



Detlef Briesen | Nguyen Vu Hao [Eds.]

Social and Human Development in Vietnam



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Vu Hao Nguyen | Detlef Briesen [Eds.]

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Preface

Nguyen Anh Tuan, Nguyen Vu Hao and Detlef Briesen

Social and human development is a long-standing issue in the history of human thought and practices. Social development is a special type of social change in the direction of meeting certain criteria in the fields of social life such as economy, politics, culture, society, environment, education, health, defense, sports, and tourism in each country, in each region as well as on a global scale. It is the process of social transformation from less complete to more complete status and stages.

Nowadays, in the common sense, social development is understood as the process of improving the material and spiritual living conditions of people in nation-states, in which people hold a central position. Therefore, social development and human development are closely related and inseparable. Studying the development of one object is basically the same as studying the development of another and vice versa.

In the history of mankind, there have been many different views and approaches to the process of social development. At each stage of its development, society determines its own basic foundations and development model. Every society exists in a certain complex and constantly changing environment, so it must also adapt and constantly change. In the contemporary world there are tremendous and rapid changes. The strong human impact on the natural and social environment has led to an increase in conflicts, crisis situations and a deepening of global problems. This shows the need to study both from a theoretical and a practical perspective the different patterns, dynamics, modes, and aspects of social and human development in history and in the present. From here, each subject can apply them to suit the own specific circumstances.

For more than 35 years of National Renovation (*Doi Moi*), Vietnam has achieved certain socio-economic achievements in many aspects of social life. Vietnam's development path to realize the goal of *rich people, strong country, democratic, just, and civilized society* can be considered as a feasible realistic destination, in line with the development trend of modern society. It determines the direction of development and creates conditions for Vietnam to integrate into the contemporary globalization process. Vietnam

has given the orientations for socio-economic, cultural, and human development for the period of 2021–2030 and a vision to the middle of the 21st century consistent with the strategy of building and consolidating defense and security potentials to ensure a peaceful environment for the long-term sustainable development of the country.

However, in the development of modern society, there have been new factors and great challenges associated with the context of globalization, digital transformation, and the impact of the fourth industrial revolution. Especially recently, the breakdown of global links due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war made all forecasts agree that the world will move in a complicated direction with more unpredictable challenges. Developing countries, especially small and medium-sized countries, are facing great opportunities and challenges on their development path.

In that context, studies of social and human development issues are of utmost importance, requiring new, updated, and in-depth efforts from the different perspectives of philosophy, political science, sociology, and history and particularly interdisciplinary approaches.

This is precisely the approach taken in our book, which is divided into five subchapters. In the first section, we discuss various aspects of social and human development at the international level. The second section deals with selected problems of Vietnam's social development. Then, in the third subchapter, we focus on various aspects of human development, also with a spotlight on Vietnam, which is followed by case studies on the topic of the book in the fourth subchapter. The fifth subchapter then concludes by discussing issues of how Vietnam today looks to its long tradition of defining social and human development. In doing so, all of the contributions demonstrate how diverse the international as well as national debate on the topic of social and human development goals has become – ranging from basic philosophical, psychological, and political studies to questions of geopolitics, environmental and climate protection, SDGs, media and discourse theories, and concrete attempts to steer policy in terms of sustainable development globally and in Vietnam.

An interesting task would be to systematically use these different approaches that have been gathered here for comparative and especially Vietnam-related research in the future. At this stage, however, we can do no more than take stock. A preliminary quintessence is perhaps: much has been set in motion in the debate on social and human development goals, and the lines of discussion are currently realigning in Vietnam and

elsewhere. This makes our publication project a highly relevant and topical one.

Nevertheless, we hope that studies will contribute to clarifying the domestic and international context, different aspects, different approaches to social development and human development in their mutual relationship in all levels.

This book is written by scholars as representatives of academic disciplines such as philosophy, politics, sociology, and history with the desire to show their responsibility in clarifying the scientific foundations for the theory of sustainable social and human development, facilitating the application of those theoretical contents to the practice of building, and developing Vietnam. As part of a research project funded by USSH, VNU Hanoi, this book is the result of the effective cooperation of the University of Giessen with scholars from the Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty of Political Science, and the Faculty of History of the USSH, VNU Hanoi.

With the progressive spirit, we look forward to the sincere suggestions of colleagues and readers to make our next scientific publications even more meaningful and effective. Thank you very much!

Nguyen Anh Tuan, Nguyen Vu Hao and Detlef Briesen
Hanoi in June 2023

I. International Perspectives

The Geopolitical Future of the Mankind in the Twenty-first Century: the Views of Zbigniew Brzezinski in his Work “The Great Chessboard”

Nguyen Vu Hao, Nguyen Thi Chau Loan and Nguyen Hoang Duc

Zbigniew Brzezinski is one of America's greatest contemporary political scientists. One of the topics that interest him most is the geopolitical future of the mankind in the 21st century and the role of the United States. In his book *The Great Chessboard* published in 1997, on the basis of a geopolitical conception of the Eurasian continent, he gave a panorama of the future of the world's political structure in the coming decades, associated with America's dominant role in many areas of social life in the world, especially in the military, economic, technological, and cultural fields.

This article deals with Zbigniew Brzezinski's views in the above-mentioned book on world geopolitical issues and mentions his predictions about the relations between major power states such as the USA, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, Japan and China in the 21st century. These predictions can have certain reference values in determining the attitudes and foreign policies of many nation-states in the world, including Vietnam, especially after the events called Russia's *special military operation* in Ukraine since February 2022.

1. A Brief Introduction to the Life and Works of Zbigniew Brzezinski

Zbigniew Brzezinski is one of America's greatest contemporary political scientists and leading American foreign policy strategists in the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century. He is one of the most influential representatives of the American political elite. Zbigniew Kazimierz Brzezinski was born in 1928 in Warsaw, the capital of Poland.

At the age of 10, he was accompanied by his parents to Canada, when his father Tadeusz Brzezinski was appointed as the representative of the Consulate General of Poland in Montreal, Canada. After the World War II, Brzezinski did not return to Poland.

Brzezinski received his bachelor's degree in 1949 and his master's degree in 1950 from McGill University, Canada. In 1953, Brzezinski received his doctorate from Harvard University, USA. He received US citizenship in 1958. Brzezinski was a lecturer at Harvard University from 1953 to 1960, and at Columbia University from 1960 to 1972. He was a professor of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University in Washington D.C. Later, wholeheartedly serving the United States, Brzezinski devoted his career to studying the Soviet Union, which he saw as a geopolitical enemy of the West, even a symbol of *absolute evil*.

Zbigniew Brzezinski used to be considered as one of the radical anti-communists who proposed the global strategy against communism. He was the first to propose explaining everything that happens in socialist countries based on the concept of *totalitarianism*. He has also put forward the theory of the technological age and the concept of new American hegemony. In the 60s of the twentieth century, with a hard-line stance towards the Soviet Union, he served as an adviser to the administration of US President John F. Kennedy. He later served also as an advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson from 1966 to 1968 and as National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981. As a political scientist, Brzezinski defended realism in international relations and the geopolitical tradition of Halford Mackinder (an English politician, one of the founders of geopolitics and geostrategy) and Nicholas J. Spykman (an American political scientist, one of the founders of the classical realist school in foreign policies of the USA).

Together with David Rockefeller, Brzezinski established the *Trilateral Commission* – a group of prominent political and business leaders as well as academics primarily from the United States, Western Europe, and Japan to strengthen ties between the three most advanced industrial areas of the capitalist world and served as its director from 1973 to 1976.

He often played a prominent role in making decisions of this organization as well as those of the *Bilderberg Group*, an annual conference – founded in 1954 by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands – attended by European and North American political leaders, experts from industry, finance, media, and academics to promote dialogue between Europe and North America.

In 1988, Brzezinski served as co-chair of the National Security Advisory Group for President George W. Bush (father). During the presidency of Bill Clinton (1993–2001), Brzezinski was the author of the concept of NATO expansion eastward. This can be considered as one of the main reasons

of the so-called *special military operation* of Russia in Ukraine today since February 2022. Brzezinski left behind a lot of valuable scientific works in political science and international relations. He died in 2017 in Virginia, USA at the age of 89.

2. Zbigniew Brzezinski's Geopolitical Views on Eurasia

One of the topics of greatest interest to Brzezinski is the geopolitical future of mankind and America's role in today's world. His geopolitical views are presented especially in the work *The Great Chessboard*.

The starting point for Brzezinski's geopolitical views is Harald Mac-kinder's thought on Eurasia. In the early nineteenth century, when discussing the question of whether land power is more important than sea power and what particular area of Eurasia might be important in controlling the entire continents, Harald Mackinder, one of the famous geopoliticians who formulated the idea of the basic territories of Eurasia including all of Siberia and most of Central Asia (Bassin/Aksonov 2006). In his theory *Heartland*, Mackinder argues that a state can achieve world hegemony, only if it gains geopolitical control over the Heartland of the Eurasian supercontinent (Mackinder 1944, 113).

Inheriting this view, in his book published 1997 *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (Brzezinski 1997), Brzezinski gave a panorama of the future of the world's political structure and a geopolitical plan of the United States for the next 30 years, during which he asserted American hegemony. He wrote:

"The last decade of the twentieth century has witnessed a tectonic shift in world affairs. For the first time ever, a non-Eurasian power has emerged not only as the key arbiter of Eurasian power relations but also as the world's paramount power. The defeat and collapse of the Soviet Union was the final step in the rapid ascendance of a Western Hemisphere power, the United States, as the sole and, indeed, the first truly global power." (Brzezinski 1997, xiii)

This book was also published in 1999 in German under the title *The Only Great Power of the World (Die einzige Weltmacht)*. This title emphasizes the first and fundamental principle of American politics with its aspiration to be the world's only and last great power. On the other hand, Brzezinski also proposed a second decisive crucial principle, according to which the

Eurasian continent is considered a chessboard on which the struggle for global domination continues.

In his opinion, the great power that dominates the Eurasian continent will also have dominion over the rest of the world. Stretching from Lisbon to Vladivostok, this huge and bizarre Eurasian Chessboard is the forum of a global game. Domination over Eurasia today is already a fundamental prerequisite for global domination, because Eurasia is the largest continent, accounting for 75 per cent of the world's population and having 3/4 of all the energy reserves of the world (Bassin 2004).

3. Zbigniew Brzezinski's View of America's Superiority

When analysing the above-mentioned American principles of planetary dominance, Brzezinski asserted that the United States has a particularly dominant position especially in the four basic areas of world power: in the military, economic, technological, and cultural sectors.

- *In the military field*, the United States has a unique global deployment capability.
- *In the economic field*, the United States acts as a driving force for the development of the world despite a competition from Germany and Japan.
- *In terms of technology*, the United States has always held an absolute leadership position in the fields of advanced science and technology.
- *In terms of culture*, despite some problems, America still has a special attraction for young people around the world.

So, Brzezinski wrote:

“No nation-state is likely to match America in the four key dimensions of power (military, economic, technological, and cultural) that cumulatively produce decisive global political clout. Short of a deliberate or unintentional American abdication, the only real alternative to American global leadership in the foreseeable future is international anarchy.” (Brzezinski 1997, 194)

All four of these dimensions give the USA more powerful political influences than any other country in the world, making them the only super-power in the world in its own right. He openly regarded the United States as a contemporary imperial hegemon with a power unmatched by any other nation, at least for the next 25 years.

Cultural Superiority of the USA

According to Brzezinski, with the responsibility of democracy and culture at its height, the United States of America should be an example to all other nations and peoples of the world. Emphasizing cultural superiority as an underappreciated aspect of America's global power, Brzezinski argues that American popular culture has always radiated a magnetic attraction, especially among young people. Cultural superiority had the effect of reducing the need to rely on large military forces to maintain power at the imperial centre (Brzezinski 1997, 19).

American TV programs and movies account for nearly three-quarters of the world market. American popular music also prevailed, and American preferences, eating habits, and even dress habits were increasingly imitated around the world. Furthermore, according to Brzezinski, the language of the Internet is English, and the majority of global computer conversation also originates in the US, affecting the content of the global conversation (Brzezinski 1997, 24). Of course, in our opinion, the numerical superiority of American films with a lot of violence, weapons and sex cannot be equated with qualitative superiority and this depends on the perspectives of different nation-states and cultures.

Democracy Superiority of the USA

Another superiority, according to Brzezinski, is the American ideal and view of democracy – in which the American form of government and Americans' respect for the constitution as the most fundamental law – considered as the norms for all nations in the world. According to him, the United States have met all the foundations to secure their leading position in the 21st century. He wrote:

“In the age of the most massive spread of the democratic form of government, the American political experience tends to serve as a standard for emulation. The spreading emphasis worldwide on the centrality of a written constitution and on the supremacy of law over political expediency, no matter how short-changed in practice, has drawn upon the strength of American constitutionalism.” (Brzezinski 1997, 25)

The learning of the American development strategy gradually spread to the whole world, which creates more favourable conditions for the establish-

ment of indirect hegemony seemingly with American consensus. Thereby, America's global domination was underpinned by a complex system of alliances and allies that swept the entire world in its own right.

4. Some Predictions by Zbigniew Brzezinski about the Geopolitical Future of Mankind in the Twenty-first Century

In Brzezinski's view, in the *Grand Chessboard* of Eurasia, there are four basic regions:

- The first region is the West including Western Europe, which is now a large territorial region of the European Union protected by the NATO military alliance led by the US.
- The second region is the South including the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Indian subcontinent.
- The third zone is the East consisting mostly of China and the East Asia countries and
- the fourth zone is the Intermediate space, a large region of the Northern Continent with most of the area covered by Russia (Brzezinski 1997, 30).

Brzezinski affirms the preeminent role of the United States everywhere, but American policy needs coordination with other major power states, especially Germany, France, Japan, China, etc. According to him, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, France will increase its influences in Europe, so will stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States at decisive moments. Germany will also increase its influences in Europe in different ways. Especially through close cooperation with Poland, Germany increases its influence over the Baltic republics in the North, Ukraine, and Belarus in the East. Poland's role is most evident in its participation in important high-level talks with France and Germany on the future of Europe within the framework of the "Weimar triangle" meetings which are significant for "geopolitical axis" in continental Europe (Brzezinski 1997, 40 and 65).

When talking about Russia's role in the world geopolitical chessboard, Brzezinski believes that Russia needs to be aware of its current position, abandon its imperial ambitions and focus mainly on Europe. Russia needs to present itself in the new reality formed after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. He wrote:

“Russia’s only real geostrategic option – the option that could give Russia a realistic international role and also maximize the opportunity of transforming and socially modernizing itself – is Europe. And not just any Europe, but the transatlantic Europe of the enlarging EU and NATO.” (Brzezinski 1997, 117)

In our opinion, in the new context of the current *special military operation* of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, similar predictions made by Brzezinski, which have certain influences on the foreign policy of the United States, need to be reconsidered. Russia’s current geopolitical position in the conflict with Ukraine and its tendency to move closer to China to confront the US and Western countries, in a certain sense, can be seen as signs of a transition from a unipolar world to a multipolar world in economic, political, and military term (Coones 2005; Laruelle 2008).

One of Brzezinski’s remarkable predictions for Russia and the future foreign policy of the leaders of the Russian Federation is *the extremely important position of Ukraine for Russia as a superpower in the world, instead of just being a regional power in Asia*. He wrote:

“Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire. Russia without Ukraine can still strive for imperial status, but it would then become a predominantly Asian imperial state, more likely to be drawn into debilitating conflicts with aroused Central Asians, who would then be resentful of the loss of their recent independence and would be supported by their fellow Islamic states to the south... However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as its access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia.” (Brzezinski 1997, 45)

In our opinion, this statement Brzezinski is one of his genius predictions and may be the main reason behind *the special military operation* of the Russian Federation in Ukraine since the February 2022 to present, when Russian leaders, headed by Russian President Vladimir Putin want to use military solutions to conquer Ukraine and bring this country back to its orbit or to the territory region under Russian influence with a real purpose to make Russia a world power in Eurasia. The goals that the Russian government declared in 2022 to *demilitarize* and *de-fascist* Ukraine is probably just a pretext to justify this conflict (Ersen 2004)

Regarding China's position in the geopolitical chessboard of mankind, at the time of publication of the book *The Grand Chessboard*, Brzezinski still considered China only a regional power, not a world power. Meanwhile, he considered Japan a world power. In our opinion, this assessment of Brzezinski is only appropriate in the world context at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Because China only became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on December 11, 2001, and the Western powers could not imagine a spectacular transformation today after more than 20 years: The position China's position has changed dramatically and become the second largest economy in the world, challenging the US hegemony. At the beginning of the 21st century, China's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was less than 1,000 US dollars, about 36 times less than that of the United States, but now it has increased to 13,000 US dollars, a gap just over five times. Currently, the US considers China as the biggest geopolitical challenge for themselves and Western nations in the 21st century (Prasad 2023).

In our opinion, China's strong rise in the first two decades of the 21st century, developments in the past year in the so-called *special military operation* of the Russia in Ukraine, especially relations between Russia and China which seem to be approaching close after the summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin during his three-day official visit (March 20–22, 2023) with the goal to carry out the transition from a unipolar world order led by the West to a new multipolar world – all these can be seen as definite proofs to Brzezinski's predictions.

In 2001, in articles published in the journal *National Interest*, Brzezinski urged the United States to prevent an *arc of instability* in the territories of Europe, Southeast Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf to gain geopolitical advantages for America. However, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the USA, the American people seem to have lost their desire to do this, no longer want to associate their fate with volatile distant countries.

In international relations, geopolitics was always considered an important factor in principle, and territorial control had always the focus of political conflicts. Satisfying national ambitions towards conquering more territories or the sense of national loss associated with the loss of holy lands were often cited as the cause of most bloody wars. According to Brzezinski, Russia's national greatness over the centuries was attributed to the acquisition of many territories, even this remained still true until the end

of the twentieth century, when the government of the Russian Federation viewed control for non-Russian peoples like the Chechens living around a major oil pipeline as a fundament to Russia's position. Nation-states are still fundamental links of the world system in the new context in which the decline of nationalism towards the great powers and the fading of the ideological elements have led to a decline in the emotional level of global politics. Even so, competition based on territorial acquisition still dominated international relations, but manifested it in more civilized forms. In this competition, geographical location was considered as the starting point to determine the foreign policy priorities of the nation-states, and the size of the country's territory was considered the most important criterion to determine the status and power of a country.

However, in the 21st century, the question of territorial acquisition for the majority of nation-states, from Brzezinski's perspective, no longer has the same significance as before. More important issues are grievances related to the denial of self-determination by fraternal peoples or dissatisfaction with neighbouring mistreatment toward ethnic minorities. According to Brzezinski, ruling elites in many countries increasingly see territory as not a fundamental factor in determining a country's status or its level of international influence. Other basic factors which can be mentioned, include *economic strength* and its embodiment in *technological innovation*. These are the basic criteria for measuring the strength of a nation-state.

According to Brzezinski, current geopolitical issues have shifted from a regional mindset to a global one, in which domination over the entire Eurasian continent is the primary foundation for global domination. He believes that the United States – a non-European superpower, is dominating the world with its power directly extending to the peripheries of the Eurasian continent. In the context of Eurasia, according to Brzezinski's forecast, at some point, there will be a potential competition with the US.

Therefore, in order to formulate geopolitical strategies to ensure geopolitical leadership in Eurasia, the United States needs to take the following actions. On the one hand, it is necessary to identify which Eurasian nation-states could cause a potentially significant change in the international distribution of power, thereby to clarify the major foreign policy goals of the political elite groups of these countries. On the other hand, it is necessary to develop specific US policies to offset, activate, and control the situation to ensure vital US interests on a global scale. In our opinion, the main goal set by Brzezinski in his book *The Grand Chessboard* for the US

geopolitical strategy is to prevent the trend of transition from a unipolar world based on the United States, to a multipolar world.

5. Summary

It can be said that Brzezinski is not only a scholar – one of America's leading political scientists, but also a statesman and a futurist who has a great influence on America's geopolitical strategy in the last decades of the 20th century and in the first decades of the 21st century. Developing the theory of the Eurasian continent, he gave a comprehensive and profound overview of the events and geopolitical issues of mankind in the twentieth century in the period before and after the cold war, and he made important forecasts about the East-West relations, the relationship between major power states such as Great Britain, France, Germany, the US, Russia, China and Japan in the 21st century, especially about the major geopolitical events of the contemporary world, including Russia's *special military operation* in Ukraine today, the rise of China, and particularly the strategic rivalry between the US and China around the contemporary world. Some of Brzezinski's geopolitical predictions are correct, even genius, and need to be carefully investigated by scholars and policy makers in many nation-states around the world to determine the correct attitudes and foreign policies for their country.

However, some of his geopolitical assessments of Russia and China are not really accurate in the current context. Brzezinski himself in his other works, especially *Strategic Perspective. America and the Global Crisis* (2012) has realized and made certain adjustments. Even in an editorial in the summer of 2016 before his death, Brzezinski himself admitted that perhaps the United States should give up its quest for American hegemony and should forge closer ties with Russia and China as the two emerging global imperial powers.

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Secularization and other Master-Theories on Religion and Society: A European Perspective

Winfried Löffler

1. *The Ambivalence of Religions*

Religions are ambivalent factors for the development and well-being of societies: On the one hand, philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas (*1929) have pointed to the positive potential of religions for civic virtues such as solidarity, respect for law and economic correctness (Ratzinger/Habermas 2007; Habermas 2019). On the other hand, in some parts of the world there are forms of religiously based disintegration and social division, partly even in the form of religious terrorism. There is hardly any major political crisis in the world which has no religious aspects, or to which such aspects have not at least been attributed. This raises the question of whether there might be some larger-scale general theory (or even a sort of *law-like* description) of the relation between religion and society, perhaps including the historical development of this relation. In what follows, I will briefly introduce the most prominent candidate of such theories, namely the secularization thesis (section 2), I will then sketch three alternatives to it in sections 3 and 4, discuss some objections to them (section 5) and will finally shed some light on the conceptual and methodological backgrounds of the discussion (section 6).

2. *The Secularization Thesis and its Roots*

As a proposed interpretation of the historical development of the relationship between religion and society in modern times, the so-called secularization thesis has long dominated intellectual discussion in the West; for many people, it was something like a truism about modernity. This thesis has its roots in the pioneers of sociology such as Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, and Max Weber.

According to Marx (1818–1883), religion is bound to die out in the course of time: Religion is a part of the superstructure that stands in a dialectical

relation to the economic and political base or substructure. The base shapes the superstructure, and the superstructure maintains and legitimates the base. With social, political, and economic change (according to Marx' politico-economic law of history), religion will be superfluous and will disappear. According to Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who defended a three-stages law of social progress, religion is a key phenomenon of the first stage, but this mythological-religious stage will be followed by a metaphysical and eventually by a third, *positive* scientific stage. Max Weber (1864–1920), the German pioneer of modern sociology, sees the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world as a key feature of modernization.

The backdrop for all these – and many more – thinkers is a general idea of progress and development to something higher, more complex, more human, or similar goals. Fragments from the works of these thinkers have shaped current public discussions for a long time and solidified into the secularization thesis, or perhaps better, a variety of secularization theses. Although there is no official definition for these theses, they claim roughly the following:

The waning of the social significance of religious institutions and interpretations of the world is a hallmark of modernization, and it is empirically obvious (for a broad survey on the empirical aspects see, e.g., Pickel/Müller 2009 and Pollack 2018); this waning is unidirectional, deterministic, and irreversible. In part, however, religious content from previous eras, and its functions, are preserved and return in a modified, secular form, for example in the form of human rights, which have an essential religious root.

Against this (still popular) secularization thesis, however, stand disconcerting phenomena such as religious forms of politics (not only in Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey, but also in the US under Bush junior and Trump, in Hungary or most recently in Russia), the religious renaissance in some parts of the world, including South-East Asia, various forms of so-called religious *fundamentalism* with political implications, the great media attention to religion and religious figures, the surprising persistence of esotericism and new forms of spirituality, and phenomena such as individual patchwork religiosity and quasi-religious staging of musical culture. As it appears, these are global phenomena (with many local differences, of course). However, there is also another side which seems to support the secularization thesis: From an empirical standpoint, religious-membership numbers and the number of churchgoers is clearly shrinking in most

European states, the same seems to hold for parts of North America (see, e.g., Gallup 2022).

Some researchers thus see secularization as only a “special European path” (Lehmann 2004), while a global view shows a different situation. Some sociologists, however, think that the secularization thesis is not even true for Europe. The core of this alternative thesis is that religion is not disappearing, but only changing, sometimes into a form which is less visible; however, it is still present. This position, by the way, has its historical roots in Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), another pioneer of modern sociology, according to whom religion is an anthropological constant and no society lives in the long run without some forms of religion. In what follows, I will briefly sketch and comment on these alternative theses.

3. The Individualization and Privatization Thesis

One alternative thesis that is often heard especially in Europe is the individualization and privatization thesis (as put forward by Thomas Luckmann (1927–2016) and Karl Gabriel (*1943), for example): While institutionalized religion tends to decline (as mentioned before, the falling numbers of church membership and service attendance are obvious in many European countries), it is claimed that forms of individual, more *patchwork*- and *bricolage*-like religiosity increase, i.e., a kind of *believing without belonging*. People do not understand themselves as subordinates of a certain religion or religious group, but rather as “artists of freedom”, as the Austrian theologian and sociologist of religion Paul Zulehner (*1939) once put it metaphorically (Zulehner et.al. 1991). They choose – sometimes from disparate and unconnected religions – those components which seem understandable and helpful for their understanding of their lives and their individual situations. This comprises not only rituals, religious figures etc., but also their religious thought: knowledge about the content of the traditional religions is markedly shrinking, but there are diffuse and mixed forms of religious thought with elements from various traditions. This kind of religiosity – sometimes labelled as “invisible religion” (Thomas Luckmann, Hubert Knoblauch etc.) – is rather subjective, in many cases anti-intellectualist and claims a direct experiential access to some kinds of transcendent forces. (Only in brackets I note Chung Van Hoang’s recent book (2017) on new spiritual movements in Vietnam – a comparison of similarities and differences between new religiosities in Europe and Viet-

nam would be fruitful but goes beyond the scope of this paper.) Back to my main argument: This new religious *bricolage* has somewhat puzzling consequences: On the one hand, it weakens religious institutions; on the other, it creates challenges of orientation for the individual who finds himself or herself in a vast array of religious and other worldview offers – and this challenge may in turn trigger a new need for religion as an orientation compass.

4. Public Religion and Civil Religion

In the United States, increasingly in Europe and in many other regions, José Casanova's theory of *public religion* and Robert Bellah's theory of *civil religion* enjoy much approval. Casanova (*1951, by the way he earned his PhD in theology as a Spanish student at my faculty in Innsbruck) argues that – against the secularization thesis! – *institutionalized* religion also plays an increasing role, as a player and as a political topic (Casanova 1994; 2009); one may think not only of the growth of religious political systems in the middle East or in India, the media presence of figures like Pope Francis or the Dalai Lama, the claim of Polish and Hungarian politicians to defend *Christian values* (in fact, it is rather a kind of nationalism and populism), or recently the religious defence of Putin's aggression in Ukraine by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. One may also think of the de-privatization and re-politicization of some individual issues which have a religious aspect, such as the question of abortion in the US, the permissibility of religious clothing in France, and in recent years the big discussions about a revised law about the legal position of the Islamic communities in Austria.

The core ideas of Robert Bellah's (1927–2013) theory of Civil Religion are the foundations of the US Constitution in some quasi-sacred values like *freedom* and the general, non-denominational theism which inspired many of the fathers of the Constitution (Bellah 1967). In more recent writings, Bellah connected this idea with a five-stage evolutionary model of the development of religions across the human race (Bellah 2011). The details of this model are not important here, but in its last stage (*modern religion*) Bellah sees an individualization of religion and the transfer of the functions of religion to other institutions. (One may think of the state, social security and medical systems, the school system, political and societal values etc.)

All that may sound very much like standard secularization theories, but the political life in the US has many more affinities to religious systems; think of its world of public religious symbols: not only does the dollar bill say that *In God we trust* and presidents swear their oath on a Bible; in many schools, there is also a non-denominational daily school prayer to a common, theistic God; such phenomena would be unthinkable in Europe, except for some clearly denominational schools run by religious communities. This general religious colouring is interestingly connected with a marked aversion against denominational religiosity at schools in the US, since this is seen as a violation of the values of freedom and individuality (Greenawalt 2005).

The values behind this Civil Religion are nowhere declared or written down in an official version, but they can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a God.
2. His will can be seen behind the outcome of democratic procedures; hence,
3. the democratic United States are God's most important tool in history and
4. the nation is the most important source of identity for the American citizen (Knoblauch 1999, 107).

If this analysis is correct, US Civil Religion is indeed a special phenomenon to be distinguished from European phenomena of secularization.

5. Possible Objections

There are, however, critical objections to all these theories which are worth considering.

Against the Individualization and Privatization Theory

it must be said that such phenomena are hard to study in a broader empirical way. In particular, the exact distinction with institutional religiosity is sometimes difficult to draw. Take as an example a Catholic religion teacher in a school, who is in friendly contact with her Islamic and Buddhist colleagues; she also practices yoga and Zen Buddhist meditation, has personally no interest in wide parts of the Catholic doctrine and rather

rejects some of them as old-fashioned; she sees Catholicism as one form of broader religiosity with a friendly, human face and Jesus as one specially gifted person in a row, together with the Buddha, Confucius, Imam Ali, and others. She attends Catholic services only occasionally, but she was fascinated by the orthodox services during a holiday in Greece and the Buddhist monks during a trekking tour in Nepal. She likes to read Islamic mystics, to burn incense and to light candles, and has many religious items of other religions in her apartment. Still, she would declare herself as *chiefly Catholic*, however, with a strong interconfessional leaning. Such phenomena exist (admittedly, not always in the rich and complex form as in my example). But what should such people be counted as? As living a form of completely individualist religion or rather as living a special, modified form of institutionalized religiosity? (After all, the person in our example declares herself as chiefly Catholic, pays her annual church contribution and even teaches religion in the name of the church.) As far as I know, broader and detailed empirical, quantitative studies of such phenomena don't exist, so it is hard to say how widespread such phenomena are and how exactly they relate to institutional religiosity.

Especially hard to study and to classify are the *thinner* and more elusive forms of such individual and privatized *religion*. If someone pays special attention to aspects of wellness, health and body and assigns to this a sort of spiritual quality, or if someone sees himself as living on after death in his/her own children and hence attributes family a quasi-religious value – should this indeed still be counted as a form of *implicit, individual religiosity*? How far should one go in order to *find something quasi-religious* in the thought and practices of people who don't seem at all religious? We should not forget that many people declare themselves as deliberately non-religious and secular. Nevertheless, many of these people have something like beliefs in highest values or ultimate goals in life, they practice some form of rituals like birthday or Christmas celebrations etc. – one should hence be careful to classify such values, goals, and rituals as *religious* if the persons in question would explicitly reject such a classification. At this point, it might also be noted that many defenders of the individualization/privatization theory have parts of their academic background in theology, and this might raise a suspicion: loosely spoken, theologians tend to see religion as *something important* in life. Secularization, the erosion and disappearing of religion, is a worrying phenomenon from this perspective. The theory of individualization and privatization might be seen as a way out of this

Picture 1: Chapel in a mountain valley in Austria



Source: Picture by the author

worry: Religion is still there, so the defenders of this theory would answer, it is just changing its shape and is perhaps less visible.

Against Casanova's Theory of Public Religion

one might, firstly, ask whether it is really religion that is at stake here. Many of the abovementioned phenomena seem to chiefly have to do with the marking of political identity and not with religion proper. Religion is rather taken into the service of political campaigning and the creation of political narratives (many political leaders who utilize religion, like Putin in Russia, Orbán in Hungary, or formerly Trump in the US, are genuinely irreligious persons). The same holds in the case of individual citizens: it has not so much to do with religion that Islamic clothing in France or abortion in the US have become such hot political topics, but rather with identity markers: some people want to set limits to immigration and the growth of the (higher reproductive) non-French population, both of which are seen

as a danger for national identity. Islamic clothing is just the visible target at hand, it is not attacked for genuine religious reasons, but rather for reasons of psychological and political identity (remember that the French society is usually seen as a rather secular one). Likewise, the individual stance to abortion is an important identity marker in the deeply split American society. One might also ask whether Casanova's claims are still empirically backed: In the meantime, studies show a decrease in membership and regular religious practice also for many American churches, less than in Europe, but similar in the general tendency (Pew Research Center 2022), and for some Islamic countries (Arab Barometer 2019).

Against Bellah's Theory of Civil Religion,

the obvious objection is that it might only refer to the special case of the USA and perhaps a few other states (an extreme example might even be found in the para-religious political liturgies and a quasi-divinization of the ruling family in North Korea). But the theory of civil religion is most probably not useful as a general interpretation of the relation between religion and society. An application of this theory to many other states would require an implausibly extended concept of *religion*. In Germany, to take an example, there is high civil respect for the Constitution, the so-called *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law) of 1949 which was promulgated after the shock of Nazi fascism and its incredible atrocities. The *Grundgesetz* enjoys great respect across all relevant political parties, any modifications to it are only made with strong hesitation. Some of its articles are declared as completely unmodifiable. Some sociologists and political scientists speak about a *constitution patriotism* which unites the people on the basis of this highly regarded document, but hardly anybody would regard this respect for the constitution as a form of *civil religion*. In my own country, Austria, which is culturally and linguistically very similar to Germany and shares a considerable part of its history, such *constitution patriotism* is completely unknown. Some other political and legal phenomena which are by some sociologists seen as remote European counterparts of civil religion (Knoiblauch 1999, 108) do not reach the intensity and prominence of US civil religion phenomena. So *Civil Religion* is surely not a universally useful analytic concept.

6. Conceptual and Methodological Presuppositions behind the Discussion

Finally, let me point out two backgrounds to our question in the philosophy of the social sciences (here: of the sociology of religion): Different views about secularization may be influenced by tacit conceptual and methodological presuppositions (Pollack 2015).

Firstly, let us recall that in the previous considerations, we encountered a recurrent problem: The authors discussed above used quite different concepts of *religion*. This is legitimate since the discussion on the *correct* definition of religion is notoriously open. These conceptual differences are relevant for us here because standpoints on the question of *secularization or not* depend partly on the assumed notion of religion: Those who take a very broad concept of *religion* as a basis will find more to like in the theories of individualization/privatization, and of public and civil religion. However, an overly broad concept of *religion* is no longer useful as an analytic category: It covers too much. Not everything that may, e.g., contribute to identity formation must have to do with *religion*, but it should better be described otherwise. On the other hand, an overly narrow notion of religion might make us blind to new, religion-like phenomena.

Secondly, standpoints in the secularization question have to do with the chosen methods of empirical sociology of religion: those who work with *quantitative* methods (using questionnaires, telephone polls, and standardized interviews as typical tools) tend to have more confidence in secularization theory, because these methods focus on easily quantitatively measurable variables such as membership and frequency of religious practices. On the other hand, those who work with *qualitative* empirical methods (such as open, longer individual interviews) are more likely to also get a look at private, individualized, and new phenomena of religiosity. Such an approach makes it easier to believe in a mere transformation of religion from a more institutionalized to a more individualized form. By merely noting this difference, I do not suggest that one of these methods is to be preferred.

What do we make out of all this? As a bottom line from the foregoing analysis, we may draw some negative conclusions: Neither is secularization the obvious and unquestionable *fact* which it is often presented as, nor is religion clearly just changing its form; likewise, slogans like *return of the religions* or *megatrend spirituality* are to be seen with some caution. The local conditions are too manifold to warrant such global diagnoses.

Moreover, we saw that such diagnoses rely on strong theoretical presuppositions concerning the concept of religion and the method of sociology.

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Multiculturalism as a Factor for Societal Development and Transnational Integration in South Korea

Duong Quynh Thu

South Korea, a country that has long valued national unity, has undergone a significant transition to adapt to and coexist with a multicultural and multi-national population in its own society. South Korea cannot reject or oppose the growth of a multicultural society, given the existing trend of growing migration. The *Social Integration* and the *Multicultural Family Support* programs are two current strategies in South Korea to address the multiculturalism issue. This article focuses on systemizing the definitions related to a multicultural society and analyses the programs and policies for foreigners in Korea to grasp the nature of these policies. South Korea must alter its perspective and progress toward a multicultural symbiotic society in order to create a cohesive and advanced East Asian community. This will significantly impact how well South Korea can integrate into the East Asian region. To reach the goal of the research – to assert the significant role of multicultural coexistence in tying South Korea to the East Asian community and the larger global community in general – the author employs multidisciplinary social and humanity research methods.

1. Introduction

Each country has myths related to the history and origin of its state and people. Not an exception, Koreans are immensely proud of their Dangun myth, of pure origin and blood, and of a homogeneous country in terms of race, culture, and language. Dangun or Dangun Wanggeom was the legendary founder and God-king of Gojoseon, the first Korean kingdom, around present-day Liaoning province in Northeast China and the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. He is said to be the grandson of heaven and son of a bear, and to have founded the kingdom in 2333 BC (<http://world.kbs.co.kr/>).

South Korean students are constantly reminded of this homogeneity in textbooks for all grade levels, from elementary school to high school, as

well as in the social sciences. It is strongly engrained in Koreans' sense of their country as one of racial, ethnic, and cultural homogeneity (Huh Dong Hyun 2011, 7).

However, South Koreans have started to welcome foreigners into their communities since the 1990s. In order to clarify this, news analyst Choi Young-il of KBS-Korea television said that foreigners started migrating to South Korea through a variety of channels after the 1990s, including labour export and marriages with the local population. As young South Koreans tended to shy away from 3D (Difficult, Danger, Dirty) employment at the period, there was a rise in the number of foreigners moving to South Korea. Even though South Korea had a high unemployment rate at the time, young South Koreans continued to shun professions they deemed to be difficult and low paying. Therefore, to meet the demand for human resources in the aforementioned industries, the South Korean Government had to let companies to hire workers from poor or less developed nations into South Korea. The same society in South Korea started to encounter newcomers with varied skin tones, ethnicities, and tongues.

Many young South Koreans relocated to large cities to live and work at the same time that the economy of South Korea was experiencing significant expansion in the late 1990s. Additionally, South Korea is a Confucian nation, and its *respect for men and scorn for women* attitude contributed to a gender gap, particularly in rural areas. Only the elderly were left in the countryside as a result, and many of the men who worked in agriculture were unable to get married because they could not find female partners. The rise in the number of marriages between South Koreans and foreigners is also the background in which multiculturalism in South Korean society has developed.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has even made information available that demonstrate the global nature of the current migratory trend, which is not limited to South Korea. By 2020, there were projected to be 281 million immigrants from other countries, or 3.6 per cent of the world's population. The IOM's Migration Report 2021 indicated that throughout the previous 50 years, the number of international migrants continuously increased. In 2020, it was projected that 281 million people lived abroad, which was an increase of 128 million from 1990 and a threefold increase from the predicted figure in 1970. As a result, we may predict that there will be an increase in immigration to South Korea in the future. A country that once took pride in its homogeneous culture,

language, and blood would unavoidably evolve into a multicultural, multi-ethnic one.

This article aims to shed light on the nature of policies for foreign immigrants in South Korea, their efficacy, and some of their current limits by combining statistics, examining multicultural definitions, and using data of the government's multicultural policies.

2. Definition of Multiculturalism and the Policy Models of Multicultural Societies

Several notable examples are the US, Australia, or Canada regarding multicultural societies. That is because the formation of the countries themselves is linked to national, ethnic, and cultural variety.

A multicultural society is one in which all of the peoples and ethnic groups who make up a nation are accorded the same fundamental rights without experiencing political or social prejudice (Jeon Kyeong Mi 2019, 15). A multicultural society, however, is more than just a place where people from many racial and ethnic backgrounds coexist. It is generally regarded as a civilization in which individuals from various backgrounds are not only grouped together in an area where they share their circumstances, but its sub-communities will also interact and coexist with one another, establishing a larger community. Everyone in the community is valued for their own values, whether they be racial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural, and they all have access to the same opportunities and rights in society (Lee Jong Yun 2009; Kim Taeyoung/Yoon Tae Jin 2016, 261).

Given the definition provided above, a multicultural society is desirable for all people worldwide and in keeping with the present trend of globalization. But not all nations have been successful in using this definition to advance their socioeconomic development. Three models of multicultural societies were created by combining several forms of multicultural societies in Jung Young Ae and Jeon Jin Ho's (2013) study.

We all exhibit the same mentality when confronted with a new set of elements, which is to keep our distance and look for ways to stop those elements from invading and penetrating the existing elements. This is what the differential exclusionary multiculturalism model indicates when it comes to a culture that is going to welcome new cultural elements. With the help of this model, societies can welcome new immigrants who work in particular professions (usually 3Ds). But immigrants will encounter certain challenges