Cold War**

sponsored by

BYU Law School's International Center for Law and Religion Studies

in collaboration with

University of Tartu's School of Law

and

Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University's

Center for Rule of Law and Religion Studies

February 12-13, 2021

Tartu, Estonia

Call for Papers

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and with it the communist camp ceased to exist. All the post-communist states of the Soviet bloc have experienced enormous social, political, economic, and legal transformations and reforms, including the rejection of both official atheism and religious suppression. The collapse has led to a great religious comeback. Traditional religions of majority populations have expanded their holds and have been institutionally strengthened; in many post-communist countries, belonging to a certain religion is seen an essential characteristic of being a good citizen, as it had previously (Pew Research Center, 2017). Many religious minorities that had gone underground were afforded the opportunity to have legal status and have flourished. Further, especially in the immediate aftermath of the communist collapse, religious freedom has allowed for the emergence of new religions and belief systems in these countries. Religions triumphantly returned to the public space with restored and increased influence over public morality, politics, and human rights discourse, such as debates over same-sex marriage that have divided Western and Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, different post-communist countries have taken significantly different paths through these thirty years. In some nation-states atheist and secular sentiments have strengthened (Czech Republic) or spirituality of people has become more individualistic (Estonia); some have seen the majority religion split

into several churches (Ukraine, Moldova) and then overcome this split (Bulgaria); and, of course, in post-communist countries the relationship between spiritual and temporal authorities varies significantly. Finally, in many countries in the region, especially in the post-USSR space, the relatively free 1990s gave way to a decline in religious freedom in the 2000s and 2010s, correlating with a decline in political liberalism in Central and Eastern Europe.

In this project, we propose to study the relationship between religion, state, and society in post-communist countries over the past thirty years, including:

- Religion-state conflicts and alliances
- Religion, populism and ideologies
- Legal and political aspects of religion and human rights
- Interreligious relations and dialogue, including between the majority religion and religious minorities
- Religion, society and spirituality
- Religions and social activism, including relations between religious communities and civil society organizations.

We do not seek overviews of religious issues in each of the post-communist states. Rather, we are looking for papers studying the specificities and peculiarities of the region as a whole and the most striking country-specific cases. Comparative studies are also welcome.

The organizers invite scholars of sociology of religion, religious studies, law and religion, religion and politics, and other relevant studies to submit their abstracts of no more than 300 words and a one-page CV by July 31, 2020 to dmtr.vovk@gmail.com (Dmytro Vovk).

Selections will be made by August 15, 2020. The authors of accepted proposals will be invited to present at a workshop at University of Tartu (Estonia) on February 12-13, 2021. The BYU International Center for Law and Religion Studies will cover travel and lodging expenses for selected participants. Presented papers will be published in a volume by an authoritative international publisher.

Confirmed speakers:

Catherine Wanner, Professor of History, Anthropology, and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University
Lucian N. Leustean, Reader in Politics and International Relations at Aston University, Birmingham

If the COVID-19 pandemic does not allow an in-person conference, then a series of online meetings with participants will be held to discuss their papers.

Important dates:

31 July 2020 – deadline for application submission

15 August 2020 – results notification

5 January 2021– first drafts must be submitted for dissemination among participants

Project leaders:

Elizabeth Clark, Associate Director of Brigham Young University Law School's International Center for Law and Religion Studies

Merilin Kiviorg, Senior Research Fellow in Public International Law at University of Tartu, School of Law

Dmytro Vovk, Director of the Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University Center for Rule of Law and Religion Studies