Religiosity, National Identity, and Legitimacy: Israel as an Extreme Case

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Abstract

This article investigates the relationship between religiosity and contemporary national identities by using Israel as a case study and comparing it to other countries. Survey data from the ISSP 2003 (ZA 3910) module and the Jewish Religious Behaviour in Israel study (2000) are used to evaluate the level of national sentiments among people with different degrees of religiosity. It is found that secular Jewish Israelis are significantly less proud in almost every dimension of national pride than other Jewish Israeli groups. A similar pattern was noticed in other countries, but the gap in national pride between religious and less religious people in Israel is the highest among the 17 majoritarian ethnic groups examined. These findings point to the difficulty of stripping ethnic symbols from their religious origin, as well as to the special quest of Israeli Jews for legitimacy, which can be achieved more easily via religious justifications.

The full text is available by request from the authors: tsorek@ufl.edu