

Religion and Secularism in Party Competition in the Western World

Section "Religion and Politics Across Boundaries"

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Abstract:

This Panel focuses on party competition on religion and secularism in the Western world. Until recently, political scientists focusing on the West expected religion to become less relevant in party politics and, consequently, the religious-secular cleavage in party competition to disappear eventually. This expectation was particularly due to secularization processes which have proceeded in Western democracies since the 1960s. However, recent party conflicts imply that the question of a role of (organized) religion in the public sphere seems to have become a contested issue between parties again. This can be particularly traced back to increasing religious pluralization or, more concretely, to the establishment of Muslim communities and the enhanced visibility of their religion in societies which have portrayed themselves as Christian and/or secular. Therefore, the new debates are not only about the legitimacy of the role of religion(s) in the public and political sector. Instead, the visible presence of the 'new' religion of Islam has also caused a party-political discourse on the more fundamental issue of national cultural identities. In this discourse, both parties that have acted as representatives of a 'Christian' worldview and their 'secularist' counterparts have been prompted to (re)position themselves. Furthermore, newly established right-wing populist parties have increasingly referred to "Christian" and/or "secular values" in order to construct national identities and exclude Islam by definition from this collective.

The aim of this Panel is to get a better understanding of the present role the secular-religious cleavage plays in party competition in the Western world. In this context, subjects of interest are especially the role of religion(s) in the public sphere as well as the significance of religion and/or secularity as national identity markers, but also other aspects touching, for instance, morality issues. Furthermore, papers are particularly welcome that apply an institutionalist perspective looking on the impact of national context factors such as church state regimes, party systems or denominational compositions of societies.

To submit a Paper proposal, you need to create a MyECPR account (if you don't already have one) and send the following information to [Matthias Kortmann](mailto:Matthias.Kortmann@tu-dortmund.de) and [Laura Orawski](mailto:Laura.Orawski@tu-dortmund.de) by **12 February**:

- your name, academic affiliation and email address
- a title for your paper
- an abstract of up to 500 words
- 3-8 keywords