

Special Issue

Religious Soft Power: Definition(s), Limits and Usage

Message from the Guest Editors

The international relations scholar Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power more than 30 years ago, in the context of secular power relations. More recently, scholars have sought to examine a related concept: religious soft power. The soft power of religion is thought to influence the foreign policies of many states, as well as the activities of numerous non-state actors, including the Holy See, al Qaeda, ISIS, and Hindutva movements. Scholars have discovered that religious soft power can be wielded with much variation, exemplifying what Scott Appleby (2000) identifies as the 'ambivalence' of religion.

The Special Issue is interested in religious soft power as exercised by both state and non-state actors in international relations, and identifies three important questions: what is religious soft power, and why is it important in international relations? How can we identify religious soft power when it is exercised? What are the limits of religious soft power in contemporary international relations? The objective of this Special Issue is to discover more about these issues and increase our understanding of religious soft power in international relations.

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Message from the Editorial Board

Fresh developments in the disciplines that consistently make significant contributions to our understanding of religious personality, authority, devotion, and community – disciplines ranging from psychology, sociology, and anthropology to history, art history, philosophy, literary criticism, and political science – fuel general, as well as scholarly, interest in the world's religions.

Religions is inviting innovative and comparative contributions. Please consider *Religions* as an exceptional, exciting enterprise ready to reward your trust, attention, and participation.

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