

Rethinking Political Secularism in Iranian Context: Intellectual Struggle in Post-Reformist Period

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Abstract : Political secularism is different from philosophical secularism in terms of its inclusionary, peaceful, liberal and democratic aspects. Secularism as a political principle not only takes the separation of state and religion as a basis but also it aims to exclude any kind of ethnic, religious, racial, gender domination at the state level. Thus, although political secularism does not see any problem with the visibility and implementation of religious views and symbols in the public sphere, it stands against the fusion of political power and religious views or more generally any kind of identity. Iranian context especially the post-reformist period, which starts in 2005, shows religious and/or reformist intellectuals try to put forward the political secularism and make it attractable to the large masses. Three prominent figures of reformist intellectualism Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar and Akbar Ganji form the basic vocabulary of political secularism in the post-reformist period of Iran. Their intellectual and political struggle against the Islamic regime's anti-democratic policies and actions do carry significance not only for Iranian democracy but also for all Muslim people around the world that demand a more equal, free, and just society. The political and intellectual discourses of Iranian intellectuals indicate that political secularism is a requirement of democratic state and society. In this paper, it is discussed the relationship between political secularism, state, society, and Islam. Thus, it will be argued that secularism as a political principle is increasingly held by Iranian intellectuals to show the relation between secularism and democracy.

Keywords : political secularism, Iranian intellectuals, democracy, Middle East

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