

Florian Höhne | Torsten Meireis [eds.]

Religion and Neo-Nationalism in Europe



Nomos

ethikundgesellschaft

edited by

Professor Dr. Michelle Becka,
Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

Professor Dr. Bernhard Emunds,
Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen
Frankfurt

Professor Dr. Johannes Eurich,
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Professor Dr. Gisela Kubon-Gilke,
Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt

Professor Dr. Torsten Meireis,
Humboldt-Universität Berlin

Professor Dr. Matthias Möhring-Hesse,
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Volume 7

Florian Höhne | Torsten Meireis [eds.]

Religion and Neo-Nationalism in Europe



Nomos

Supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation
(Fritz Thyssen Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung).



The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-8487-6414-3 (Print)
978-3-7489-0505-9 (ePDF)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-8487-6414-3 (Print)
978-3-7489-0505-9 (ePDF)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Höhne, Florian / Meireis, Torsten
Religion and Neo-Nationalism in Europe
Florian Höhne / Dr. Torsten Meireis (eds.)
419 pp.

Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN 978-3-8487-6414-3 (Print)
978-3-7489-0505-9 (ePDF)



Onlineversion
Nomos eLibrary

1st Edition 2020

© Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, Germany 2020. Overall responsibility for Manufacturing (printing and production) lies with Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG.

This work is subject to copyright. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers. Under § 54 of the German Copyright Law where copies are made for other than private use a fee is payable to "Verwertungsgesellschaft Wort", Munich.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Nomos or the editors.

Inhalt

Introduction. Religion, Populism, Neo-Nationalism	9
<i>Florian Höhne, Torsten Meireis</i>	

Part I: Religion and Nation in a Globalized World

Transnationalism and Religion: The European Union, from Christian-Democratic Project, to Secular Cosmopolitanism, to Populist 'Christian' Neo-Nationalisms	29
<i>José Casanova</i>	
The Global Context of European Religious Neo-Nationalism	49
<i>Mark Juergensmeyer</i>	

Part II: Neo-Nationalism, Populism, Religion – Concepts in Context

Neo-Nationalism and its Relationship to Globalization: A Test of the Backlash Hypothesis	63
<i>Maureen A. Eger</i>	
Grounded Nationalism and Cultural Diversity	85
<i>Siniša Malešević</i>	
Nationalism and the Political Theology of Populism: Affect and Rationality in Contemporary Identity Politics	99
<i>Ulf Hedetoft</i>	
Nation and Religion in the Thought of the German New Right	115
<i>Hans-Richard Reuter</i>	

Inhalt

“Right-Wing Catholicism”? Activities and Motives of New Right Catholics in German-Speaking Countries	131
<i>Sonja Angelika Strube</i>	

Part III: Case Studies

Neo-Nationalism, Religion and the Politics of the Right in Belgium	151
<i>Rik Pinxten</i>	
The Religious Legacy: Dutch Nationalism Redefined	163
<i>Thijl Sunier</i>	
Finland: From Demotic Populism to Neo-Nationalism	177
<i>Teija Tiilikainen</i>	
“Love your Folk”: The Role of ‘Conspiracy Talk’ in Communicating Nationalism	189
<i>Cora Alexa Døving</i>	
In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Religion and the Neo-nationalist Resurgence in Brexit Britain	203
<i>Adrian Pabst</i>	
The Political Theology of the New Right in Germany	217
<i>Rolf Schieder</i>	
“Heart of Darkness” or Special Case (“Sonderfall”)? Religion and (Neo-)Nationalism in Switzerland	233
<i>Frank Mathwig</i>	
Neo-Nationalism and Religion in France	255
<i>Philippe Portier</i>	
The Response of the Catholic Church to Neo-Nationalism in Italy	273
<i>Raffaella Perin</i>	

Religious Neo-Nationalism in Hungary <i>István Povedák</i>	291
The Russian Orthodox Church and Neo-Nationalism <i>Kristina Stoeckl</i>	311
Religious Nationalism in the Western Balkans <i>Dino Abazović</i>	321
Right-Wing Populism and Religious Conservatism: What's the Connection? <i>Philip S. Gorski</i>	333
Afrikaner Nationalism, Religion and the Sacralization of the Past: Revisiting some Discourses on Nationalism and its Discontents in South Africa in a Changing Political Landscape <i>Robert Vosloo</i>	347
 <i>Part IV: Ethical and Political Perspectives</i>	
Why Vote Against Best Interests or Why is Populism Persuasive? <i>Marcia Pally</i>	361
Religious Political Education and Neo-Nationalism: Some Preliminary Considerations <i>Christian Polke</i>	377
Religious Internationalism? German Protestantism, Neo-Nationalism and Populism <i>Torsten Meireis</i>	391
Religion and Neo-Nationalism: A Commentary <i>Hans Joas</i>	407
Contributors	417

Introduction. Religion, Populism, Neo-Nationalism

Florian Höhne, Torsten Meireis

“Coronavirus crisis pushes Europe into nationalist economic turn” (Financial Times 2020). “Nationalism rears its head as Europe battles coronavirus with border controls” (LA Times 2020). “The Coronavirus is killing globalization as we know it” (Foreign Policy 2020). As this introduction is being written, the Corona-crisis seems to have intensified the question of a new nationalism. And while some argue “The Case for Corona Nationalism” (Modern Diplomacy 2020) others fiercely turn “Against the New Nationalism” (Reason.com 2020).

Currently, the future of the type of internationalism – political, economical, cultural – the world has become accustomed to in the last decades is at stake. Especially in Europe, where the European Union exemplified a new type of international political body, that seemed to make national borders more and more permeable and even scarcely noticeable by its populace, borders are back on the agenda. However, the corona crisis has only intensified a development that has been going on for more than a decade. Not only the 2007 financial crisis, a consequence of the US subprime crisis, but also the dire need of refugees fleeing civil war hot-spots and general misery as well as the growing uneasiness of Britons with the EU culminating in 2019’s Brexit have shaken the idea of supranational unity.

After a fairly long time of efforts directed at complementing economical internationalization by a political transnationalization, at least in the global northwest, nationalism seems to be back on the agenda. Not only in the Americas, but in Europe as well an intensive renationalization of policies and politics is visible implying a retraction of democratic mechanisms to govern international relations – paradoxically in the name of democracy. Not only have border controls been reintensified even in traditionally open countries like Sweden or Denmark (AFP 2016) and even more so in freshly democratic countries like Hungary or the Czech Republic in the course of what was named the ‘refugee crisis’ (and the term was not applied to the situation of the refugees from civil strife in Syria or Afghanistan, but to that of the more or less affluent European countries). Anti-European movements became more and more popular, not only in

the UK, where Nigel Farage's United Kingdom Independence Party has successfully led a campaign to vote for a 'Brexit', but also in the Netherlands (Geert Wilders' 'Partij voor de Vrijheid'), in France (FN) or in Germany (AfD). A certain anticlimax is reached in traditionally democratic Switzerland, where the most popular and successful party, the SVP, has announced to bring in an 'initiative for self-governance' that ultimately aims at renouncing the European Convention on Human Rights to unfetter majority rule in Switzerland (Brotschi 2016).

That phenomenon has been labeled 'neo-nationalism' (Gingrich/Banks 2006) and differs considerably from a 19th and 20th-century paleo-nationalism aggressively aimed at nation-building: rather, it appears as a defensive retraction into the seemingly secure borders of the nation-state (Eger/Valdez 2015). And even though respective leaders don't seem overly religious, religion seems to be involved in such issues, as a few glimpses into current political debate show: Le Pen attacked her rival to the presidency, Francois Fillon, on accounts of his profession to the Christian faith in matters of social security. She claimed that Fillon had opportunistically violated the French concept of *laïcité*, the strict separation of faith and state (Valeurs 2017). Le Pen, on the other hand, had no qualms about assuring Lebanon's Maronite Christian leader Roger Eddé that she would defend eastern Christians, "since blood ties were the closest of all." (Haddad 2017) Donald Trump, even though apparently no church member anymore (Prömpers 2017, Burke 2016), drew voters especially from the white, evangelical born-again Christians across denominations (81 %), the Protestants (58 %) and the white Catholic side (60 %) (Smith/Martinez 2016). The Protestant church in Saxony, Germany, is openly divided on the question of a ministry of AfD and Pegida-followers (Hähnig 2016, Reinhard 2016, Richter 2017), who nevertheless claim to be the defenders of a German 'Leitkultur' involving first and foremost the 'religious tradition of Christendom' (AfD 2016). As religion and nationalism have been closely intertwined from the emergence of the modern nation state in the 19th century on – even though the precise nature of the relationship is disputed –, a close scrutiny of the relation between neo-nationalism and religion seems necessary. A volume tackling the involvement of religion and neo-nationalism in Europe needs to look into historical, sociological and ethical questions, into the role particular religious ideas have played in the development of nationalism, into the way nationalisms have changed religious practices and the current relation of nationalism and religion as well as the role religion should play faced with nationalism.

To do so, the volume will tap into three current discourses, each of which focuses a different angle of the topic: the debate on neo-national-

ism, the discussion on populism and the discourse on public theology. Firstly, the volume will contribute a deepened understanding of the relation of neo-nationalism and religion to the debate on ‘neo-nationalism’ initiated by being labeled as such by Gingrich/Banks (2006). The theoretical description of this relation is controversially discussed: While the description of the role of religion in the formation of nation-states is a classical topic (f.e. Smith 2009), the question has been raised in how far (neo-) nationalism can be seen as a religion itself. While Spickard (2007) has found structural analogies between religion and nationalisms, Marvin and Ingle (1996) have even identified nationalism as a ‘powerful religion’, based on a theory of sacrifice, and Hedetoft (2009) has argued that nationalism would have replaced religion, which raises the question for the role of religion newly in times of neo-nationalism. On this background, the contributions to this volume seek to describe the relation of religion and nationalism sociologically and theologically – and of course self-critically – ask for the role of Christianity in the rise of neo-nationalism. Secondly, the book shall participate in the academic debate on populism: Populism, usually understood as a term denoting movements, political strategies and ‘thin ideologies’ (Freeden 1998) that presume the moral distinction of a ‘pure people’ from a ‘corrupt elite’ (Mudde 2004), claiming common sense, anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism and professing an anti-institutionalist and anti-political stance in favor of moralism (Priester 2012), has been on the rise not only in the US or Eastern Europe, but also in Western Europe (Decker/Henningsen/Jacobsen 2015). Of course, this topic is deeply connected to the topic of neo-nationalism: Populist movements in Europe more often than not take a neo-nationalist stance, regardless of their ideological tenets. Especially in the German-speaking world, neo-nationalist populism often refers back to romantic and essentialist notions of ‘people’ and ‘nation’ (rather than on democratic individualism). Religion then plays the part of a signature of difference distinguishing the supposedly innate cultural heritage of a people conceived of in essentialist terms from ‘alien influence’. Thirdly, the label ‘public theology’ denotes a vibrant theological debate on the public role and responsibility of theology, of religious communities and organizations and the public relevance of religious traditions. Public theology – understood as “theologically informed public discourse” (Breitenberg 2003, 66) and “reflection of issues of public relevance” (Bedford-Strohm 2015, 215) – needs to deal with neo-nationalism and populism at least on three levels: The rise of neo-nationalism has brought questions of applied ethics on the agenda that shall be addressed also in theological perspective. Since it is a common feature of public theologies to reflect on notions of the ‘public’ (Day/Kim 2017, 11f.), it needs

to reflect how populism affects the public sphere in which public theology itself is a part of and wants to participate in. And public theology asks self-critically for the role religious traditions and communities have played and play in the development of nationalism. In doing so, public theology is marked by interdisciplinarity and internationality.

A volume covering a field where concepts and discourses are fluid and situations change daily is bound to be explorative in nature. To map the field, four steps are taken. Firstly, José Casanova and Mark Juergensmeyer take a look at the relationship of nation and religion in a globalized world. In a second part of the book, concepts like neo-nationalism, populism and religious nationalism are discussed and put into context. A third part assembles case studies from different European countries and regions, and, for the sake of comparison, some glimpses from overseas. A fourth chapter then brings together ethical and political perspectives on the phenomenon.

1 Part I: Religion and Nation in a Globalized World

José Casanova focusses on transnationalism, neo-nationalism and religion in Europe and the European Union in a global horizon. He deals with this complex topic in a historical perspective and sheds light on different developments. As the title of the chapter indicates, the story sketch has three parts: “The European Union, from Christian-Democratic Project, to Secular Cosmopolitanism, to Populist ‘Christian’ Neo-Nationalisms”. According to Casanova, the EU started out as a “Christian-Democratic project”, which presupposed the reconciliation of France and Germany as well as of Catholics and Protestants. With the expansion of the EEC “into Protestant Northern Europe”, with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, and with the replacement of Christian Democracy by Social-Democratic parties “as the hegemonic force in many European countries”, Casanova sees “the European spirit” transforming from Christian to “a more technocratic, cosmopolitan and secular spirit”. An important line in all the further developments Casanova describes is the emergence of a “cross-fertilization of discourses [...] between American evangelicals, conservative Catholics and Russian Orthodoxes”. After reflections on Italian populism he concludes by emphasizing that “the Catholic Church is likely to remain the weak link in the unholy alliance of American Evangelicals and the Russian Orthodox Church peddling their ecumenism of hate in Western Europe” and that “[r]eligious ‘faith,’ in the strict sense of the term is also a rather weak component of most populist movements in secular Western Europe.”

Mark Juergensmeyer's essay introduces the rise of religious nationalisms as a global phenomenon and presents the outcome of a comparison of different nationalisms all over the world. While all these movements differ from context to context, Juergensmeyer identifies three similarities: There is always a more or less extreme crisis of authority, a crisis of social identity, and a crisis of security. According to Juergensmeyer, all three of them are related to what he calls "the 'loss of faith' in secular nationalism". All in all, he sees the reason for the global rise of religious nationalism in the social consequences of globalization: "Globalization has undercut the support for the nation-state" and secular nationalism, which made them "vulnerable" to religious nationalisms. Juergensmeyer sees religion also as an "antidote", because traditional religions provide alternative answers to the three aforementioned problems of authority, social identity and security. Juergensmeyer concludes that religion could be "an agent of healing as well as of harm".

2 Part II: Concepts in Context

Maureen Eger's paper provides an exposition of the concept of neo-nationalism describing a new nationalism that primarily comes to the fore in well-established nation-states with fixed borders and tests the "backlash hypothesis" which links the rise of neo-nationalism to an excessive level of globalization. According to this hypothesis, the 'losers of globalization' are mobilized by parties on the radical right. As Eger argues, however, the connection of objective levels of globalization to the rise of neo-nationalist parties remains doubtful. The chapter then offers an empirical test by relating objective levels of globalization in terms of the KOF Globalisation Index to the importance of issues in European national elections between 1970 and 2017 derived from the Manifesto Project Dataset. As the outcome shows a negative relationship of objective levels of globalization with the salience of nationalism in those elections, any simple version of the 'backlash hypothesis' may well be disputed. Indications point to a more intricate relationship in which national and regional reactions towards globalization challenges – especially concerning welfare state arrangements – play a key role.

The chapter of *Siniša Malešević* provides a historical analysis of nationalism and neo-nationalism. Malešević challenges the view that nationalism were a relic from the 19th century and marginal movement against the globalist and cosmopolitan mainstream. He argues that there is neither a sudden rise or return of nationalism nor is it the exception. From a histori-

cal perspective, nationalism is rather the “hegemonic form of political legitimacy and the principal mode of collective subjectivity in the world we have been inhabiting for the past 250 years”. Malešević narrates the story of these 250 years as a story of continuous expansion of nationalism. He argues that the nationalism in the 19th century was predominantly a discourse of the elites and became “a global mode of political legitimacy only in the second half of the 20th century”: It emerged historically, institutionalized and propagated by states which homogenized their populations, grounded in ideologies that made it attractive, and woven into micro-interactional contexts. On the background of this narrative, nationalism appears as “dominant operative ideology”. Hence, the contemporary right-wing-rhetoric is not the exemption but “a radicalised version of the mainstream belief systems”.

Ulf Hedetoft's chapter on “Nationalism and the Political Theology of Populism” shows how closely related nationalism and populism are by defending the thesis that populism is a “hyper-moralistic version of nationalism”. While populism shares many characteristics of nationalism – the central role of “the people”, of national sovereignty, of homogeneity, and the us-them-division –, it is distinct by how it defines the people and excludes “infidels” from this notion. Hedetoft further focusses on the religious dimension of nationalisms: He argues that nationalisms would keep referencing “universes of transcendent belief” in order to make the move from self-interest to sacrifice imaginable. He describes three forms in which this is done: Conservative immersion for which Poland serves as a case study, Christianity, i.e. “secularized Christianity-as-culture” as he finds it in Northern Europe, and a competitive individualistic form for which the U.S. are paradigmatic. Common to all three forms is their deepening “the populist nationalist agenda” by religiously turning the belonging to a nation-state “into a question of believing in belonging”. Hedetoft closes by criticizing essentialist tendencies in the critique of populism which deal with populism as a derivate of religion, nationalism, and democracy and obstruct to see populism “as an issue in its own right”.

Hans-Richard Reuter's contribution focusses the intellectual movement of the New Right in Germany and scrutinizes this movement's understanding of religion, of people, of Christianity, and of their enemy. As examples of this movement, Reuter analyzes the publications of people from the “most active think-tank of the German New Right, that is the private Institut für Staatspolitik (Institute for State Policy – IfS)”, particularly of Karlheinz Weißmann, Götz Kubitschek and Martin Lichtmesz, also a contributor to the Journal “Sezession”. His thorough analysis shows that while an underlying cyclical structuring of time might make prone to pagan reli-

gion, the German intellectual right-wing scene rather “emphasizes the Christian orientation”, working with the “dichotomy of ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’”. Reconstructing the right-wing intellectual’s concept of the people shows how their concepts work less with the reference to race and more with the connection of people and culture, promoting “ethnopluralism”. Looking at the movement’s perceived enemy, Reuter shows that their picture of Islam is more differentiated and that Islam can also be perceived as a model for collective identity in the New Right; the enemy seems to be liberalism. Reuter concludes by showing how the New Right’s instrumentalization of Christianity is “dressed up in the worn out garb of traditional political theology” in Carl Schmitt’s use of the term: Religion is used to legitimize “the supreme value of the national”: While Weißmann does so with reference to the “ethnic traditions of Lutheranism” and its idea of orders of creation, Lichtmesz seeks a Catholic approach with “an apocalyptic interpretation of history”.

Sonja Strube’s article describes the alliances of ultraconservative Christians and the “Intellectual New Right” in times of the internet in Germany. She shows that the “New Right’s interest in Christian values, concepts and topics” can be seen as their strategy to reach out into the mainstream of society and emphasizes that the “majority of German Catholic bishops take a clear stand” against nationalism. On this background, Strube analyzes three different right-wing Catholic websites: the “extremely conservative” *kath.net*, *katholisches.info* where she sees anti-modernist theology and new-right political thinking combined, and the right-wing-extremist page *kreuz.net* which published content punishable by law. Her analysis scrutinizes the theological profile as well as the styles of religious thinking on these webpages. She finds the anti-modernism of the “Pian Era” to be a formative reference point for right-wing Catholicism and detects the features of the “authoritarian personality”, described by Adorno et al. in the attitudes expressed in the styles of the right-wing Catholic websites. She concludes by pointing to the tasks of Christian groups which includes to reflect “the authoritarian structures within the own religious tradition”.

3 Part III: Case Studies

Rik Pinxten’s chapter deals with Belgium as a “‘mixed’ state” and describes the development of the political landscape in Belgium with a particular focus on Flanders and on the right and the extreme right since 9/11. While after 2001 democratic right parties emerged, he presently sees the extreme

right groups that use the means of digital communication developing. Out of the spectrum of religiously inspired neo-nationalist groups he focusses on the Flemish group “Schild en vrienden” and describes their topics, their online-activity, and their ideology. He shows how the proclaimed essentialistic unity of a people, a culture, and a nation is central to this kind of neo-nationalism and how their influence works through digital communication.

Thijl Sunier’s chapter locates current nationalistic rhetorics in the longer history of nation-building in Europe. Focussing on the Netherlands, he starts with a Dutch introductory movie for migrants, which he uses as illustration for the shift to what Tonkes et al. have called “culturalization of citizenship”. This concept names the identification of citizenship with an “embodied set of cultural characteristics”, that are then seen to be the condition for migrants wanting becoming citizens. Sunier states for the Netherlands that culturalization of citizenship is not only a recent restorative phenomenon, but traces its root back to “the early years of post-World War immigration”. Drawing on Foucault’s terminology of governmentality and body politics he describes the older “national domestication of religion” as an aspect of nation-building. Since the arrival of “Muslim migrants” (a category whose emergence in the Netherlands Sunier dates back to the 1980s), this inherent aspect has become “an important devise for the symbolic reproduction of European nation-states”. Hence, the “recent nationalist [...] backlash” has its roots in European nation-building. Sunier then shows how this political domestication of Islam played out in the Netherlands by telling the story of Dutch migration politics since the (late 1970s and) early 1980s. He narrates how the hopes for assimilation in the 1980s turned into “much more coercive” approaches in the 1990s.

The contribution of *Teija Tiilikainen* focusses on Finland and outlines the story of the development, particularly the ideological development of the Finns Party, which had turned from a populist party into neo-nationalist movement “with obvious similarities to other nationalist parties in Europe”. Tiilikainen describes the Finnish context of this development with an emphasis on the “consensus-oriented political culture” in Finland. She traces the origins of the Finns Party back to the “ruins” of the populist Finnish Rural Party in 1995. While the Finns Party started out being populist and anti-elitist, moderately nationalist and focussed on Finland’s EU membership, Tiilikainen shows how the Party’s “connections to right-wing extremist groups” strengthened since 2007, and how the party’s position on immigration radicalized around Jussi Halla-aho. She also describes how the alliances of the Finns Party in the European parliament have

changed in 2019. Taken together, she shows how the Finns Party has developed from a populist party into a neo-nationalist movement.

Focussing on the situation in Norway, *Cora Alexa Døving's* chapter examines particularly “conspiracy talk” in the far right-wing online milieu by analyzing “eleven of openly accessible homepages, news sites and Facebook pages” between September 2016 and April 2017 and from September to November 2018. She quotes population surveys to show that the discourse of the far right online milieu does not represent the general population while it can draw on an “established Islamophobic discourse”. Drawing on existing research into conspiracy theory, she summarizes core features of these theories: they are intensional, monological, dualistic, and apocalyptic. They serve their adherents to explain the world, find “evidence” in everyday life and generate a certain sense of security. Based on that, she finds these features in the analyzed data of conversation as “conspiracy talk”. Such conversations often start with local everyday-life topics such as food or clothing, confirm “feelings of distrust and images of threatening others”, and mix “cozy-talk” with expressions of anger. They confirm observations and create a feeling of community. Døving finds out that while claims to violence “are common, they also end the conversation”. Her paper shows the necessity to look into these online conversations by showing that they popularize and normalize nationalistic and Islamophobic claims by bringing them close to everyday-life.

Adrian Pabst's chapter firstly provides a map of the political geography of Brexit and argues firstly, that the vote to leave the EU leaves both old and new binaries behind. Neither traditional political categories of ‘left’ and ‘right’, nor novel oppositions such as the ‘left behind’ versus the ‘new, networked generation’ serve to account for the movement. Pabst sees deep inequalities of power, wealth and social status at work, which run through local communities and nation at large, which transcend simple polar opposites. In a second section, the author explores what he understands as deep sectarian fault-lines running through the UK. Those are religiously rooted but have taken on secular forms too, and may be linked to political and cultural identities – especially a commitment to a secularized Protestant isolationism. In a final section, Pabst offers reflections on how the supposed threat from Islamization fuels neo-nationalism, arguing that it is especially identity politics and the fear of urban social upheaval that matters.

Rolf Schieder focusses on the “The Political Theology of the New Right in Germany”. He starts by questioning the notion that right-wing parties were only “Christian to the extent that they reject Islam”. Then, he describes the religious and/or political statements of four different people

from the New Right in Germany from four different denominational traditions: the Evangelical Hans Penner, the Lutheran Frauke Petry, the Roman-Catholic Götz Kubitschek (supplemented with reflections on Carl Schmitt's legacy), and the Neo-Pagan Thor von Waldstein. Schieder also describes "three preferred theological and philosophical narratives" in the New Right: apocalypticism, romanticism, and anti-liberalism. The chapter concludes with two theological remarks: Schieder suggests the "concept of eschatology" as a "remedy against apocalypticism" and "the Exodus narrative as an alternative to 'blood and soil' ideologies".

Frank Mathwig's chapter on the "Heart of Darkness" or "special case" asks whether the "category of neo-nationalism" is adequate for the Swiss context and looks at the "religious dimensions of politics". He thoroughly describes the narrative of "Swiss as a nation of will" and as a "special case" in their role for Swiss Self-understanding. The chapter shows how the latter is itself "linked to the topic of (neo-)nationalism", by claiming Swiss uniqueness, even in the discourse about nationalism. With reference to Guggenbühl, he argues that the nation has become "a substitute of religion in a secularized society", and makes explicit how this plays out in "the history and self-image of the SVP". His analysis of the "discussion about the ban on the construction of minarets" shows how "a discourse initially dominated by (self-designated) religious 'experts'" was "occupied by right-wing populists". He concludes by saying that the term "neo-nationalism" can for the Swiss context only refer to something newly paid attention to, not to something new in itself.

In his article, *Philippe Portier* takes a closer look on a volte-face in France from an older nation-building that broke the ties with religion and recent right and far right movements that refer to a Christian framework again. He does so by narrating the development in the relation of nation and religion for the 20th century in two stages. The first stage from 1875 to the 1960s is characterized by an understanding of the nation as legal and political community independent of any religious roots. The active separation of state and religion was coupled with a cultural remembrance of the French Revolution instead of France's presumed Christian roots. After World War II the reference to those presumed Christian roots nearly disappeared, for example due to Pétain's use of this motive. Portier describes the second stage, starting from the 1980s, as being marked by a new understanding of the nation "as part of a social reaction against the impotence of the legal-rational state and against the emergence of Islam". He shows how parts of the far right of the Front National as well as the moderate right, both link the French nation again with Christian roots. According to

Portier, the “idea of the Christian nation” has come back “as the fear of an ‘Islamification’ of society gained credence.”

Raffaella Perin’s chapter explores the historic and present relationship of (neo)-nationalism and religion, particularly the Catholic religion, in Italy. The first part of her article outlines the history of nationalism and the Catholic Church’s changing position on Italian nationalism from the reunification of Italy in 1861 to the present. The second part takes the Lega Nord and its leader Matteo Salvini as exemplifications for the contemporary relationship between neo-nationalism and Catholicism in Italy. Perin shows that Salvini makes use of Christian symbols while being criticized by the high level of the Catholic hierarchy. The position of the clergy is to be investigated. Perin points out that Salvini has not substantially determined what being Italian means except for claiming Catholicism “as a common feature of the Italian identity”. This leads to her concluding thesis, that Italians consenting with Salvini have not “suddenly become nationalist[s]”.

István Povedák’s contribution scrutinizes the connection between religion and (neo)nationalism in Hungary. In doing this, he not only focusses on the institutional level of politics and institutionalized religion, but also uses cultural anthropology to show how (neo)nationalism also began as a “grassroots movement” in Hungary and is a part of “everyday culture”. Having emphasized that the connection between the two has taken various forms in the course of history, he shows that presently “quasi-religious (neo)nationalism does not replace religions but occupies a place beside them.” The alliance of (neo)nationalism with institutionalized religions in Hungary would offer “a basically religious world-view” to everyone, which is mythological and works with “bipolar oppositions”. Historically, he sheds light on the role the “Trianon trauma” plays for the politics and popular culture in Hungary. The major part of Povedák’s article focusses on the neo-nationalist discourse after 2010 and particularly “after the international refugee and migration crisis in 2015”, a discourse that “became the main determining factor of Fidesz”: First, he shows and exemplifies how religious references and religious persons are increasingly used in politics and how “church-related projects” are increasingly supported. Second, he discusses the “nationalism of religions” and describes how the Catholic and the Calvinist Church and later the Pentecostal-charismatic congregations started to turn to Viktor Orbán’s positions from 2010 on. Thirdly, he discovers the neo-nationalism “not only in state rhetoric, but also to at least the same extent in ‘civil’ form”. Particularly, he points to the “personality cult” around Viktor Orbán in popular culture. Thereby he shows that neo-nationalism in Hungary is “rooted more deeply” than only in political

culture, namely in popular culture: the right-wing party had met a demand “from grassroots level”.

Starting with a focus on Russia, the article of *Kristina Stoeckl* shows how (religious) neo-nationalism can be transnational and transdenominational, unifying right-wing parties. While the Orthodox synode of 1872 had denounced “religious nation-building nationalism” as heresy, Stoeckl sees the Russian Orthodox Church’s contemporary opposition to the independence-movement of certain churches as motivated by the idea of a “Russian world”. She defines this concept as an “expression of a political religion built around Orthodoxy, the Russian language, and the imperial legacy of the Russian Empire.” Stoeckl not only shows how the Russian Orthodox Church has linked this concept to its territory and how it succeeds other nationalistic concepts, particularly from the pre-revolutionary and post-soviet period. She also analyzes how the “World Russian People’s Council (VRNS)” promotes this idea. In the battlefields of Ukraine, the promotion of such an imperial political religion shows its effects: Stoeckl points to the “paramilitary implementation of civilizational Orthodox neo-nationalism” here. On this background she traces the role of Konstantin Malofeev for the VRNS as well as for connecting “right-wing populist parties across Europe and conservative Christian groups”.

Dino Abazović’s chapter provides valuable insights into the role of “religious nationalism in the Western Balkans”. He starts with discussing the problematic and historically changing semantics of the term “the Balkans” and then narrates the history of religious pluralism in this region, tracing it back to the Millet system of the Ottoman’s Empire. The article points to the different roles religion, religious identity und religious communities played in different stages of history – as a source of resistance against socialism and a means of tradition of national cultures for example. The second part of the article describes features of religious nationalism and points to how the “rhetoric of religious nationalists” gained acceptance in the course of globalization. Abazović closes by calling for a “re-institutionalization of public space” and “demystification of ethnic and religious irrationalities” to make multi-religious societies possible.

Philip Gorski’s article focusses on the connection between right-wing populism and religion in the USA. He starts with the observations that the common explanations from Donald Trump’s rise leave out religion and that evangelical support for Trump has not been convincingly clarified by the usual explanation. Gorski’s thesis then is that the “cultural resonance between white Christian nationalism and Trumpism” would provide that explanation, “that white evangelicals support Trump if and insofar as they are white Christian nationalists”. To support this thesis Gorski outlines the

history of “white Christian nationalism” with its mutations and migrations, tracing it back to its early seeds in the New England Puritans’ sense of chosenness. In the course of this, he identifies four elements of white Christian nationalism: blood rhetoric, apocalypticism, victimization and messianic leadership. Based on this definition, he shows how Donald Trump resonates with all four elements and claims that Trumpism were “a secularized version of white Christian nationalism”. Gorski emphasizes that not all white evangelicals are white Christian nationalists, which leads him to conclude that the “future of American democracy” might depend on how white evangelicals answer the question: “Will policy victories on the culture wars front be pursued even at the expense of democratic governance?”

Starting from the more critical attitude towards nationalism that became more prevalent in some church circles in South Africa in the 1970s on, *Robert Vosloo* looks back at the entanglement of Afrikaner nationalism and a sense of sacralized history from the 1930s onwards, with references to the “role of some churches” and theology in this. Based on Benedict Anderson’s understanding of nation as “an imagined community”, Vosloo points to how Afrikaner nationalism was “invented”. He shows how the commemoration of the settlers’ “ox wagon trek of 1938” formed the imagination of the Afrikaner people and was used “to face contemporary challenges within the broader framework of Afrikaner nationalism and unity”. In the development, Vosloo finds what Tzvetan Todorov has described as sacralization of the past. In an exemplary way, Vosloo describes the different roles the religious discourse has played in relation to Afrikaner nationalism. In the last part of his paper, Vosloo turns to the contemporary situation of South Africa where a “loss of trust in political projects associated with ‘the nation’ or ‘democracy’” had created the climate for a new populism of polarities “accompanied by a type of nostalgia”. He concludes by inferring from his argumentation that “South African political discourse cannot be dealt with in an ahistorical way” and that a “historical hermeneutics” were needed to deal responsibly with the past.

4 Part IV: Ethical and Political Perspectives

In her chapter, *Marcia Pally* focusses on the USA as a case study and develops a thesis about the elements that make populism persuasive. Her general starting point is the premise that “a populist vote is not a vote against best interests but rather a vote for what people think best.” According to her definition populism is “a way of presenting solutions to economic and

way-of-life-duress” that works with binary distinction and is understandable to people. This definition allows her to detect right-wing as well as leftist populism and to locate populisms on a scale between strong and weak populism, depending on the “degree of binarity” they use. Pally then describes what causes duress in the United States, namely: un- and under-employment, loss of “economic dignity”, rise in mortality, demographic changes. To this duress, leftist as well as right politicians would offer binary solutions, but both construct the us-them divide differently and make different use of the “historico-cultural materièl”, namely the idea of a liberal covenantal republic. For example, left populism defines the “them” by those “who take an unfair share of societal resources”. The right populism’s binarity is stronger, “where ‘them’ is identified on essentialist criteria such as race or the non-locality of national government.” Hence, Pally shows how both “the left-wing Bernie Sanders and the right-wing Donald Trump fall within rubric parameters for populism”. While Sander’s populism is weaker, Trump’s is stronger binarized.

Christian Polke’s contribution focusses on public education as an institution and as processes in which the neo-nationalism and the relation between religion and national identity can be dealt with. Polke illumines the “indirect influence” religious education has “on political and moral understanding of our present” which he sees more in the cultivation of democratic attitudes. As basis for that he argues for an “understanding of what is meant and what is feared” in neo-nationalism and a more differentiated view on nationalism: Drawing on David Miller, he points to a certain kind of national identity – some “liberal kind of nationality” – that can be compatible with a “universal ethos of ‘weak cosmopolitanism’” and is needed for social solidarity. On this background, the “double task of religious education in the face of neo-nationalism” were to criticize “ideological abuse of religious motifs” and to assess the “challenges which have been treated in these movements”. In addition to that, religious education could help to develop “self-criticism and tolerance as private and public virtues”.

Protestant theologian *Torsten Meireis* scrutinizes Protestant ideas and realities to check whether there are internationalist tendencies in current German Protestantism condoning a universalist human rights stance. For even though Protestant Christian churches in today’s Germany during the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ condoned a ‘culture of welcome’ rather contrary to nationalist platforms, such attitudes are neither undisputed nor self-evident in German Protestantism, or so Meireis claims. The author then points to the first half of the twentieth century, when a majority of Protestant scholars and clerics took an outright chauvinist nationalist stance and gives examples of current Protestant Christians who are not happy with in-

ternationalist tendencies. Arguing that public political or moral positions by religious agents often carry populist overtones, Meireis then goes on to describe doctrinal and institutional challenges as well as opportunities for an internationalist Protestant perspective.

Departing from the statement of a German church leader proclaiming nationalism a sin, sociologist *Hans Joas* questions the moral precedence of any political entity while insisting on a set of universalist values any political body needs to adhere to. On that normative basis, Joas discusses four conceptual problems arising in the field of religion, nationalism and internationalism. He addresses the systematic value of the term ‘neo-nationalism’, questions the relationship of globalization and new nationalism, argues for an experiential rather than doctrinal approach to religion as well as nationalism and issues a self-critical warning addressed at liberals against the ‘othering’ even of those who do ‘othering’ themselves.

Far from achieving a well-rounded picture, the volume tries to explore the new tenets of nation and religion in a re-nationalizing world. And if it does not provide too many answers, it at least tries to raise a good many questions.

The chapters in this volume are revised versions of papers presented at the conference “Neo-Nationalism and Religion in Europe” (September 6–8, 2018) at the Berlin Institute for Public Theology. This conference was organized in cooperation with and funded by the European Academy on Religion and Society (EARS) and the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung. The Fritz Thyssen Stiftung has also generously funded the publication of this volume. We thank EARS as well as the Thyssen foundation for their support. We are also very grateful to all the contributors for their excellent presentations and their excellent work. Neither the conference nor this volume would have been possible without the work of Bettina Schön, M.A. She not only took care of most of the organizational tasks, she also did a lot of proof-reading and revising footnotes. We also thank the Nomos publishing house, particularly Beate Bernstein and Eva Lang, for their work in making this volume possible.

Berlin, April 2020

Florian Höhne

Torsten Meireis

References

- AfD (2016): Programm für Deutschland. Das Grundsatzprogramm der Alternative für Deutschland. Beschlossen auf dem Bundesparteitag in Stuttgart am 30.04./01.05.2016, https://alternatiefuer.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/05/2016-06-27_afd-grundsatzprogramm_web-version.pdf, (accessed Nov. 10th, 2017).
- AFP (2016): One of Europe's most open borders has just been closed, AFP 01/04/2016, <http://www.thejournal.ie/europes-borders-open-sweden-denmark-id-2529560-Jan2016/> (accessed Oct. 18th, 2016).
- Bedford-Strohm, Heinrich (2015): Öffentliche Theologie in der Zivilgesellschaft, in: Höbne, Florian/van Oorschot, Frederike (Eds.): *Grundtexte Öffentliche Theologie*, Leipzig: EVA, 211–226.
- Breitenberg, E. Harold Jr. (2003): To Tell the Truth. Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?, in: *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics (JSCE)* 2, 55–96.
- Brotschi, Markus (2016): SVP-Initiative kann Menschenrechte nicht aushebeln, *Tagesanzeiger* 08/10/2016, <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/svpinitiative-kann-menschenrechte-nicht-aushebeln/story/28468796> (accessed Oct. 18th, 2016).
- Burke, Daniel (2016): The guilt-free gospel of Donald Trump, *CNN.com* 10/24/2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/21/politics/trump-religion-gospel/> (accessed Feb. 3rd, 2017).
- Day, Katie/Kim, Sebastian (2017): Introduction, in: Kim, Sebastian/Day, Katie (Eds.): *A Companion to Public Theology*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1–21.
- Decker, Frank/Henningsen, Bernd/Jacobsen, Kjetil (2015): *Rechtspopulismus und Rechtsextremismus in Europa. Die Herausforderung der Zivilgesellschaft durch alte Ideologien und neue Medien*, Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Eger, Maureen/Valdez, Sarah (2015): Neo-Nationalism in Western Europe, in: *European Sociological Review* 31/1, 115–130.
- Financial Times (2020): Chazan, Guy/Brunsdon, Jim: Coronavirus crisis pushes Europe into nationalist economic turn, *Financial Times*, 03/26/2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/79c0ae80-6df1-11ea-89df-41bea055720b> (accessed March 30th, 2020).
- Foreign Policy (2020): Legrain, Philippe: The Coronavirus Is Killing Globalization as We Know It, *Foreign Policy* 03/12/2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/12/coronavirus-killing-globalization-nationalism-protectionism-trump/> (accessed March 30th, 2020).
- Freedon, Michael (1998): *Ideologies and Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gingrich, Andre/Banks, Marcus (Eds.) (2006): *Neo-Nationalism in Europe and Beyond. Perspectives from Social Anthropology*, New York, Oxford: Berghahn.

- Haddad, Emmanuel (2017): Au Liban, Marine Le Pen tente de rallier les chrétiens, *La Croix* 02/21/2017, <http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Laicite/Au-Liban-Marine-Le-Pen-tente-rallier-chretiens-2017-02-21-1200826473> (accessed Feb. 22nd, 2017).
- Hähnig, Anne (2016): Oh Gott, Sachsen!, *Die Zeit* 03/11/2016, <http://www.zeit.de/2016/11/kirche-sachsen-fluechtlinge-pegida-homosexualitaet-hilfe/> (accessed Feb. 23rd, 2017).
- Hedetoft, Ulf (2009): Nationalism as Civil Religion, in: Hvithamar, Annika/Warburg, Margit/Jacobsen, Brian Arly (Eds.): *Holy nations and global identities. Civil religion, nationalism, and globalization*, Leiden: Brill, 252–269.
- Los Angeles Times (2020): Kirschbaum, Erik/King, Laura/Bernhard, Meg: Nationalism rears its head as Europe battles coronavirus with border controls, *Los Angeles Times*, 03/19/2020, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-03-19/nationalism-could-rear-its-head-as-europe-battles-coronavirus> (accessed March 20th, 2020).
- Marvin and Ingle (1996): Blood Sacrifice and the Nation. Revisiting Civil Religion, in: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64/4, Thematic Issue on “Religion and American Popular Culture” (Winter), 767–780.
- Modern Diplomacy (2020): Cherneva, Iveta: The case for corona- nationalism, *Modern Diplomacy*, 03/14/2020, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/03/14/the-case-for-corona-nationalism/> (accessed March 30th, 2020).
- Mudde, Cas (2004): The Populist Zeitgeist, in: *Government and Opposition*, 39/3, 541–563.
- Priester, Karin (2012): Wesensmerkmale des Populismus, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 5–6, 3–9.
- Prömpers, Klaus (2017): Wie steht Trump zur Religion? “Er versucht, das ganze Spektrum abzudecken”, *domradio.de* 01/19/2017, <https://www.domradio.de/themen/weltkirche/2017-01-19/wie-steht-trump-zur-religion> (accessed Feb. 22nd, 2017).
- Reason.com (2020): Stephanie Slade: Against the New Nationalism, *Reason.com*, April 2020, <https://reason.com/2020/02/24/against-the-new-nationalism/printer/> (accessed March 30th, 2020).
- Reinhard, Doreen (2016): Kein Erbarmen. Ein Pfarrer outet sich in Internetforen als AfD-nah. Jetzt ist er arbeitslos. Hat er das verdient? *Die Zeit* 08/12/2016, <http://www.zeit.de/2016/51/evangelische-kirche-pfarrer-afd-entlassung/komplett-ansicht> (accessed Jan. 31st, 2017).
- Richter, Christoph (2017): Kirche und Politik. Der Pfarrer a. D. und die AfD, *Deutschlandfunk* 01/16/2017, http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kirche-und-politik-der-pfarrer-a-d-und-die-afd.886.de.html?dram:article_id=376330 (accessed Feb. 22nd, 2017).
- Smith, Anthony D. (2009): Hierarchy and Covenant in the Formation of Nations, in: Hvithamar, Annika/Warburg, Margit/Jacobsen, Brian Arly (Eds.): *Holy nations and global identities. Civil religion, nationalism, and globalization*, Leiden: Brill, 21–46.

- Smith, Gregory A./Martinez, Jessica (2016): How the faithful voted. A preliminary 2016 analysis, PewResearchCenter 11/09/2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/> (accessed Jan. 31st, 2017).
- Spickard, James V. (2007): Religion in global culture. New directions in an increasingly self-conscious world, in: Beyer, Peter/Beaman, Lori: Religion, Globalization and Culture, Leiden: Brill, 232–252.
- Valeurs (2017): Chrétien et gaulliste. Marine Le Pen juge Fillon “opportuniste”, Valeurs actuelles.com 02/10/2017, <http://www.valeursactuelles.com/politique/chretien-et-gaulliste-marine-le-pen-juge-fillon-opportuniste-59598> (accessed Feb. 22nd, 2017).

Part I:
Religion and Nation in a Globalized World

Transnationalism and Religion: The European Union, from Christian-Democratic Project, to Secular Cosmopolitanism, to Populist 'Christian' Neo- Nationalisms

José Casanova

The relations between religions, nationalisms and patterns of globalization have historically been and continue to be complex, multiform, and diverse. They can hardly be reduced to simple unilinear, unidirectional or universal formulations, or to simple alternating dynamics between progressive globalization and regressive reactive re-nationalizations. The task of our conference is to understand the emergence of various types of neo-nationalisms, within a transnational European Union in our global age, and the various facilitating and hindering roles, which various religions are playing in this emergence. As a starting point of our reflections, we may want to recognize that the emerging neo-nationalisms themselves seem to be subject to global dynamics and appear to be promoted by complex transnational coalitions beyond the European Union. European developments, therefore, need to be understood within a global historical perspective.

The transnational project of a European Union was an attempt to partially transcend the Westphalian European system of nation-states at the very same moment when the Westphalian system was becoming finally globalized through processes of post-colonial nation-state formation after World War II, now encompassing the entire world. The 1957 Treaty of Rome, which established the foundations of the European Union, was born as a Christian-Democratic project, grounded on a dual reconciliation: the reconciliation of France and Germany, two nations which had been at war (or preparing for war) for 75 years, and the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants in the new post-WW II Christian-Democratic parties in Germany and Holland. The broader global context was the new transatlantic axis between Protestant Washington and Catholic Rome anchoring the Cold War between the liberal democratic capitalist "Christian" West and the Soviet system of atheist authoritarian communist states.

The seeds were planted by the initiative of Catholics, active in the French Resistance who became leaders of the Christian Democratic MRP,

and already before the end of the war spoke openly of the need for Franco-German reconciliation. The lay Catholic grassroots movement *Pax Christi* was born at the same time in France with a similar aim of Franco-German reconciliation. In his 1949 speech at Strasbourg announcing the coming supranational European Community, Robert Schuman, later to become the first President of the European Parliamentary Assembly in 1958, stated: "We are carrying out a great experiment, the fulfillment of the same recurrent dream that for ten centuries has revisited the peoples of Europe: creating between them an organization putting **an end to war** and guaranteeing an **eternal peace**." Despite this reference to European medieval Christendom, it was clear that the more relevant reference was the need to overcome the history of constant warfare between European states which was a legacy of the Westphalian system. Schuman added, "Our century, that has witnessed the catastrophes resulting in the unending class of nationalities and nationalisms, must attempt and succeed in reconciling nations in a **supranational association**." He ended with the words, "This new policy ... constitutes probably **the supreme attempt to save our Continent and preserve the world from suicide**." (Schumann 1949)

It is important to remind ourselves of these forgotten spiritual-religious sources of the European project if we want to understand the contemporary crisis of what Schuman called "the European spirit," which in my view is at the root of the present crisis of the European Union and of the re-emergence of neo-nationalisms. The project of a supranational democratic Europe had a "catholic" Christian orientation. By "catholic" I do not mean Roman-Catholic, much less a project for a Catholic Europe. Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal were clearly excluded from the project. But it is not a coincidence that all the signatories of the 1951 Treaty of Paris and of the 1957 Treaties of Rome were Catholic leaders of Christian Democratic parties. Nor was it just accidental that, initially, Gaullist and other nationalist parties, most socialist parties and all northern Protestant countries looked at the new European *community* with suspicion.

It is not the case that Catholic nations proved to be more immune to the modern tendency to national self-sacralization, than other European religious communities. If one considers World War I as the apotheosis of nationalist conflagration, when millions of European youth were sacrificed at the altar of the nation state, then one cannot but observe that Catholics embraced the war with as much euphoria and jingoistic frenzy as did most people, intellectuals, political leaders, and the clergy throughout Europe.

While a group of prominent German Catholics described the war as "the new springtime of religion," Pope Benedict XV, elected shortly after the outbreak of WW I, more soberly viewed it as "the darkest tragedy of