

Plenary Session: Making Sense of Intercultural Dialogue in our Age

Panelists:

Tu Weiming, Professor of philosophy and founding dean at Beijing University

Vitaly Naumkin, President of the International Center for Strategic and Political Studies and Chair of Faculty of World Politics at Moscow State University

Candido Mendes, Author

Moderator:

Ghida Fakhry Khane, News and Programmes Presenter Aljazeera English

Session Summary

AOC in its principle is a way to promote mutual understanding between the predominantly Christian west and the Muslim world. However, AOC cannot be reduced to be a mere dichotomy of views on the world.

Tu Weiming explains that our modern world is founded upon 18th century's enlightenment, an intellectual current of western European shape and reasoning. What was called westernization and modernization became globalization in our times. The basis of our anthropocentric weltanschauung lies in rationalism and the belief, that mankind holds its faith in its own hands. But how can the global society enrich this perspective with a modern understanding, how can it be made fit for the exigencies of the 21st century? Tu Weiming takes the example of China to illustrate how a society of our times can embark upon a road of renewal and regional identity at the same time. In accepting its new role as regional and global player, China will have to overcome nationalistic sentiments and adopt the western notion of the rule of law- in contrast to rule by law. Although China is undergoing a huge transformational process and is in search of a new identity in the international context, the world may learn from this country that always strived for internal and external harmony. Candido Mendes then raised the question, if the post-modern societies were strong enough to bear globalization and if they were prepared to lose regional identities. Tu Weiming countered with the example of Japan, a country that for the last 20 years has evidenced hardly any economic progress. In his words, the country is nevertheless "happy" and the society almost free of poverty. To see the big picture modern social science needs to drop GDP growth as its only core indicator for progress and move towards a more inclusive view of modern, diverse societies.

Quotations

Tu Weiming:

“We all are part of the global village – but not all of us travel on the upper deck.”