Development without God: The Intentional Secularization as a Driver and a Barrier of Soviet Development

Robert Barasa Ikee

Kenya

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.905000475

Received: 19 May 2025; Accepted: 24 May 2025; Published: 23 June 2025

ABSTRACT

The Soviet Union's intentional secularization policies, grounded in the ideology of scientific atheism, presented a complex and ultimately paradoxical dynamic in its pursuit of development. This paper examines how the state's forceful implementation of secularization catalyzed rapid industrial and educational advancements, aligning with certain tenets of modernization theory. Drawing upon secondary data and employing a case study methodology, it explores how the Soviet regime's atheistic ideology shaped its economic, social, and cultural policies. It argues that while secularization enabled the state to mobilize human and material resources toward industrialization and scientific advancement, it simultaneously eroded social capital, suppressed pluralism, and limited the moral foundations necessary for sustainable development. The top-down approach undermined social cohesion by encountering persistent religiosity, fostering cultural resistance, and exacerbating ethnic tensions. By analyzing the theoretical underpinnings of Soviet secularization, its historical implementation, and its dual impact as both a driver and a barrier to development, this paper illuminates the inherent limitations of engineering societal transformation through ideological imposition. Case studies from Central Asia and the Baltic region further underscore the uneven and often counterproductive outcomes of this ambitious social experiment. The paper reveals the dual-edged nature of secular governance and contributes to debates on the interplay between religion, ideology, and development.

INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Union's ambition to create a fundamentally new society extended beyond political and economic reforms to a deliberate reshaping of its citizens' spiritual and ideological foundations. Guided by the doctrine of scientific atheism, the state undertook an unprecedented project of intentional secularization aimed at replacing religious belief with a Marxist-Leninist materialist worldview[1 - 2]. This project presents a paradox for development studies: while state-driven secularization facilitated certain aspects of modernization, such as industrialization and education, it also provoked social tensions by suppressing deeply rooted cultural and religious traditions[3 - 4].

This paper explores this complex dynamic by analyzing how Soviet secularization acted simultaneously as a catalyst for specific forms of progress and as a barrier to comprehensive societal development due to persistent religiosity and cultural resistance.[2] It examines the theoretical foundations of this social experiment, traces its historical implementation across diverse regions, and assesses its multifaceted consequences[1], [3]. The study aims to reveal the contradictions and limitations inherent in attempting to engineer societal transformation through the forceful imposition of an atheistic ideology[4].

Drawing on secondary sources, including Soviet historical records, accounts of religious persecution, and contemporary scholarly analyses of Soviet economic and cultural policies, this paper investigates the paradoxical role of state atheism. It considers how the campaign to promote scientific atheism, driven by official mandate rather than popular appeal, failed to supplant religious beliefs fully and instead eroded social cohesion, disrupted cultural continuity, and generated unintended resistance[2]. Case studies from Central Asia and the Baltic region illustrate the varied and often unintended outcomes of this ambitious social engineering project[5, 6].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on secularization and development is rich and multidisciplinary, encompassing sociology, political theory, religious studies, and economic history. Foundational sociologists like Durkheim and Weber framed religion as pivotal in social cohesion and economic rationality, with Weber linking Protestant ethics to capitalism and Marx critiquing religion as a tool of social pacification[5-6]. These classical debates set the stage for modernization theory, which posits secularization as an inevitable outcome of industrial and institutional progress[7 - 8]. However, this linear model is problematized by the Soviet experience, where secularization was not a spontaneous byproduct but a deliberate state policy aimed at replacing religion with Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Paul Froese's analysis critically highlights the Soviet project's failure to substitute religion's emotional and moral functions with secular ideology, resulting in a persistent underground religiosity and a post-Soviet religious resurgence.[1 - 9] Empirical studies by Evans, Northmore-Ball, and Stolz et al. confirm this revival, particularly in contexts where religion is intertwined with ethnic and national identity, challenging classical secularization theory's assumptions about irreversible religious decline[10-11].

William Husband's work on Soviet secular rituals reveals another dimension: the attempt to engineer secular rites to replace religious ceremonies. His findings that these secular rituals lacked the emotional resonance and cultural continuity of religious ones deepen the understanding of why Soviet secularization was incomplete. This emotional and cultural insufficiency complements Froese's thesis, showing that ideological substitution was not only institutional but also experiential and symbolic, and ultimately inadequate.

Further complexity arises from Remmel and Sillfors, who document the emergence of hybrid spiritualities in post-Soviet societies, where atheism coexists with individualized spiritual beliefs. This "crossbreeding" indicates that Soviet secularization did not eradicate spiritual needs but transformed their expression, blending secular and religious elements. This challenges simplistic secularization narratives and aligns with recent scholarship in spirituality and non-religion studies, which problematize the binary opposition of religion versus non-religion[12].

Sadvokassova et al. provide a longue durée perspective, situating Soviet secularization within a broader historical continuum of Russian state control over religion, shifting from Orthodox dominance to Marxist-Leninist atheism. This framing suggests that Soviet secularization was less a radical rupture than an intensification of autocratic religious governance, complicating narratives of modernity and secular progress[13].

While critics like Froese and Boehme emphasize the moral and cultural costs of Soviet secularization, scholars such as Fitzpatrick and Suny defend its developmental achievements-literacy, scientific advancement, and industrialization-arguing that secular governance enabled unprecedented mobilization of human capital. Yet, these material gains came with social costs: alienation, loss of ethical pluralism, and the erosion of communal traditions, as evidenced by the post-Soviet religious revival[14 - 15].

Remmel and Sillfors' findings on the privatization and fragmentation of spirituality underscore a critical flaw in Soviet development strategy: the assumption that religious belief could be engineered out of human nature through repression and propaganda. Instead, spiritual life adapted into syncretic and individualized forms, revealing the limits of ideologically imposed secularism.[12]

The reviewed literature tends to treat Soviet secularization either as a failed ideological experiment or as a developmental success in material terms. There is a lack of systematic analysis that simultaneously examines how intentional secularization functioned as both a catalyst and an obstacle to Soviet developmental goals, especially across socio-cultural, ethical, and institutional dimensions.This paper aims to fill this gap by providing a historically grounded, analytically rigorous examination of Soviet secularization as a complex developmental strategy with paradoxical outcomes, integrating institutional, cultural, emotional, and ideological dimensions to understand better its legacy and implications for secularization theory and development studies.

Historical Context of Soviet Secularization

The ideological foundations of Soviet secularization are deeply rooted in Enlightenment rationalism and 19th-century revolutionary thought. Influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach's critique of religion as a human projection and Marx and Engels' characterization of religion as an "illusion" sustaining oppressive social orders, Bolshevik revolutionaries perceived religious belief as fundamentally incompatible with scientific socialism. This intellectual lineage positioned atheism not merely as a personal conviction but as a necessary ideological pillar for the revolutionary transformation of society.

Pre-revolutionary Russia's religious landscape was dominated by the Russian Orthodox Church, which maintained a symbiotic relationship with the Tsarist autocracy, wielding considerable social and political power.[16] However, the empire's multi-ethnic composition encompassed diverse faiths- Islam in Central Asia, Catholicism and Protestantism in the Baltic states, and numerous indigenous beliefs, posing a complex challenge to the Bolsheviks' vision of a unified, secular Soviet identity.Following the 1917 October Revolution, Lenin institutionalized atheism within the Soviet state's ideological core. His writings, notably *Socialism and Religion* (1905), framed religion as a tool of feudal and capitalist oppression. The 1918 RSFSR Constitution formalized church-state separation and prohibited religious instruction and property ownership by religious organizations, marking the first modern state constitutional commitment to atheism[17].

The Bolshevik regime launched a systematic campaign to dismantle religious institutions and suppress belief. This campaign involved expropriating church property, destroying religious buildings (with estimates suggesting up to 85% of such structures were eliminated by 1940; Fletcher, 1999), and banning religious education. The League of Militant Atheists (1925–1947) played a pivotal role in propagating atheism through mass education, publications, and public events[18]. Legal instruments such as Article 58 of the Soviet Penal Code (1927) criminalized religious practice, leading to widespread persecution, imprisonment, and execution of clergy and believers[19].

The Soviet case presents a distinctive intersection of religion and development. Classical theorists like Weber[6] emphasized religion's role in economic modernization, while Marx[5] saw religion as a barrier to revolutionary consciousness. Amartya Sen later expanded development discourse by emphasizing cultural and moral freedoms as integral to sustainable progress.[20] Against this theoretical backdrop, the Soviet Union's deliberate atheistic secularization represents a radical developmental experiment, where religion was not a residual byproduct but a primary target of state policy.

Scholars such as Froese and Peris argue that Soviet secularization was a conscious state project designed to dismantle religious authority and replace it with Marxist-Leninist ideology[1], [21]. Throsby further contends that development detached from cultural legitimacy risks internal resistance and social instability, a dynamic visible in the Soviet context[22].

Historically, the Soviet anti-religious campaign was both ideological and political. Pospielovsky documents the early Soviet years' violent assault on the Russian Orthodox Church, perceived as a Tsarist pillar. The Red Terror (1918–1922) saw mass executions of clergy and the closure of churches. The 1920s and 1930s intensified this repression with the institutionalization of the League of Militant Atheists, which by the late 1930s had over 5 million members promoting scientific atheism through education and propaganda, including publications like *Bezbozhnik* ("The Godless")[23].

The Stalin era marked the zenith of repression: over 98% of Orthodox churches were closed or repurposed between 1929 and 1941, and religious leaders across faiths faced systematic persecution[1]. Although the 1936 Constitution nominally guaranteed "freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda," only atheistic expression was tolerated. Religious belief became conflated with political dissent and backwardness.

This trajectory was interrupted during World War II when Stalin pragmatically reinstated the Moscow Patriarchate (1943) to mobilize popular support against the Nazi invasion. However, Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign (1959–1964) renewed aggressive church closures and reasserted atheism as a civic duty. Brezhnev's

tenure saw a more passive repression, emphasizing "scientific atheism" through academic channels while tightly regulating religious institutions via the Council for Religious Affairs[9].

This historical evolution reveals a dialectical pattern: ideological zeal followed by pragmatic concessions, repression alternating with controlled tolerance. This oscillation underscores the state's ongoing struggle to forge a new civic identity anchored not in religious heritage but in socialist ideology. Understanding this complex historical process is essential for analyzing the institutional and psychological impacts of Soviet secularization on development outcomes.

While the reviewed literature provides comprehensive overviews of Soviet secularization's ideological and political dimensions, there is a notable gap in detailed analyses of how specific policies and institutional mechanisms functioned to enforce secularism and reshape social structures. Moreover, the nuanced interplay between ideological objectives and pragmatic adjustments over time remains underexplored. This paper seeks to address these gaps by systematically examining the mechanisms of Soviet secularization and their developmental implications, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of secularism as a state-engineered project within a complex socio-political landscape.

Secularization Policies in the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union implemented an all-encompassing secularization strategy that combined coercive state control, ideological indoctrination, and monopolization of public discourse. This approach was designed not merely to suppress religion but to engineer a new social order aligned with Marxist-Leninist developmental ambitions.

State Control of Religion

From the outset of Bolshevik rule, the Soviet state aggressively dismantled religious institutions. Nationalization of church property, closure of religious schools, and bans on public worship targeted the Russian Orthodox Church, which had been a key pillar of Tsarist authority. The imprisonment, execution, or political co-optation of clergy effectively decapitated religious leadership. The 1929 Law on Religious Associations further curtailed religious activities by restricting gatherings, charitable work, and missionary efforts. The state's sponsorship of the League of Militant Atheists institutionalized anti-religious activism, mobilizing millions to propagate atheism and discredit religious "superstition."[21].

This policy framework reflects a deliberate attempt to eradicate religious authority and replace it with an ideologically compliant apparatus. However, while the institutional suppression was extensive, the persistence of underground religious practice and eventual post-Soviet revival suggests limits to the state's capacity to fully control belief systems. This raises questions about the effectiveness of coercive secularization as a developmental tool and the resilience of religious identity under repression.

Educational Reforms and Secular Ideals

Education was a central arena for secularization, with religious instruction banned and curricula reoriented around Marxist-Leninist ideology and scientific materialism. Textbooks depicted religion as archaic and irrational, while the state introduced "Red rituals" to supplant traditional religious ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals[24]. These reforms aimed not only to remove clerical influence but also to cultivate a new Soviet identity grounded in collectivism, industrial progress, and atheism.

This educational strategy underscores the Soviet effort to reshape cultural and moral frameworks as part of its developmental agenda. Yet, the emotional and symbolic inadequacy of secular rituals compared to religious ones, Husband points to a critical gap in the state's secularization project: the failure to replicate religion's affective and communal functions[18]. This shortfall likely contributed to the dissonance between official ideology and popular belief, a tension insufficiently explored in existing literature.

Censorship and Propaganda

Censorship was a key mechanism in silencing religious discourse and promoting a secular worldview. Religious texts were banned or altered to conform to party ideology, and clergy were barred from public media. Concurrently, state-controlled films, newspapers, literature, and visual arts disseminated anti-religious

propaganda, elevating scientific achievements and socialist heroes as moral exemplars[1]. This monopolization of cultural production sought to marginalize religious ethics and replace them with a secular, socialist morality.

While the literature acknowledges the breadth of censorship and propaganda, there remains a need for deeper analysis of how these tools shaped individual and collective identities over time. Specifically, the extent to which ideological narratives penetrated everyday life and altered moral reasoning beyond formal institutions warrants further investigation.

Soviet secularization policies represented a comprehensive state-led initiative to cultivate an atheistic and ideologically unified populace deemed essential for advancing industrial and scientific objectives. While characterized by extensive state repression targeting religious institutions and practices, the enduring presence of clandestine religious observances and the subsequent post-Soviet religious revival underscore the inherent limitations of coercive secularization strategies. Despite the intended function of fostering a disciplined labor force conducive to developmental aims, the long-term socio-cultural ramifications and inherent paradoxes of this approach remain largely underexplored within development discourse. By addressing these analytical lacunae, this study seeks to contribute a more nuanced understanding of Soviet secularization, illuminating its complex and enduring legacies across institutional frameworks, cultural norms, and ethical considerations.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study draws on secularization theory to provide a critical lens through which Soviet development can be examined. Secularization theory, particularly as articulated in Western scholarship, posits that modernization naturally leads to a decline in religious belief and institutional influence, an organic process linked to rising rationalism, scientific advancement, and state-building[25], [26]. In contrast, the Soviet Union represents a unique case of enforced secularization, where atheism was not a byproduct of social evolution but a deliberate state policy aimed at eradicating religion as a perceived obstacle to progress[1], [21]. This divergence between organic and coercive secularization offers a valuable analytical distinction, allowing for a deeper understanding of how ideology shaped Soviet developmental strategies and their socio-cultural ramifications. By situating Soviet atheism within this theoretical debate, the framework sets the stage for assessing the practical consequences of state-enforced secularism on society, governance, and long-term institutional development in the chapters that follow.

Secularization and Modernization Theory

The Soviet project of enforced secularization offers a compelling, albeit stark, case study through the lens of secularization and modernization theory. Functional differentiation theory posits that as societies modernize, specialized secular institutions gradually assume functions previously held by religious entities. The Soviet state actively sought to accelerate this process by systematically dismantling the institutional power and social influence of religion, transferring its roles in education, social welfare, and even moral guidance to secular state apparatuses. This aligns with the modernizationist perspective that views the decline of religious authority as a necessary precursor to rational, scientific progress[25]. However, the Soviet model starkly contrasts with Western experiences, where secularization has largely been characterized by a more organic decline in religious belief and practice, driven by factors such as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of scientific inquiry[26]. The Soviet Union's "forced secularization" represents a deliberate and often brutal intervention in this process, seeking to eradicate rather than simply relegate religion.

State Atheism as an Ideological Tool

Soviet scientific atheism transcended a mere absence of belief; it functioned as a quasi-religious belief system in its own right[27]. Endowed with its own set of dogmas, rituals (e.g., secular holidays, atheistic propaganda campaigns), and a distinct moral code centered on Marxist-Leninist principles, it aimed to supplant traditional theological frameworks. The state actively promoted this ideology through institutions like the League of Militant Atheists, which by its peak in the early 1930s boasted millions of members[18]. This state-sponsored atheism served as a powerful ideological tool for consolidating political power, legitimizing the communist regime, and mobilizing the population towards state-defined goals. By framing religion as inherently backward

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue V May 2025

and antithetical to progress, the Soviet state sought to create a unified secular identity conducive to its modernization agenda.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in a dual-lens conceptual framework that positions intentional secularization as both a developmental instrument and a structural constraint within the Soviet Union. The framework integrates perspectives from secularization theory, state modernization paradigms, and critical sociology of religion to map the complex interaction between ideology, policy, and social transformation.

At its core, the Soviet secularization project was ideologically driven by Marxist-Leninist doctrine, which viewed religion as an impediment to socialist progress. As such, the state pursued a program of forced secularization, including the closure of religious institutions, the promotion of atheism, and the creation of secular rituals to replace religious life cycles.[9], [18] This process was conceptualized by Soviet planners as a pathway to modernization, enabling the advancement of science, education, and bureaucratic efficiency[28].

However, the conceptual framework employed in this study goes beyond the unidimensional portrayal of secularization as a linear path to progress. Drawing from the work of Remmel and Sillforsand Evans and Northmore-Ball, the framework acknowledges the symbolic, emotional, and ethical void left by the removal of religion[10,12] In attempting to replace traditional faith with a "civil religion" based on Soviet mythology and secular rituals, the state inadvertently fostered cultural alienation and social dissonance.

The framework presents two opposing roles of intentional secularization in development. On one hand, it served as a driver by promoting education, scientific rationality, ideological unity, and state-led modernization. On the other hand, it acted as a barrier by suppressing cultural and spiritual identities, fostering social fragmentation, and failing to provide lasting moral legitimacy. This duality reveals the paradox of Soviet development, technological and educational progress alongside a deep spiritual and cultural void.

These axes converge at a paradoxical junction where developmental gains in literacy, industrialization, and ideological control are offset by growing alienation, resistance, and eventual religious resurgence. This dynamic illustrates the limits of coercive secularism and highlights the inadequacy of development models that overlook the cultural and spiritual dimensions of society.

The framework supports the paper's central argument: secularization in the Soviet Union simultaneously propelled modernization while undermining its own legitimacy and sustainability, especially at the levels of community cohesion and moral continuity.

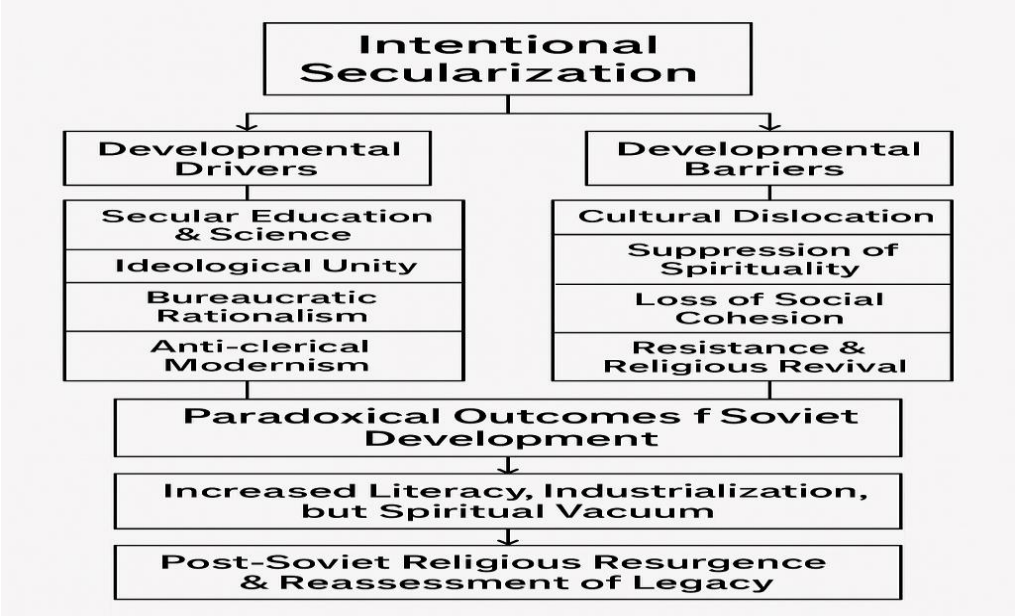

Figure 1: Visual Conceptual Framework: The Dual Role of Soviet Secularization in Development

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design that combines a comprehensive review of secondary literature with comparative case studies. The use of secondary sources, including academic books and peer-reviewed articles, is appropriate given the historical focus and allows for a broad synthesis of Soviet secularization's ideological, social, and developmental dimensions. A systematic literature search was conducted using databases like JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar with targeted keywords such as *"Soviet Union," "secularization," "atheism," "religion," "modernization," "social development," "economic impact,"* and *"cultural resistance."* This ensured a comprehensive and methodologically rigorous selection of sources, prioritizing those offering nuanced insights into the multifaceted dimensions of Soviet secularization.

To provide deeper, context-specific insights, the study incorporates two case studies: Central Asian nomadic societies, which highlight the tension between Islam and state atheism; and Baltic Old Believers, illustrating religious resilience under repression. Two cases were purposively selected based on their contrasting religious and cultural profiles, offering valuable insights into different aspects of the secularization project:

- **Central Asian Nomadic Societies:** This case investigates the imposition of secular policies on predominantly Muslim nomadic communities, where religion was deeply embedded in daily life, social organization, and cultural identity. It illustrates the disruptive effects of state atheism on traditional belief systems and the sociocultural tensions that emerged from these interventions.

- **Baltic Old Believers:** This case examines a geographically concentrated Orthodox Christian minority known for its resilience and preservation of distinct religious practices. Despite systematic repression, the Old Believers maintained their religious identity, revealing the limitations of authoritarian secularization and the endurance of faith-based traditions under pressure.

Data for these case studies are drawn exclusively from peer-reviewed academic literature that rigorously documents the historical experiences of the selected communities. This ensures that the case analyses are not only contextually rich but also methodologically sound and empirically grounded. These cases, drawn from rigorous scholarly work, reveal varied experiences and outcomes of Soviet secularization policies.

This integrated approach balances theoretical breadth with empirical depth, enabling a nuanced analysis of secularization as both a political project and developmental strategy in the Soviet Union.

FINDINGS

The subsequent analysis synthesizes secondary data from Soviet-era historical accounts, records of religious persecution, and scholarly examinations of Soviet economic and cultural policies. This synthesis reveals the dual and often contradictory impact of the Soviet Union's intentional secularization project, highlighting its role in facilitating certain aspects of modernization while simultaneously contributing to significant systemic weaknesses.

Secularization as a Driver of Development

The Soviet Union's modernization project was inextricably linked to a state-directed agenda of secularization, premised on the belief that dismantling religious influence would pave the way for progress in key developmental areas. This section examines the ways in which the Soviet state actively pursued secularization to achieve specific developmental goals, focusing on the instrumental role it played in fostering advancements in education, science, industrialization, labor mobilization, and the transformation of social structures, including the promotion of gender equality.

Secularization played a role in weakening religious institutions that historically reinforced patriarchal social structures. The state actively encouraged women's participation in the workforce and the education system, promoted through slogans such as "Emancipation through Labor." Soviet policy documents from the 1930s illustrate a clear decline in the influence of religious authorities on matters of marriage, family law, and

inheritance, particularly in rural areas where the Russian Orthodox Church had previously held significant social sway.

Soviet secularization policies played a pivotal role in facilitating rapid modernization by intentionally dismantling religious institutions and replacing them with a state-driven, technocratic order. Nowhere was this more evident than in the education system. By removing religious control over schools, the Soviet state was able to implement a centralized, secular curriculum focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), thus aligning educational content with the broader goals of industrialization[14].The systematic removal of religious instruction from educational curricula and the concurrent introduction of mandatory education in Marxist-Leninist philosophy, alongside scientific and technical disciplines such as physics, engineering, and biology, demonstrably contributed to the growth of a scientifically literate populace. As noted by Soviet historian Anatoly Vlasov, this emphasis was crucial for the USSR's post-war reconstruction and its achievements in technological domains, exemplified by its success in the space race. Quantifiable evidence supports this claim: between 1928 and 1950, the number of scientists in the USSR experienced a substantial increase of over **400%**, indicating the significant impact of secular education on fostering technological development[24].As a result, literacy rates rose dramatically, from approximately 28% in 1897 to 75% by 1939, reflecting both the reach and effectiveness of Soviet educational reforms[14]. This surge in basic and technical education produced a new cadre of skilled workers and engineers who underpinned the Soviet Union's ambitious industrial projects.

Beyond education, secularization also enabled more efficient labour mobilization. The abolition of religious holidays increased the number of available workdays by an estimated 15%, enhancing productivity across sectors (author's calculations based on pre- and post-revolutionary religious holiday calendars). Furthermore, anti-religious campaigns in Muslim-majority Central Asia, framed as efforts to emancipate women from traditional constraints, significantly expanded the labour force. Women's workforce participation increased from 23% in 1926 to 49% by 1970, indicating a transformation in gender roles and labour supply that was directly linked to the secularization of social life[29].

This aligns with the centrally planned economic policies, particularly the successive Five-Year Plans (1928–1932, 1933–1937), which relied heavily on the creation of a disciplined and collectivized labour force. By actively marginalizing religious holidays and traditional observances of sacred time, the Soviet state facilitated the implementation of the continuous work week and suppressed Sabbath observance in many regions, thereby maximizing industrial output. Economic historian Alec Nove astutely observed the development of a secular "industrial religiosity," where commitment to productivity and state loyalty effectively supplanted traditional religious devotion in the workplace[30].

These structural changes fostered a climate conducive to scientific and technological advancement. Unshackled from religious dogma, Soviet policy prioritized materialist ideology and state-sponsored research. Investment in sectors such as aerospace and nuclear physics yielded landmark achievements, including the launch of *Sputnik* and advances in atomic energy, milestones that underscored the regime's belief in secularism as a foundation for progress[31]. By aligning education, labour, and science with its secular ideology, the Soviet state demonstrated that forced secularization, while ideologically driven, could serve as a powerful engine of development.

However, the aggressive pursuit of secular modernization came with unintended social consequences, particularly in the erosion of cultural traditions and local religious identities, a theme explored in the following section.

Unintended Social and Cultural Consequences of Secular Development

Beyond its intended modernization goals, Soviet secularization triggered a series of unforeseen and significantly detrimental social and cultural consequences. Largely absent from official Soviet accounts, these unintended effects included identity fragmentation, the emergence of generational alienation, and the proliferation of informal and clandestine religious networks.

The systematic dismantling of religious institutions, historically vital centers for community cohesion, generated a profound void in meaning and belonging for numerous Soviet citizens. Accounts of religious persecution, coupled with post-Soviet oral histories, vividly illustrate the extensive disruption caused by the closure of churches, mosques, and synagogues. This impacted not only religious worship itself but also fundamental communal rituals such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, and the observance of religious holidays. Consequently, traditional moral authority weakened, and the intergenerational transmission of established values was significantly hampered. While secular education effectively addressed gaps in technical knowledge, as Froese argues, it failed to cultivate enduring ethical frameworks, leaving a substantial portion of the population feeling disoriented amidst rapid socio-political transformations[9]. This erosion of communal structures inadvertently fostered a sense of individual and collective fragmentation.

Paradoxically, the state's efforts to eradicate religious belief inadvertently drove religious practice underground. The clandestine production and distribution of religious texts (Samizdat), the performance of secret religious ceremonies, and the establishment of informal house churches became widespread across the USSR, particularly in rural areas and among religious minorities. These resilient underground networks sustained spiritual life in defiance of state ideology and, significantly, fostered the development of informal social networks that later played a crucial role in the broader dissident movement of the 1970s and 1980s. As scholars like Smolkin emphasize, the enduring nature of religious behaviour, despite intense systemic repression, starkly reveals the inherent limitations of total ideological control and the unintended consequences of creating alternative social structures[32].

The forceful imposition of atheist dogma also created significant rifts between generations. While younger citizens underwent active indoctrination within secular educational institutions, many older individuals quietly maintained their religious convictions, leading to palpable tensions and misunderstandings within families and communities. Anecdotal evidence gleaned from Soviet ethnographies reveals instances where children, influenced by secular education, would criticize their parents or grandparents for engaging in religious practices, contributing to emotional distance and a sense of moral ambiguity. This generational divide, fuelled by the state's ideological project, exacerbated the broader sense of alienation fostered by pervasive state surveillance and intense pressures for social conformity.

Finally, Soviet cultural policy under the guise of secularism prioritized a narrow spectrum of ideologically aligned themes, often at the expense of rich religious and folk traditions. Sacred architectural sites were frequently destroyed or repurposed for secular uses (e.g., churches transformed into warehouses or museums of atheism), and religious music, literature, and iconography were systematically suppressed. As historian Catherine Wanner compellingly argues, this deliberate suppression led to the decline of distinct artistic forms and the erosion of regional cultural identities, particularly in regions such as Ukraine, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. This pursuit of cultural homogenization, intended to foster unity, ironically often fuelled underlying ethnic and religious resentments, demonstrating a significant unintended consequence of the secularization project[33].

By dismantling religious institutions and norms, the state sought to accelerate industrialization and scientific advancement. However, this ideological pursuit often disrupted longstanding social structures, particularly in the realm of family and gender roles. For instance, early Soviet policies liberalized divorce and abortion, encouraged communal childrearing, and marginalized the domestic sphere in favour of collective identity[34]. While these reforms were intended to liberate women and redirect loyalty toward the socialist state, they also destabilized traditional kinship networks and generated new forms of domestic strain. Between 1926 and 1930, the divorce rate in urban areas nearly doubled, indicating social fragmentation rather than cohesion.[34] Moreover, the suppression of religious rituals surrounding marriage, birth, and death removed familiar cultural anchors that had historically offered emotional and moral guidance.

These shifts had subtle but profound effects on labour productivity and morale. While the expansion of the female labour force, rising from 23% in 1926 to nearly 49% by 1970, contributed quantitatively to industrial output[29], the quality of labour engagement was often undermined by the erosion of social cohesion and moral certainty. The alienation stemming from these rapid cultural transformations diminished personal motivation, weakened trust, and fostered disillusionment, especially as state ideology proved unable to fully replace religious

meaning systems[9]. Consequently, while secularization facilitated the mobilization of labour and enabled key scientific achievements, it also undercut the very social fabric necessary to sustain long-term development.

In summary, beyond its aims of modernization, the Soviet Union's aggressive secularization policies inadvertently triggered a cascade of detrimental social and cultural consequences, including the fragmentation of identity, the rise of generational alienation, the unexpected proliferation of clandestine religious networks, and the erosion of cultural diversity, ultimately revealing the complex and often counterproductive outcomes of ideologically driven social engineering. This paradox highlights the complexity of secular modernization: its capacity to deliver short-term gains in education and industry came at the cost of weakening the moral and emotional underpinnings of Soviet society.

The next section explores how, beyond these social costs, secularization itself increasingly acted as a barrier to sustainable societal development, alienating citizens, eroding cultural identity, and ultimately contributing to the fragility of the Soviet system.

Secularization as a Barrier to Development

While the Soviet Union pursued modernization and development by diminishing religious influence, its imposition of secularization policies inadvertently created significant obstacles. This section will explore how secularization acted as a hindrance to development by undermining essential ethical frameworks, suppressing cultural diversity, and eroding crucial institutional trust, all of which are now understood as vital components of sustainable and holistic development.

The Soviet drive for technical and economic advancement occurred at the cost of a significant erosion of traditional moral and ethical foundations. The extensive records of religious persecution compiled by the human rights NGO Memorial, which document the arrest of over 100,000 clergy and religious believers between 1929 and 1941, including the systematic dismantling of entire monastic communities, illustrate this suppression. This deliberate dismantling of religious ethics fostered an environment ripe for widespread corruption, cultivated an atmosphere of fear, and entrenched a pervasive culture of surveillance. The absence of viable alternative moral systems meant that adherence to party ideology often eclipsed conventional notions of right and wrong, contributing to a sense of ethical relativism[1].

Furthermore, the state's forceful suppression of religious pluralism in favour of a uniform state atheism actively eroded the diverse cultural identities of populations, particularly among Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist communities within the Soviet periphery. Scholarly analyses of Soviet cultural policy, Tumarkin, detail the aggressive assimilation of non-Russian and religious identities into a standardized Soviet culture. Despite these state-sponsored efforts, significant religious revival movements persisted in clandestine forms, evidenced by the underground (Samizdat) circulation of religious texts and the practice of secret religious ceremonies within private homes[35]. This enduring popular resistance highlights the limitations of ideological imposition and the resilience of cultural and religious identity.

The long-term consequences of this secular authoritarianism extended to a gradual but significant decline in public trust towards state institutions. Soviet sociologists, including Yuri Levada[36] documented increasing levels of public disillusionment throughout the 1970s and 1980s[37]. As religious life was driven underground and state-sanctioned morality appeared increasingly insincere and hypocritical, a growing chasm emerged between the state and its citizens. The significant religious resurgence that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 underscores the enduring cultural significance of religious faith, a significance that the state ultimately failed to eradicate and that consequently undermined its long-term legitimacy.

In conclusion, the Soviet experience reveals a critical paradox: while secularization facilitated certain material and scientific advancements, its suppression of fundamental ethical and cultural elements, now recognized as indispensable for sustainable and human-centered development, ultimately hindered a more holistic and enduring form of progress and contributed to a decline in institutional trust.

In summary, the findings reveal that Soviet secularization was neither uniformly implemented nor uniformly received; its impacts varied significantly across cultural and regional contexts. While some communities experienced profound disruption and transformation, others displayed remarkable resilience, preserving religious identities despite intense state pressure. These case-specific insights underscore the complexity of secularization as both a top-down ideological project and a lived social experience. The following discussion section will interpret these findings in light of broader theoretical frameworks, exploring their implications for understanding the intersections of state power, culture, and development.

DISCUSSION

The findings presented above offer compelling empirical evidence that both support and complicate existing theoretical frameworks concerning secularization, development, and the role of culture and religion in societal change. The case of Soviet secular development reveals a dual reality: a state that successfully mobilized secularization to drive technical and economic modernization, yet one that simultaneously sowed the seeds of its own moral and cultural fragility. The findings demonstrate that while secularization enabled rapid industrialization, education reform, and gender transformation, it also led to profound unintended consequences in the social and cultural domains.

The evidence shows that state-imposed secularism did achieve some developmental milestones. This aligns with the initial promise of classical secularization theory, which posits a linear decline of religious influence with modernization[25],and finds partial support in the Soviet case. The state's deliberate efforts to marginalize religious institutions and promote a scientific worldview undeniably led to a decline in overt religious participation and a shift towards secular modes of thought in certain spheres, particularly education and the workplace. It dismantled feudal structures, promoted scientific thinking, and created a uniform civic identity. The expansion of scientific literacy and the restructuring of the work week away from religious calendars align with some of the predicted outcomes of modernization within this framework. These achievements agreewith classical modernization theory, which saw religion as an obstacle to rational governance and economic planning.

However, the Soviet experience also starkly contradicts key tenets of secularization theory. The persistent underground religious practices and the significant post-Soviet religious resurgence demonstrate the limitations of a purely linear and deterministic model. Rather than disappearing, religion was often driven underground, adapting and persisting in informal networks. This resilience challenges the assumption that modernization inevitably leads to the privatization and eventual demise of religion. The Soviet case highlights the importance of considering the coercive element of secularization, a factor often less emphasized in Western-centric secularization debates. State-imposed atheism, while achieving some surface-level secularization, ultimately failed to eradicate deeply held beliefs and cultural practices.

The findings engage critically with various theoretical approaches within development studies. The initial Soviet focus on industrial and scientific advancement through a secularized and disciplined workforce aligns with modernization theory's emphasis on technological progress and rationalization as drivers of development[7].The same secular policies also severed ties with deep-rooted traditions, eroding social cohesion and leaving many without a moral compass in times of crisis. This contradiction highlights a fundamental tension in development theory: can progress be imposed without cultural legitimacy? The quantifiable increase in scientists and industrial output during specific periods can be seen as evidence supporting this perspective, albeit achieved through arguably coercive means.

However, the analysis of the "Secularization as a Barrier to Development" and "Unintended Social and Cultural Consequences" sections directly challenge purely economistic or technologically deterministic models of development. The moral vacuum, ethical decline, cultural homogenization, and loss of social cohesion highlight the significant social and cultural costs associated with a development strategy that actively suppresses fundamental aspects of human identity and community. These findings underscore the importance of more holistic and human-centered approaches to development, such as those articulated in human development theory[20], and sustainable development frameworks, which emphasize well-being, cultural preservation, and social equity alongside economic growth. The Soviet experience serves as a cautionary tale against narrowly defined development goals that neglect the crucial role of culture, ethics, and social capital.

The persistence of underground religious practices and the post-Soviet resurgence strongly support social constructionist perspectives within the sociology of religion[25]. These theories emphasize the socially constructed nature of meaning and the resilience of shared belief systems, even under intense pressure. The Soviet state's attempt to impose a purely materialist worldview ultimately failed to replace the deeply ingrained social and cultural frameworks provided by religious traditions for many individuals and communities. The proliferation of underground religious practice and the moral ambiguities experienced by Soviet citizens point to the limits of authoritarian secularism. These unintended outcomes illustrate what James Scott called the "hidden transcripts" of resistance, informal practices that survive under the surface of authoritarian regimes. Rather than eradicate religion, Soviet policy fragmented it, privatized it, and in some cases, radicalized it. The suppression of faith did not lead to a secular utopia, but to an ideologically disoriented society where obedience masked inner conflict. The emergence of Samizdat religious texts and secret religious gatherings demonstrates the human capacity to create and maintain meaning systems outside of state control. The case studies of Central Asian nomadic societies and the Baltic Old Believers further illustrate how religious identity is deeply intertwined with cultural practices and social structures, making its eradication a complex and often unsuccessful endeavour[38].

The generational divides and cultural erosion outlined in the findings are particularly damaging from a human development perspective. Sen's capability approach emphasizes not just income or technological progress, but the ability of people to live lives they value. By stripping away spiritual traditions and silencing cultural diversity, the Soviet model curtailed personal agency and collective memory. What remained was a civic shell, efficient, but emotionally and culturally sterile[20].

The Soviet case challenges the assumption that religion and development are inherently at odds. Rather, it underscores the importance of pluralism, moral discourse, and identity continuity in any development project. Secularization can indeed modernize certain institutional frameworks, but when it becomes coercive and monolithic, it risks triggering social fragmentation, mistrust, and intergenerational rupture. A more sustainable model of development recognizes the need to negotiate with tradition, not obliterate it.

In conclusion, the Soviet experience with enforced secularization offers a complex case study that both confirms and challenges existing theoretical frameworks. While demonstrating the potential for secularization to contribute to specific aspects of modernization, it also reveals the significant limitations and negative consequences of coercive secularization for social cohesion, ethical frameworks, and long-term societal well-being. The findings underscore the critical need for development theories to incorporate a nuanced understanding of the enduring role of culture and religion in shaping individual and collective identities, and to move beyond purely materialist or deterministic models of progress. The Soviet case serves as a potent reminder of the intricate and often unintended consequences of state-led social engineering projects that seek to fundamentally alter deeply rooted cultural and belief systems.

Lessons Learned For Economic Development

This section draws lessons from this historical experience, examining how the Soviet case can inform contemporary development practice and policymaking, particularly in culturally diverse or religiously embedded societies where secularization remains a contested process. The Soviet Union's experiment with enforced secularization provides several critical lessons for economic development, particularly in contexts where cultural and religious factors are intertwined with state-led modernization efforts:

Ignoring Cultural and Religious Contexts Impedes Economic Integration: The experiences of Central Asian nomadic societies and the Baltic Old Believers underscore the profound influence of culture and religion on economic practices and social organization[17], [39 - 40]. The Soviet state's imposition of a uniform secular model, which failed to understand or accommodate these deeply rooted norms, generated resistance and hindered the effective integration of these populations into the Soviet economic system. This highlights the necessity of culturally sensitive development policies that acknowledge and engage with existing social and religious frameworks, rather than attempting their eradication.

Forced Secularization Can Disrupt Established Economic Systems: The disruption of nomadic lifestyles and traditional agricultural practices in Central Asia due to imposed collectivization and sedentarization illustrates how top-down ideological campaigns can negatively impact functioning economic systems[41]. Development initiatives that neglect the economic logic embedded within cultural and religious practices risk undermining productivity and creating inefficiencies. Sustainable economic development necessitates a thorough understanding of existing livelihoods and the implementation of gradual, culturally appropriate transitions.

Resistance to Imposed Ideologies Can Foster Parallel Economies and Limit Participation: The self-imposed isolation of the Baltic Old Believers, driven by religious preservation, also limited their full engagement in the broader Soviet economy[40]. When development is perceived as an assault on cultural or religious identity, communities may opt to operate outside the formal economic system, thereby restricting their potential contribution and leading to economic fragmentation. Inclusive economic development requires building trust and ensuring that progress is not interpreted as a threat to deeply held beliefs.

Resource Diversion Towards Ideological Campaigns Undermines Economic Efficiency: The substantial resources allocated to anti-religious propaganda and the suppression of religious institutions in the Soviet Union represent a misallocation of funds that could have been directed towards more directly productive economic activities. This demonstrates the economic cost of prioritizing ideological transformation over pragmatic development strategies. Efficient economic development necessitates a focus on investments that directly enhance productivity, infrastructure, and human capital, rather than expending resources on coercive social engineering.

Genuine Social Cohesion is Fundamental for Sustainable Economic Growth: The social fragmentation resulting from the suppression of religious and cultural identities in the Soviet Union ultimately undermined long-term stability and likely impeded sustained economic growth[42]. Economic development flourishes in environments characterized by trust, cooperation, and robust social capital. Policies that alienate significant segments of the population based on their beliefs can erode social cohesion and create an unstable foundation for economic progress.

In conclusion, the Soviet experience provides compelling evidence that successful economic development demands a nuanced and holistic approach that respects cultural and religious diversity. Imposing radical ideological transformations can provoke resistance, disrupt existing economic systems, and divert resources from productive investments. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth is more likely to be achieved through policies that are culturally sensitive, build upon existing strengths, and foster social cohesion, rather than attempting to erase fundamental aspects of people's identities.

Building on these insights, the next section offers concrete policy recommendations aimed at guiding contemporary development efforts in culturally complex societies, emphasizing the importance of inclusive strategies that recognize the integral role of belief systems and cultural traditions in shaping developmental outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing upon the preceding analysis of the Soviet Union's secularization project and its complex interplay with development, several key recommendations emerge for both policymakers and scholars engaged in development studies. These recommendations underscore the need for a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach that moves beyond simplistic notions of secularization as a prerequisite for progress.

For policymakers, development should prioritize pluralism over religious eradication, fostering inclusive secular environments that value diverse beliefs and their harmonious coexistence with modernization. Integrating the preservation of cultural and religious heritage is crucial, engaging religious institutions as social capital and involving faith-based organizations as key partners. Balancing technocratic approaches with moral-ethical considerations is essential for human-centered development, incorporating ethical education for meaning and responsibility. Finally, in rapidly secularizing contexts, proactive measures should bridge generational divides through dialogue, preserving cultural continuity and mitigating alienation.

For scholars of development, the Soviet case highlights the need to critically re-examine secularization theory, moving beyond assumptions of inevitability and universal benefit by prioritizing context-specific analyses of religion-development interactions, especially in authoritarian or post-colonial contexts. Standard development metrics should also be broadened to include cultural resilience, assessing cultural vitality, religious freedom, and community bonds alongside economic growth. Future research should explore religion not just as a variable or conflict source, but as a potential resource, investigating its positive contributions to education, healthcare, social justice, and reconciliation to enrich development theory and practice.

Post-secular development thinking requires reframing religion as a potential asset, recognizing that its values align with developmental goals. It also necessitates fostering genuine dialogue between secular and religious perspectives, emphasizing mutual respect and engagement for inclusive strategies, particularly crucial in diverse or post-conflict societies.

Ultimately, these recommendations underscore the importance of culturally informed, context-specific development strategies that prioritize dialogue, inclusivity, and respect for local identities. By acknowledging the limits of top-down, ideologically driven approaches, policymakers can better design interventions that are not only effective but also sustainable and socially legitimate.

CONCLUSION

The final section concludes the paper by synthesizing key insights from the analysis and reflecting on the broader implications of the Soviet case for contemporary debates on development, secularization, and cultural policy.

The Soviet experiment in intentional secularization offers a profound and multifaceted case study in the complexities of state-led development. By eradicating religious institutions and enforcing atheistic ideology through policy, education, and propaganda, the USSR succeeded in forging a highly centralized, industrialized, and scientifically oriented society. From a developmental standpoint, this enabled remarkable achievements in literacy, technological advancement, and gender equity.

Yet these gains were not without cost. The findings show that secularization, when imposed without regard for cultural continuity and human spiritual needs, resulted in significant unintended consequences. The suppression of religious life dismantled traditional ethical frameworks, eroded community cohesion, alienated generations, and led to the loss of a rich cultural heritage. Rather than eliminating religion, the Soviet approach drove it underground, revealing the resilience of belief and the limits of ideological control.

The Soviet Union’s case underscores a paradox: secularization may drive institutional modernization, but when used as a tool of cultural domination, it can undermine the very social fabric needed to sustain development. Development is not only about infrastructure or industry, it is also about meaning, identity, and belonging. The Soviet model highlights the danger of divorcing these dimensions from national progress.

Ultimately, this paper argues that secularization is not inherently developmental or anti-developmental; its outcomes depend on how it is pursued, by whom, and in what sociocultural context. The Soviet experience serves as a cautionary tale and a vital reference point for any modern development strategy seeking to navigate the relationship between religion, culture, and progress.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the Soviet secularization experience and its economic developmental implications, it also acknowledges certain limitations that open avenues for further research and deeper exploration.

The reliance on existing scholarly literature, historical records, and case studies necessitates an acknowledgment that direct, contemporary empirical data collection within the Soviet context was not feasible. Furthermore, the diverse experiences of various ethnic and religious groups within the Soviet Union, while touched upon through specific examples, warrant more in-depth, comparative analysis to fully capture the nuances of their individual responses to secularization policies and their varying impacts on local economies.

Future research could benefit from exploring several avenues. Firstly, the increasing availability of archival materials from the post-Soviet era may allow for a more granular understanding of the long-term economic consequences of secularization at regional and local levels. Secondly, comparative studies examining state-led secularization efforts in other historical and contemporary contexts could provide valuable cross-cultural insights and help to refine the theoretical frameworks presented here.

Finally, qualitative research focusing on the lived experiences and economic adaptations of individuals and communities who navigated the Soviet secularization policies could offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of the micro-level impacts on economic behaviour and social capital. Investigating the role of informal networks, including those with religious underpinnings, in mitigating the economic disruptions caused by secularization also presents a promising area for future inquiry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. P. Froese, “Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an atheistic monopoly failed,” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 43, no. 1, p. 35, 2004.
2. S. Luehrmann, Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.
3. H. Thibault, “Religion in post-Soviet Russia: The Resurgence of Orthodoxy after Communism.,” Communist and Post-Communist Studies, vol. 48, no. 2–3, pp. 255–263, 2015, doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.06.002.
4. E. Protasova, “Religion and identity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Spaces: Reassessing Secularization and Resilience,” Sociology of Religion, vol. 83, no. 1, pp. 65–84, 2022, doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srab040.
5. K. Marx, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. Independently published, 2022.
6. M. Weber and T. Parsons, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Reprint. in Routledge classics. London: Routledge, 2010.
7. W. W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960. Accessed: May 08, 2025. [Online]. Available: https://monthlyreview.org/product/capitalism_and_underdevelopment_in_latin_america/
8. D. Lerner, The passing of traditional society: modernizing the Middle East, First Free Press Paperback Edition. Free Press, 1958.
9. P. Froese, The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization, First Edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008.
10. G. Evans, “he Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia,” The Journal of Politics, vol. 74, no. 4, pp. 912–926, doi: 10.2307/23353833.
11. J. Stolz, A. Gugushvili, F. Molteni, and J. P. Antonietti, “A counterexample to secularization theory? Assessing the Georgian religious revival,” The British Journal of Sociology, vol. 74, no. 4, pp. 731–757, 2023.
12. A. Rammel and M. Sillfors, Religious and non-religious spiritualities in the post-Soviet space: Transformations, continuities, and ruptures. Routledge., 2022. Accessed: May 16, 2025. [Online]. Available: https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/religious-non-religious-spirituality-western-world-lop-45
13. G. Sadvokassova, G. Nysanbaeva, and N. Kenzheakhmet, “Secularization in Russia: Historical Continuity and Transformation,” International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 23–37, 2022.
14. S. Fitzpatrick, Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921–1934. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
15. R. G. Suny, The Soviet experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the successor states. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195081058.001.0001
16. G. L. Freeze, Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century, First Edition. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993.

17. M. Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia, Revised Edition, Revised edition. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990.
18. W. Husband, Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932, 1st edition. DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999.
19. M. Bourdeaux, Patriarch and prophets: Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church today. London: Mowbrays, 1975.
20. A. Sen, Development as Freedom. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
21. D. Peris, Peris, D. (1998). Storming the heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless. Cornell University Press, 1998. [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501701720
22. D. Throsby, Economics and Culture, 1st edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
23. D. V. Pospielovsky, History of Soviet Atheism in Theory and Practice and the Believer: Soviet Antireligious Campaigns and Persecutions v. 2. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988.
24. J. Anderson, Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States by John Anderson. London: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
25. P. L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Reprint edition. Newburyport: Doubleday, 1967.
26. S. Bruce, God is Dead: Secularization in the West, 1st edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002.
27. C. Lane, The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society - the Soviet Case, First Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
28. S. Bruce, Secularization: In defence of an unfashionable theory. . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199588553.001.0001
29. G. W. Lapidus, Women in Soviet society: Equality, development, and social change. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
30. A. Nove, The Economics of Feasible Socialism, Light wear to cover, Otherwise good condition. London ; Boston: George Allen & Unwin: London, 1983.
31. A. A. Siddiqi, Challenge to Apollo: The Soviet and American race to the Moon. University Press of Florida., 2000. Accessed: May 16, 2025. [Online]. Available: https://www.abebooks.com/9780813026282/Soviet-Space-Race-Apollo-Siddiqi-0813026288/plp
32. V. Smolkin, "A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism," European History Quarterly, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 164–166, Jan. 2019, doi: 10.1177/0265691418822189ag.
33. C. Wanner, Burden of Dreams: History and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine, 1st edition. University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, 1998.
34. W. Z. Goldman, Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936, First Paperback Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
35. N. Tumarkin, Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983.
36. S. Filatov and A. Shchipkov, Eds., Filatov, S., & Shchipkov, A. (1993). Religious life in the USSR (1985–1991). East European Monographs., 1993. doi: 10.4324/9781003311294.
37. B. Martin and N. Beliakova, Eds., Religious Life in the Late Soviet Union: From Survival to Revival (1960s-1980s). Taylor & Francis, 2024. doi: 10.4324/9781003311294.
38. J. C. Scott, Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, 0 edition. New Haven, CT London: Yale University Press, 1999.
39. R. Olson, "The survival of Islam in the Soviet Union," Central Asian Survey, 19(3-4), 387-403., vol. 19, no. 3–4, pp. 387–403, 2000.
40. R. Garšva, "Old Believers in Latvia.33(1), 64-83. Husband, W. B. (2002). 'Godless communists': Atheism and society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932. Northern Illinois University Press.," Journal of Baltic Studies, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 64–83, 2002.
41. J. Critchlow, Nationalism In Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road To Sovereignty, 1st edition. Boulder: Routledge, 1991.
42. S. P. Ramet, Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia. Duke University Press, 1998.