

Dynamics of Politics and Religions: Beyond a 'Standard Model' of Secularization

Panel Chair: Karsten Lehmann

The Academic Study of Religions is witnessing a fundamental reconfiguration of the debates on what is frequently described as the 'secularization paradigm'. The 2000s and 2010s were dominated by an increasing debate on notions such as de-secularization (Peter Berger), re-enchantment (Christopher Partridge), or the 'resurgence of religions' (Martin Riesebrodt). In a most recent article, the English sociologist of religions David Martin opened a new dimension for those debates. He made the point that even those new debates are basically reproducing the main structure of what he describes as the 'standard model' of secularization – which is characterized by the basic bipolarity of the secular and the religious. Along those lines, internationally renowned scholars of religions such as Linda Woodhead, Detlef Pollack, José Casanova, and Francois Gauthier have been arguing for a stronger historization of the very notion of secularization. In a number of publications (such as *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* / 2012; *Umstrittene Säkularisierung* / 2012; *Europas Angst vor der Religion* / 2013; *Religion in the Neoliberal Age* / 2013), they argue that it is necessary to go beyond the mere dualism of 'the religious' and 'the secular', and to find a new terminology to adequately describe the respective processes. The Panel at hand wants to follow this avenue by adding a comparative dimension to the respective debates. It wants to start from the general critique of the 'standard model' of secularization. On this basis it intends to discuss to what an extent terminologies that go beyond the standard model can be developed in different cultural contexts.

Ansgar Jödicke

Beyond the 'Standard Model' in the South Caucasus?

Both the standard model of secularization and the alternative models of a revival of religion do not fit to the recent developments of religion in the new independent states of the South Caucasus. On the basis of fieldwork in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, I argue that a secular political self-understanding is still dominant in all three countries, although religion doubtless gained more influence in politics and society. This theoretical dilemma can be solved when we analyse religion at different social levels such as personal religiosity, organisational authority, interactions with politics etc. I will discuss the relationship between these levels in my contribution.

Weigang Chen

Beyond the 'Standard Model' in China?

The powerful resurgence of religion in the post-Cold War world forces a major rethink of the "standard model of secularization" and, in so doing, puts the Huntingtonian paradigm of the "clash of civilizations" at the heart of current discussions on global politics. It is this neo-Weberian position the present paper proposes to challenge. Drawing on the historical and conceptual

linkage between Confucian Marxism in China and liberation theology in Latin America, it concurs with José Casanova in arguing that a radical reinterpretation of the “public” roles of religion holds the key to the formation of civil society that goes beyond the limits of Western liberal democracy.

Karsten Lehmann

Beyond the ‘Standard Model’ in global contexts

Throughout the last two decades, globalization theory has established itself as one of the most significant theoretical frameworks in the Academic Study of Religions. The present paper argues that a globalization perspective can also contribute to a better understanding/critique of the ‘standard model’ of secularization. On the basis of an in depth analysis of modern human rights discourses, it shows, to what an extent these discourses have become more and more hybrid. Since the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), human rights discourses have accumulated multi-fold religious and secular layers. This is not only central to the understanding of present-day human rights. It also adds a significant dimension to the discussions of the panel.

Kim Knott

Response

The respondent will address the issues raised in the papers of this panel.