



SECULARIZATION AND DESECULARIZATION: DISCUSSION ON PARADIGMS

SECULARIZACIÓN Y DESECULARIZACIÓN: DISCUSIÓN SOBRE PARADIGMAS

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to contribute to the debate on theory of secularization by presenting critical arguments against it and – where possible – these arguments' refutation. Some of the arguments, however touch the core paradigm of secularization, and, it seems, can be answered only by developing a modified, but not necessarily contrary paradigm. The main objective of the paper is to be established against this backdrop, and it is to introduce and critically discuss the concept of desecularization. It shall be argued the concept of desecularization has potential to overcome the entanglement of paradigms of secularization in progressiveness, narrow-range scope, linearity and predicted directness of the role of religion. To illustrate the difference of paradigms, some particular cases of religious resurgence (Georgia, Hungary, Poland, USA) are briefly analyzed from the perspective of secularization and of desecularization.

Keywords: Secularization, Desecularization, Religion is society.

RESUMEN

Este artículo intenta contribuir al debate sobre la teoría de la secularización presentando argumentos críticos contra ella y -en la medida de lo posible- la refutación de estos argumentos. Algunos de los argumentos, sin embargo, tocan el paradigma central de la secularización y, al parecer, sólo pueden responderse desarrollando un paradigma modificado, pero no necesariamente contrario. Sobre este telón de fondo se establecerá el objetivo principal del artículo, que consiste en introducir y discutir críticamente el concepto de desecularización. Se argumentará que el concepto de desecularización tiene potencial para superar el enmarañamiento de los paradigmas de la secularización en cuanto a progresividad, estrechez de miras, linealidad y predicción directa del papel de la religión. Para ilustrar la diferencia de paradigmas, se analizan brevemente algunos casos particulares de resurgimiento religioso (Georgia, Hungría, Polonia, EE.UU.) desde la perspectiva de la secularización y de la desecularización.

Palabras clave: Secularización, Desecularización, Religión es sociedad.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is known that traditional secularization theory argued or took for granted the diminutive role of religion in modern society caused by the process of modernization¹ and, as a consequence, regarded secularization² an inevitable, rather linear process similarly affecting all the cultures and societies.³ Critical

1 Modernization can be briefly defined as the process which leads societies to greater institutional, technological and cultural complexity (Jörg Stolz, Pascal Tanner, “Secularization, secularity, and secularism in the new millenium: Macrotheories and research”, in Paul A. Djupe, Mark J. Rozell and Ted G. Jelen (eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1–19. Slightly more detailed description would include institutionalization of ideas of: individualization (the individual becomes as or more important than the community), sovereignty of the people (as opposed to the monarch or a despot), democratization, rationalization (rational rather than religious explanations of phenomena), autonomy of science from religion, pluralism of worldviews, and emphasis on individual economic development. Implementation of these values in Western societies led to functional differentiation (Piotr Musiewicz, “The Catholic Church’s Formula for Adaptation to Modernity and Contemporary Models of Secularism”, *Religions* 14(5): 639 (2023), 1-2; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

2 For the purpose of the introduction, let us initially define secularization as a general decline of religions’ social influence (Vyacheslav Karpov, “Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework”, *Journal of Church and State*, 52: 2, (2020), 233.

3 I use the term “a society” in a broad sense, meaning either the people of a particular country or a particular group or a community within the particular country. The broader term sometimes used in the paper would be a culture and a civilization.

examinations and responses to these statements proved their inadequacy in many cases – most visibly in non-European social contexts – and lead to the submission of the newer thesis that secularization might function as unpredictable process that does not always lead to the same effects, as it is impossible to evidence one global pattern of modernization.⁴ Against this backdrop José Casanova presented a more nuanced concept of secularization, in which its particular aspects - departing of social institutions from religious norms, decline of religious beliefs and practices, and privatization of religion including its departure from the public sphere – are not necessarily linked with each other and in which varied combinations of these aspects may produce different effects.⁵ As a result, two general narratives about the significance of the social role of religion and its future were developed (I will call them “traditional” and “newer”) and, as some scholars claimed, the debate on secularization came to a “dead end”; however a number of proposals to facilitate it have been proposed and considered.⁶

Some of them, like Monika Wohlrab-Sahr’s and Marian Burchardt’s, presented wider concepts of models of links between religion and other social areas, depending on historical traditions and dominant ideas in particular cultures.⁷ Others, like Gert Pickel or Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, attempted an empirical research to analyze the social phenomenon of religion and its transformations,⁸ but the results did not seem to be applied to verify the broader spectrum of concepts of secularization.⁹ Another direction tries to develop a critical approach to secularization theory by denoting that the theory still does not sufficiently consider the facts of religious stability or resurgence in many societies. This is particularly the point of interest and examination of this paper as the topic it employs and a modified paradigm it eventually provokes and requires, seem still hardly researched and developed.

4 Shmuel Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities”, *Daedalus* 29 (2000), 1–29; Rivka Feldhay, “Catholic Europe and Sixteenth-Century Science: A Path to Modernity?”, in Yohanan Friedman and Christoph Marksches (eds), *Religious Responses to Modernity* (Berlin: De Gruyter), 49–63.

5 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 211.

6 Jorge Botelho Moniz, “Secularization in Europe: Causes, Consequences, and Cultural Diversity”, *Religions* 14(3): 423 (2023), 1-11.

7 Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, “Multiple Secularities: Toward a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities”, *Comparative Sociology* 11 (2012), 905.

8 Gert Pickel, “Secularization—An Empirically Consolidated Narrative in the Face of an Increasing Influence of Religion on Politics”, *Politica & Sociedad* 16:36 (2017), 259–94; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

9 J. Botelho Moniz, “Secularization in Europe...”, *Religions* 14(3):423 (2023), 1-11.

Therefore the main objective of the paper is to present and critically discuss the paradigm of desecularization. The methods used in the research are analysis of sources and texts, critical analysis and comparative studies of the concepts, discourse analysis and some case studies.

II. THEORY OF SECULARIZATION AND RESURGENCE OF RELIGION

One objection against traditional secularization theory has already been mentioned – it argued there exist societies with larger role of religion in social life, and in these societies the role of religion is not diminishing in the same aspects and in the same pattern as in others – for example in Europe some diminution of this kind in many societies is noticeable and evident, while in Africa it is not so. As it was suggested, the general concept of secularization was defended only by becoming aware of these arguments, adapting the theoretical reflection to these instances and shaping new, non-traditional and more nuanced approaches (for example Shmuel Eisenstadt and Casanova).

However, at least two objections concerning particular instances were raised over time. In the first on it is asked what about societies in which the social role of religion remains stable? In the second: what about societies, in which the resurgence of religion occurs? The examples of these two cases might be found in countries like the United States, India, South Korea, Georgia, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Brazil, but also in Europe – Hungary and Poland¹⁰ (some of the examples will be discussed in the next point). The cases of stability of religion in particular societies were and are usually explained either by the slow modernization of some societies (for example countries with a low Human Development Index), by general rejection of the modernization adopted by some societies (Old Order Amish) or by some additional – social or national – role the religion continuous to play in particular societies – in this case the link between modernization and secularization might not temporarily exist.¹¹ Such

10 Jörg Stolz and David Voas, “Explaining Religious Revival in the Context of Long-Term Secularization”, *Religions* 14(6): 723, 1-2; Jörg Stolz, Alexi Gugushvili, Francesco Molteni, Jean-Philippe Antonietti, “A Counterexample to Secularization Theory? Assessing the Georgian Religious Revival”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 74(4), 581-597; Ksenia Northmore-Ball and Geoffrey Evans, “Secularization versus religious revival in Eastern Europe: Church Institutional Resilience, State Repression and Divergent Paths”, *Social Science Research*, 57 (2016), 31-48.

11 Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, “Secularization: The Orthodox Model”, in Steve Bruce (ed.), *The Sociology of Religion* (Aldershot: Elgar), 693–715; J. Stolz and D. Voas “Explaining Religious Revival...”, 1-16; William M. Kephart and William W. Zellner. “The Old Order Amish” in Richard T. Schaefer and William

explanations, therefore, acknowledged the existence of hardly modernized societies with little or no secularization but at the same time these example of religious stability or resurgence were not treated as undermining the (traditional or newer) secularization theory. That is because the process of modernization – and therefore secularization – did not seem to be working in these societies.¹² However, what remains interesting and not fully answered are the cases of societies or countries undergoing modernization, but not secularization.

Jörg Stolz and David Voas, mentioning research of Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, proposed to explain this “additional” – social or national – role of religion that prevents secularization; according to them it comes in two forms: “cultural defense” and “cultural transition”. In the former case, religion serves as an identity resource to unite a group against an outside threat. In the latter case, religion is used by immigrants to bond and find strength in a host country. According to the authors, these mechanisms are compatible with ongoing modernization and are transitional since religiosity drops once the outside threat subsides or the immigrants have been assimilated.¹³

It seems to be explaining some cases of continuity of strong role of religion in some societies. However, what about the cases with no obvious outside threat to a society, in which resurgence of religion can be observed? Could these instance be a potential objection to the secularization theory?

Resurgence of religion (or religious resurgence) could be defined as an increase of the significance of religion in life of individuals as well as on the societal level of a society, or a region. Another term for it could be “religious revival”.¹⁴

Although it is worthy and needed in further research, I will not get deeper here into factors or circumstances making it adequate to name the particular events or process the religious resurgence as this is not the main aim of the paper. Let it be sufficient to use Casanova’s three inverted aspects of secularization. Therefore a religious resurgence occurs when any of the following can be noticed: social institutions would embrace more religious norms, increase of

W. Zellner (eds), *Extraordinary Groups. An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 5–51.

12 J. Stolz and D. Voas, “Explaining Religious Revival...”, 1.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 2.

religious beliefs and practices, religion would become more present in the public sphere, and/or less of the private case.¹⁵

Let us briefly examine first the examples of religious resurgence of Georgia, Poland, Hungary. Research conducted by Stolz, Alexi Gugushvili, Francesco Molteni and Jean-Philippe Antonietti revealed that in Georgia between 1985 and 2014 it could be observed large increase in number of churches in operation, in church attendance, in declared religions affiliation and in perceived importance of religion (the church remains unrivaled number one institution in terms of being trusted there). The authors of the research also presented the mechanisms which lead or could lead to religious revival and applied them to the case. In particular, they indicated social, economical and political reasons of the Georgian religious resurgence – most of all very deep social and economic crisis of the 1980s caused by the Perestroika-related reforms and the fall of the Soviet Union, and also strong leadership of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which took over some functions of the depressed state. The religious resurgence in Georgia could be to some extent a reaction to too rapid modernization of the country in 1980s and 1990s, and conditions for the religious revival were made possible by the state regulations which institutionalized religious freedoms. Finally, however, they authors proved that the Georgian religious resurgence not only does not contradict secularization theory, but also that it should be accounted within a secularization framework as the revival was caused by particular temporal reasons and has been itself a temporarily phenomena.¹⁶

It is probably possible to apply similar logic be analyze to religious resurgence in Hungary in Poland in the second and the third decade of the XXI century. In the timeline, resurgence in both countries was seen not in increased church attendance, but rather in seeing more religion in the public sphere and in some political and social institutions embracing more religious norms. Hungary adopted the new Constitution (2011) in which it was declared that the Catholic Church's role has been to preserve the nationhood based on the millennial tradition of the Crown of Saint Stephan and in public sphere there has been many declaration – by top politicians – about the Christian identity of the nation.¹⁷ Moreover, Hungary enlarged the state's engagement in financing the main

15 Such usage of Casanova's concept is what did Karpov for the purpose of clarification of the concept of desecularization – it will be presented and discussed afterwards (V. Karpov, "Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework", 239-240).

16 J. Stolz, A. Gugushvili, F. Molteni, J.P. Antonietti, "A Counterexample to Secularization Theory?", 581-597.

17 Joanna Kulka, "The Sacralization of Politics? A Case Study of Hungary and Poland", *Religions* 14(4): 525, 10.

churches and the synagogue (in 2021 the state co-financed the renovation of 1800 churches and considerable sums on religious schools) and LGTB education and broadcasts were banned (2021). In Poland also the funds for church renovation and some religious education projects were increased – although not that much as in Hungary – but the most interesting display of possible “counter-secularization” there has been the ruling of the Constitutional Tribunal (2020) followed by the outlawing the abortion connected with the eugenics reasons – and therefore marching opposite direction compared to secularization trends in this aspect in the rest of Europe.¹⁸

Now, could these examples of religious resurgence be reconciled with secularization theory? Joanna Kulska, analyzing these two, pointed out that these political steps and enactments were and are accompanied by the ongoing secularization of personal religiosity. Moreover, she presented arguments showing that such “sacralization of politics” or “sacred legitimization” has been in fact a political agenda of party leaders in Hungary in Poland, aimed at securing parliamentary and presidential elections – in other words the religion has been “politically used” for the purpose of political strategy, and in fact it accelerated secularization of societies.¹⁹ If it is so, that seems facilely to conclude that this religious revival in the political realm cannot be long-lasting, and that it has some particular reasons that will prove temporary. Therefore, it could be recapitulated, it does not undermine the ongoing process of secularization in the long-term.

I have presented some of the common objections against secularization theory and the refutations made by scholars defending the validity of secularization process. Now, it is time for less common and perhaps more challenging objections that try to verify some core principles of the secularization theory or rather its paradigm.

The first question to consider is about the scope of data used in and presented by research on secularization. It is understandable that empirical social research started to be relatively widely used in the XX century, and therefore it has been able to deliver solid data regarding such time framework. Making use of these data concerning Europe does almost always lead to supporting the thesis that over several recent decades this region has been undergoing secularization process. Components of this process such as decline

18 It should be added that this enactment has had some social support – although it decreased the number of voters for the conservative party, still the party had the highest result in parliamentary elections of 2023.

19 J. Kulska, “The Sacralization of Politics?”, 13 and generally 1-17.

in popular religiosity and declining presence of religion in public life are clearly presented. In other cases, if a wider historical scope is to be used and little or none empirical surveys is available, historical data are usually used. However, both kinds of research usually limit themselves to decades, or at most to two and half centuries – therefore to the time-line when it is not difficult to point to historical, social and political events or processes causing or advancing secularization. However, the question to ask is what about previous centuries, when the role of religion had been increasing? These decades or two-and-half centuries perspectives perhaps inevitably lead to formulation of some kind of paradigm of linearity – that secularization is ongoing process towards one already predicted and verified direction – towards diminishing the role of religion.²⁰ Even if later secularization theory critiques resulted in softening this claim by limiting it to the West,²¹ by acknowledging temporal events or processes going into the opposite direction, by presenting more nuanced approach to its linearity, some sort of linear paradigm still seems to be prevailing in most analysis concerning secularization theory. Certainly a more comprehensive approach treating linearity one of the options and acknowledging also cyclical, dialectical or paradoxical models of secularization – such as the one presented by Goldstein²² - can also be found. However, it remains within the secularization theory framework which tends to explain religious resurgence from the perspective of secularization – that is the declining direction of religion.

Perhaps a source of setting up the linear paradigm and of popularization of the perspective of secularization might be found in some influence to development of sociology that concepts of Auguste Comte and Karl Marx have had.²³ Their models of social development were decisively evolutionary and proposed certain stages of development of societies, in which declining of religion was to testify the advanced stage of such development. Although it would not be accurate to say that today sociology of religion always insists on outlining particular stages of development of societies, it seems justified to say that the idea of progress has become an important part of reflection or research

20 Cf. V. Karpov, “Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework”, 262-263; Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2011.

21 Steve Bruce, “What the Secularization Paradigm really says”, in: Manuel Franzmann, Christel Gärtner, Nicole Köck (eds.), *Religiosität in der säkularisierten Welt* (Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag, 2006), 39–48.

22 Warren Goldstein, “Secularization Patterns in the Old Paradigm”, *Sociology of Religion* 70:2 (2009), 157-178.

23 See: Ankie M.M. Hoogvelt, “Theories of Social Evolution and Development: The Marxist Tradition”, in: Ankie M.M. Hoogvelt, *The Third World in Global Development. The Sociology of Developing Societies* (Palgrave, London, 1982), 149-170.

about societies, when concerning sociological approach.²⁴ It is then possible that to some extent the idea of progress had already been established in sociological approach before the theory of secularization appeared and before it started to be discussed and amended. If that is so, than it could be stated that sociology of religion was perhaps not able to think of or produce any different approach to secularization issue than progressive – linear, even if later verification proved the progressive line may not be straight and may include temporal setbacks and be cyclical. Cycles can also be used in long-term perspective of progress.

Another factor that might have lead to establishing progressive (linear or cyclical) approach to studies on secularization could also be of “general ideas” kind. Michael Burawoy unambiguously stated that since 1960s “sociology has moved left” and he gave examples of progressive (meaning: moving ideologically left) deepening this tendency in USA and within American Sociological Association.²⁵ While for Burawoy it seemed to be a natural and desirable direction, others, becoming equally aware of general assumptions embedded in sociology, proposed a departure from these traditional tendencies. Stark called to go beyond the ideas of early sociology – including especially sociology of religion - of Max Weber, Emil Durkheim or Karl Marx,²⁶ while Philip Rieff bluntly stated “sociology as we know it began as a deathwork against European Catholic social order. The deathwork is enacted everyday in the halls of our institutions of higher illiteracy.”²⁷ Indicating instances of such ideologically entangled sociology of religion, Vyacheslav Karpov drew conclusions that without a new approach or paradigm “sociology will become increasingly irrelevant to understanding and predicting the ongoing changes in religions’ societal roles”.²⁸

Could there be found, then, any other approach or paradigm that would go beyond the “traditional” sociological paradigm preoccupied with constant progress and ongoing diminution of the social role of religion? Apparently, a concept of desecularization might help here.

24 See the manifesto of Burawoy: “The dialectic of progress governs our individual careers as well as our collective discipline. The original passion for social justice, economic equality, human rights, sustainable environment, political freedom or simply a better world, that drew so many of us to sociology [...] Michael Burawoy, “For Public Sociology”, *American Sociological Review*, 70 (2005), 5.

25 *Ibid.*, 6.

26 Rodney Stark, “SSSR Presidential Address, 2004: Putting an End to Ancestor Worship”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43:4 (2004), 465–475.

27 Philip Rieff, *My Life among the Deathworks: Illustrations of the Aesthetics of Authority* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 16.

28 V. Karpov, “Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework”, 234.

III. TOWARDS THE CONCEPT OF DESECULARIZATION

Concluding reflections from the first part of the paper, it could be stated that theory of secularization emerged in the specific cultural context within sociology with some ideas embedded in it. These ideas became uncovered and started to be verified and that resulted in acknowledging a diversity of modernities and of secularization processes. The modified secularization theory defended herself against many objections, including particular cases of religious resurgence in particular countries. In spite of this modification, however, core ideas of the theory remained vulnerable to a particular kind of general questions connected with the paradigms and aims of sociology of religion. To overcome this kind of objections perhaps it might be possible to represent or adopt the theory again and remain in the secularization framework – that means for example limiting or broadening the scope of the theory.²⁹ The other option, which seems more challenging but perhaps also comprehensive, is to propose an alternative approach, somehow in relation with the secularization theory, but at the same having its own paradigms.

Such an approach was probably first outlined by Peter Berger in the paper *The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview*. His point of departure – like most secularization theory critiques – was that “the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false.”³⁰ Berger inverted the traditional secularization perspective: instead of taking Europe as the reference point for the process of secularization and the rest of the world as an exemption (or different, softened version of secularization), he proposed to look at Western Europe as an exemption, and at the rest of the world – with growing numbers and importance of Evangelicalism, Islam or Hinduism - as the norm of reference which shows stable or increasing importance of religion in social life.³¹ Berger called his concept “Desecularization Thesis”. It seems his work finished with this overturn of the perspective – he did not develop nor conceptualize it.

Karpov justly stated that “there has been remarkably little effort to conceptualize desecularization and heuristically apply this theoretical notion to comparative studies of religions’ resurgence around the world.”³² It is worth noting he himself made a crucial contribution to the development of the term.

29 This is what did Goldstein, “Secularization Patterns in the Old Paradigm”, 157-178.

30 Peter Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview”, in: Peter Berger (ed.), *The desecularization of the world: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington: Grand Rapids, 1999), 2.

31 Ibid., 9.

32 V. Karpov, “Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework”, 233.

Most of all, he managed to conceptualize desecularization. Generally, Karpov presented desecularization as counter-secularization. Particularly, he used and inverted Casanova's three aspects of secularization, and then added another two to make it more comprehensive. The three aspects of desecularization – that might be not integrated with each other - were then the following:

(a) a rapprochement between formerly secularized institutions and religious norms;

(b) a resurgence of religious beliefs and practices

(c) a return of religion to the public sphere.³³

Then to this, he added the cultural component – the presence of religious content in philosophy, arts, literature and even science – and the materialistic component – birth rates, religious organizations' possessions and territories, production of religion-related goods.³⁴

The result of conceptualizing the desecularization thesis seem to be an adequate answer to a number of problems and challenges that emerged in relation to secularization theory. Particularly, Karpov proposed “a mega-level” time-frame to apply to research on secularization and desecularization. The mega-level would mean research scope of several centuries on particular societies, cultures or civilizations, including research on their rise and fall. Within such a perspective it is possible to observe more trajectories of secularization and desecularization that with the scope of the last two-and-half centuries. Moreover, that makes it possible to depart from the progressive linear or cyclical paradigm (or at least verify them in the long-term) and observe more cyclical changes without the paradigm of progress. Here, probably, secularization and desecularization might appear as consecutive (or sometimes non-consecutive) cycles in the long-term history. That certainly relativizes the paradigm of linearity, of diminishing of religion, and of unidirectionality.³⁵

However, Karpov's concept might have at least one important problematic point that should be discussed.

It is worth noting that prior to using Casanova's definition, Karpov claimed to have built his concept on Berger's notion of desecularization as a counter-secularization phenomena and defined it accordingly as something happening

33 Ibid., 239-240.

34 Ibid., 250.

35 Ibid., 262-256. Note that broad secularization thesis, opened to cycles of changes dynamics, was suggested within the secularization theory framework might also possible, as suggested before.

only in reaction to secularization.³⁶ We could see such a counter-element in his definition adapting Casanova's concept. All other phenomena of increased religiosity that is not preceded by secularization is treated by Karpov "a religion's growth". However, the distinction for "religion's growth" and "deseccularization" seems problematic for four reasons.

Firstly, Berger did not make any such unequivocal statement – he was concerned rather with religious resurgence itself than with clarified designation of deseccularization or its conditions. Karpov might be credited for advancing the concept, but this aspect is at most his own development of Berger's general notion of deseccularization. However, in my opinion, the example given by Karpov to illustrate "religion's growth" – growing religious adherence in the United States 1776-2000 – was something Berger would treat precisely as the illustration of deseccularization. This is clear Berger began his essay with the example of growing Evangelicalism adherence in the United States and pointed that this instance lead him to initiate the work on deseccularization concept.³⁷

Secondly, Karpov's distinction seems problematic to apply and if willing to do so, it would require a great deal of detailed research. For how can we know that particular religious resurgence was a reaction to secularization trends, and was not primarily caused by other factors? Comprehensive secularization, as well as deseccularization studies, will usually display a range of reasons or factors enhancing one or the other. Certainly, religion's growth might be caused by inner factors – like particular religion's obligations to spread its faith – but are not such obligations connected with reacting to secularization trends? And more generally – does not any religion's growth contains at least an element of reaction to secularization?³⁸

Thirdly, if the distinction is applied, deseccularization researched would be conditioned by the category of reason (cause) of the phenomena, while the result of the process might appear of less importance.

36 Ibid., 236.

37 See P. Berger, "The Deseccularization of the World", 1-2; V. Karpov, "Deseccularization: A Conceptual Framework", 236. Karpov recalled the studies of Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

38 See for example Catholic Church's calls for the New Evangelization. Only in some of these cases they are presented as a reaction to some sort of secularization, while most of them are expressed without direct regard to the process, but with regard to tasks found in the Bible, including Jesus of Nazareth: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28,19) – (Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 49; Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 19).

Fourthly, Casanova himself considered decline of religious beliefs and adherence an aspect of secularization, which may appear without any other aspects of it, and the phenomena is still counted secularization. He did not seem to inquire whether it was an immediate reaction to strong presence of religion in society. Should not desecularization's aspects be treated the same way, when using Casanova's inverted concept to define desecularization?

On the other hand, I am aware that consistent using the above objections would likely lead to claim to rename at least the term desecularization itself, as the term, containing the prefix 'de' literally seems to be denoting opposite direction than 'secularization' and being not the primary phenomena, but rather a reaction to the primary (secularization) phenomena. It seems the concept of desecularization in this aspect may be still vulnerable to criticism from the position of opponents of secularization theory that look for the concept that would describe resurgence or growth of religion as a natural and primary phenomena.³⁹ Until (if) such concept is found and discussed it seems – for the sake of adequate research – to accept the existence of both processes (secularization and desecularization) and to acknowledge that a broader picture of the role of religion in particular society can be found when only if both are examined.

IV. DESECULARIZATION PARADIGM AND CASE STUDY

Now, let us attempt to apply the perspective of desecularization to particular cases, which were previously explained within the secularization paradigm. This is not an attempt to any comprehensive assessment of the role of religion in particular societies, but rather an example of how could particular cases look like when going beyond the traditional secularization paradigm. Certainly, further studies noticing both perspectives in societies and outlining broader picture are much needed,⁴⁰ but these are beyond this paper.

Increased number of church attendance in Georgia in 1985-2014, of churches in operation and of perceived importance of religion had been explained by being caused by deep economic and social crisis, which in the long-term proved to be a temporal period in the general process of secularization. With desecularization perspective two other explanations might be possible.

39 Probably Berger was heading into this direction, when presenting his insights in *Desecularization of the world*, but, as it was said, he did not manage to develop nor conceptualize it.

40 V. Karpov, "Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework", 270.

First one – acknowledging the link between secularization and desecularization – would indicate that this resurgence of religion was a reaction to secularization process performed by communist rules.⁴¹ The second – using desecularization as a more separate perspective – would state that growth of religion after 1985 was a natural phenomena, while the previous period made unnatural restraints to it. The decline of Georgian religiosity after 2014 might be explained as a secularizing period, having some particular reasons, but also having an end at some moment in the future, when more religiosity or other factors of presence of religion in society would increase.

Financial support for churches in Hungary, and stronger presence of religious values in public space, including Constitution, together with Poland's political enactments concerning restriction on abortion, were explained to be accompanied by the ongoing secularization of religiosity in both countries and serving political agenda of party leaders. Therefore such sacralization was to be serving political aims. In one version of desecularization perspective, if the claim about sacralization is true, these reforms could probably not be called desecularization because they were not a reaction to secularization, but had other (political) reason, and at the same other aspects of secularization were advancing (at least Karpov's distinction of desecularization and religion's growth would not allow to term it desecularization). In the second version, however, increased importance of religion in social and political life, regardless of the reason, is precisely desecularization, even if other processes in these countries would count for secularization. Perhaps these would be the case of 'well organized and resourceful elites' which desecularized some public institutions 'even in the absence of a noticeable religious revival from below'.⁴²

One more case could that concerned Berger much may be added here. Engagement of American Evangelicals in politics in order to revert some secular policies, together with their victory in overturning *Roe vs Wade* by the US Supreme Court (2022), can be seen a temporal resurgence of religion in long-term process of secularization, but can easily be regarded as well as a reaction to separationist framework, even without applying desecularization term.⁴³ The second version of desecularization, however, would regard this engagement and overturning a constant Evangelical pursue, which was perhaps less intensive in

41 However, authors of the research on Georgia discussed this issue, and according to them, the reaction to secularization was certainly not the first reason of religious resurgence (J. Stolz, A. Gugushvili, F. Molteni, J.P. Antonietti, "A Counterexample to Secularization Theory?", 581-597.

42 V. Karpov, "Desecularization: A Conceptual Framework", 254.

43 This is what Berlinerblau did – see Jacques Berlinerblau, *Secularism: The basics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 131.

the past because the American political norms were more in accordance with Evangelicals' main ideas. In this perspective secularization of the political sphere might be only a temporal drawback in a 'christianization' process as desecularization might use the inverted secularization paradigm.

V. CONCLUSION

I have tried to present some objections against secularization theory, as well as their refutations. However, as some objections touch upon the very basic ideas of secularization, it becomes increasingly hard to refute them staying within the secularization paradigm. Therefore, it is advisable to broaden (some sociology of religion scholars call for it or do it) or produce a new perspective that would advance studies on the role of religion in societies. While some scholars attempt the first direction, this paper reflected mainly on the second. Grasping such a perspective would particularly allow us to advance research on resurgence of religion, without traditional sociological assumptions about the future of religion.

The discussions and objections against secularization theory, together with proposals of desecularization paradigm are not aimed at replacing the secularization paradigm – consisting the idea of progress, diminution of religion in linear or cyclical way – with the paradigm of desecularization – opened to notice resurgence of religion or even inverted idea of religions' decline. These two paradigms might be used in complementary way. At the same time it might be interesting to present different explanations to particular cases of religion's resurgence – one from the secularization perspective, and the other from the perspective of desecularization (examples of these were presented). Such presentations might eventually lead, as well, to grasping broader perspective on studying the role of religion in societies.

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