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**A Conversation with Friedrich Wilhelm Graf**  
**What is the Role of the Churches and Religion**  
**in Contemporary Society?**

**Vivian A. Schmidt**

**Neo-Liberal Conceptions of Citizenship**  
**and the State**

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**Liberalism – the Fate of a Great Idea**

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**TTIP-A Challenge to Politics and Society**

INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY EDITION

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# Editorial

This issue of the Quarterly is devoted especially to two grand themes: religion and liberalism. There is a close relationship between them. In fact, the watershed that divides the many variants of religion and religiosity is their stance toward the core values of cultural and political liberalism. To the wonderment of those who advocate simple-minded theories of secularization, religion in whatever form continues to play a crucial role in modern and modernizing societies, regardless of their cultural affinities. Some observers even claim to see a renaissance of religion. The situation is becoming ever more complicated because two separate phenomena are at work here. First, we have the spectacular rise of religious and political fundamentalism in every corner of the globe. Then the religious marketplace, with its plethora of consumer-style options, is starting to play an ever more significant part in many countries. That marketplace turns out individualized products for the personal needs of its customers, often by cobbling together elements from nearly every religious tradition. Religion is conjured up, as it were, from test tubes. This trend is frequently associated with the weakening of social cohesion and almost always with a highly conspicuous decline in major religious institutions, at least where mainstream Christian churches are concerned. The religious landscape is increasingly fragmented.



Even in the modern world, religious-political fundamentalism continues to play a prominent role. Among its other distinguishing features, it rejects the values and norms of the liberal culture of modernity, either in toto or on certain crucial questions. To be sure, fundamentalism cannot claim that the major religions have chosen its adherents to be their spokesmen; however, the apparent certainty of its convictions in an uncertain world has earned it a steady flow of acolytes in many places. Its radical positions and behavior in confusing circumstances as well as its ability to provide a kind of social safety net for its supporters at times have served only to strengthen its appeal. Fundamentalists see themselves as engaged in a no-holds-barred struggle against political and cultural liberalism, but have no qualms about using some of the tools that modern society has invented: weapons, communications, organization, psychology, and advertising. Their flirtation with modern methods is most obvious in the case of the Islamic State's websites and public relations campaigns. They are perfect facsimiles of the products made by modern pop culture and Internet communications. For that reason, they appeal to a growing number of young people, many of them from immigrant families living in the West's population centers. Those are worrisome trends. But they should not make us forget that the diverse forms of liberalized religion-and by no means only the Christian versions-have become mainstays of democracy, freedom, and global solidarity.

*Thomas Meyer*

Thomas Meyer  
Editor-in-Chief and Co-Publisher

*A Conversation with Friedrich Wilhelm Graf*

## **Multi-religiosity, Radicalization, a Critical Look at the Churches, and the Quest for Orientation**

### **What is the Role of the Churches and Religion in Contemporary Society?**

*Increasingly, religious faith does not necessarily entail belonging to an established church. Our multi-religious society now offers a plethora of options for finding religious orientation. Meanwhile, radical sects – and not only within Islam – have been gaining adherents. Then too, the issue of whether and how the state should put all religious congregations on an equal footing has become ever more urgent. Unquestionably, the religious landscape is undergoing an upheaval. The Protestant theologian Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, author of – among other works – »Götter global. Wie die Welt zum Supermarkt der Religionen wird« (»Global Gods; How the World is becoming a Supermarket of Religions«) sits down for a conversation with Thomas Meyer. He offers his take on current trends in religion and explains what he thinks the respective roles of the churches and politics ought to be in shaping the future of religion.*

**NG/FH:** How would you characterize the situation of religion today, especially as it relates to politics? On a global level, what strike you as the most important developments of the past twenty years?

**Friedrich Wilhelm Graf:** We are seeing a process of radicalization that has affected not only Islam, but other religious cultures as well. To put it somewhat crudely, people who are selling hard religious products right now are doing especially good business. It is not so easy to explain why this is occurring. Certainly it has something to do with the changed conditions under which religions communicate (*keyword:* Internet). We live in a world of dramatic

change due to global capitalism, new information technologies, and personalized life styles. Under those circumstances, the »purveyors of meaning« who can offer firm, clear identities have become particularly attractive. When everything else appears to be so relative, or random, flight towards a fixed structure that offers clear orientation evidently appeals to many people.

**NG/FH:** Is that true everywhere in the world, or only in certain regions?

**Graf:** By now, most scholars who analyze religion agree that Europe is a special case. In other parts of the world radicalized religious »products« are in high demand. One can see that happening, for example, in the religious market of the United States, where Protestant mainline churches are in decline while the sects that tend to be more conservative, traditionalist, and fundamentalist have attracted new converts. It can also be observed in Latin America, in southern or sub-Saharan Africa, and on the Indian subcontinent.

**NG/FH:** The classic version of the secularization thesis, which claims that modernization implies secularization, is rather vague. Does it refer to the separation of church and state, the role of religion in the life of society, or the religious convictions of the individual person?

**Graf:** If we understand by the term »secularization thesis« the claim that there is a necessary relationship that could be expressed by the formula »more modernity equals less religion,« then the seculari-

zation thesis is false. But it could be reformulated in another way. Obviously, we can design secular institutions, adopt highly rational forms of behavior toward technologies, etc., and still be profoundly irrational beings. We need a more nuanced notion of reason and modernity, in order to perceive the enduring meaning of religion for many people.

**NG/FH:** There are some very interesting theories about lived human reality and its relation to religion – for example, the comparative study done by the American political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (*Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*). Their basic argument is that religion will be a powerful force wherever human insecurity is high.

**Graf:** That study really didn't convince me. To be sure, it is a fascinating thesis, but if one looks at it more closely, regions such as Europe have societies with well-organized social welfare states, but they are also very religiously productive. That model does not fit such societies at all. Also, you might think about Poland or Great Britain where there are many strong non-Christian actors, although no one would deny that the British social welfare state also produces a good deal of social security. For that reason I would place some question marks after the Inglehart-Norris thesis.

What we are witnessing in our time are new alloys between religion and the nation. We have not reflected enough about the phenomenon of ethno-religion, in which nationalism is charged with religious fervor. We are experiencing this in the various versions of orthodox Christianity. Unfortunately, the phenomenon can be studied readily by considering the example of Ukraine. There one finds two major competing orthodox churches that are positioned quite differently. Other examples include Hindu nationalism and certain Japanese religious groups. When religious

symbols are fused with national constructs, the combination obviously forges powerful emotional bonds. One can observe this phenomenon today in many places around the world.

**NG/FH:** In spite of ongoing processes of modernization, religion survives and even flourishes to some extent. Yet under many circumstances the kind of religion that flourishes is not the liberalizing, civilizing variant, but instead the nationalistic or fundamentalist, narrow-minded brand, which retards modernization.

**Graf:** Of course we don't know exactly how the several variants of European Christianity forged civilizations through their respective folk churches. Today we simply take it for granted that they did. But we do know that democratic and liberal models of order were highly controversial in both of the major religious denominations in Germany up until the 1950s. Now we have a political discourse in which the claim is often raised that, »human dignity has something to do with the idea that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God,« etc. If you look at theological ethical systems of the 1920s to the 1950s, you will find that human rights were denied legitimacy, while human dignity was spoken of cautiously, most often in the context of the dignity of individual persons. I am convinced that the churches of the Federal Republic recognized the political order, because it bestowed advantages on them, and because they realized that their respective social service arms, Caritas (Catholic) and Diakonie (Lutheran), would benefit from the construction of a social welfare state, and that the state would seek an amicable relationship with them.

**NG/FH:** I thought there was one especially interesting passage in your new book (*Götter global*), in which you address religious symbols and languages. In and of them-

selves, ethical/legal codes based on religion are extremely ambivalent and open-ended. They can be given quite different concrete applications and used in a variety of ways, for example, to stoke enmity, but also to stabilize an ethic or a democracy. That depends on the context as well as the forces that, you might say, »seize control of« the religious codes. One could draw out some implications of this point regarding the way in which Germany's mainstream Christian denominations should deal with the non-dominant sects that are gradually winning converts. Yet one would have to say that there is little to distinguish Muslims and Christians when it comes to their approach to democracy.

**Graf:** The majority of Muslims in this country has accepted parliamentary democracy as a political arrangement. The exceptions are usually small groups in which converts often play an important role. The problem we have is that, in a pluralist democracy like ours, the representatives of Muslim associations have a hard time making media-savvy public appearances. What is most striking about Muslim functionaries is that they are still not articulate enough in public speaking. But that will change, because we are in the midst of a trend toward intellectual discourse about Muslim issues. Many young Muslims, above all females, have now completed their university studies with distinction and have taken positions in academic institutions, a trend of which I heartily approve.

**NG/FH:** You say that even here we will soon find that the religious »marketplace« will be full of attractive and carefully packaged products in which spirituality has been measured out in extremely high doses. Should we expect that a phenomenon such as Pentecostalism will soon play a major role in Germany as well?

**Graf:** Naturally, we have charismatic groups

in German Protestantism. Those traditions play a key role in the non-mainstream, independent Protestant churches here. I would argue that the significance of forms of Christianity that originated outside of Europe will be on the increase in Germany because of immigration. In Munich and other major cities there are Pentecostal church services that are mainly arranged and attended by Latin Americans. We don't know much about this, because we don't make enough of an effort to investigate religious diversity. Wherever classical methods of religious geography have been applied, it has been shown that religious diversity is distinctly higher than expected and that our ideas about religiously active people are wrong. For example, there are some marvelous studies of the Ruhr area showing that the most religiously active people there are Italian Catholic immigrants rather than Muslims.

**NG/FH:** As a theologian, what would you see as the main reason why fundamentalist groups are so strong in some situations or countries and have remained relatively weak in others?

**Graf:** There are classic studies of fundamentalism that were done in Chicago, for example the works of Martin Marty and Martin Riesebrodt. There have been very few case studies on fundamentalist actors in Europe, so we don't know much about them. However, we must try to explain why fundamentalism is attractive. Why is it such a plausible choice for certain people? My answer is that the hope of security and the attainment of certainty constitute a highly appealing option for many people, especially since we live in such turbulent, agitated times in which everything is changing so dramatically.

We have lived through a political revolution in Europe that has changed all of our lives in fundamental ways. We have experienced the recrudescence of old con-

flicts (*keyword*: Ukraine). We are living in a world in which communication has been profoundly altered by the Internet and forms of new, mobile communications. We live in times marked by a brand of capitalism that is transforming the whole world with amazing rapidity. All of this generates insecurity and social dislocations comparable to those that people were already starting to experience in some regions of Europe by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Those transformations result both in brutal pressures to perform and in a variety of new social conflicts. Religion is often

assigns them what might be described as an ethical mandate. When it comes to controversial issues like terminal care, assisted suicide, or stem cell research using human embryos, Germans expect the churches to speak out. They believe that the churches are competent to judge such ethical issues. But it is another matter whether the churches can really live up to such expectations. There have been quite a few positions taken in the ecclesiastical arena that indicate little willingness to draw fine distinctions.

As I see it, the second important function of Christian churches is to let people

**» Often religion is the only thing that establishes trust, dependability, and networks of social solidarity in a world caught up in permanent change.«**

the language in which social protest is articulated. And often religion is the only thing that establishes trust, dependability, and networks of social solidarity in a world caught up in permanent change.

**NG/FH:** Shouldn't we expect that the reasons behind the attractiveness of fundamentalism would diminish or disappear altogether if social security were improved and more stable societies emerged? Do you see any connection between this universal insecurity and modernization itself?

**Graf:** I am convinced that if we could offer young people in North African societies work and the experience of meaningfulness associated with it, they would be far less susceptible to forms of religious radicalism. A majority of the young men we talk about in the context of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are unemployed and have no prospects beyond the armed struggle.

**NG/FH:** What public role should religions play in a democracy based on the rule of law?

**Graf:** Let's concentrate on the two major German churches. The German populace

know that even in such a wealthy society as Germany, there are still many instances of social exclusion and poverty; hence, there is ample room to talk about justice and solidarity.

The third function of the churches is to get involved in the struggle against the ideological deformation of the political sphere. Modern parliamentary democracy can't get along without compromise, pragmatic solutions, and a willingness to reach an understanding even when the different camps have diametrically opposed world views. By employing the medium of religiously symbolic language, religion can help to keep alive the knowledge of how dangerous political ideology can be. I would find that to be a fascinating task for the churches.

**NG/FH:** But sometimes one gets the impression that the representatives of the two major churches think they have a kind of monopoly over ethics ...

**Graf:** ...Yes, but that is not the case. The churches deceive themselves on that point, because they imply that they can define what is right on the basis of certain traditional religious notions. But that is not true. If one takes a glance at the history of Christian

ethics and considers the relevance of factors specific to the religious denominations in the Federal Republic's ethical discourse, then it becomes apparent that, in many instances, there is far more ambiguity there than the churches would care to admit. Theology, or at least certain forms of theology, invites us to reach some presumed unanimity that just does not exist on many issues.

**NG/FH:** It is rare to hear voices that draw careful distinctions.

**Graf:** In this respect the climate has grown worse. There are a lot of Catholic university theologians who say, over an evening beer: »Well, I am so happy you said that.« In other words, there is already a climate of intimidation and repression. And in political Berlin there is unfortunately a tendency among politicians to avoid any critical commentary on what the churches say. There are in fact tendencies toward a new clericalism in this country, if one looks at ethical debates.

**NG/FH:** That would hardly be conducive to the social and political accommodation of our basically multi-religious situation. Isn't that actually an unproductive trend?

**Graf:** Indeed, it is even a fatal trend, because – by evading discourse and argument – we are in effect overdrawing our own accounts and not taking dissenters, even religious ones, seriously.

**NG/FH:** Isn't that a way to fight back in a situation in which one feels threatened? Are they attempting to defend their position as top dogs by making stronger claims about their ability to resolve ethical issues?

**Graf:** They are, at least if you look at the words of certain representatives of the German Bishops' Conference or the Evan-

gelical Church of Germany. They are papering over enormous problems by making implicit promises about their own competence. And yet if you look more closely, you see that they cannot deliver on those promises.

**NG/FH:** In your book you assign a crucial role to the concept of a »religious market« as a way of explaining certain phenomena. Today we have the impression that religious energies or religious projections of meaning also extend into other areas. Soccer and the Internet, for example, are regarded by some people as ersatz religions, i.e., as primary sources of meaning or orientation in life. Is there a tendency for secular phenomena suddenly to become objects of religious dramatization?

**Graf:** I don't think that soccer is a religion. It certainly is an interesting phenomenon that human beings tend to pledge themselves to a collectivity just at a time when life styles are becoming more individualized. One sees this, for example, in public viewing or when people wear a sports jersey. When I was a student I went to the Oktoberfest wearing jeans. Today everybody wears Lederhosen, disguising themselves as Bavarians. Even Italians do that when they come to Munich. In effect they are pledging themselves to an invented collectivity.

**NG/FH:** Is this tendency to imbue every possible item from the world of everyday life with religious energy and give it a religious function just a fringe phenomenon?

**Graf:** No, it can't be a fringe phenomenon. Just go into any bookstore and take a look at the selection of esoteric literature. This literature exists solely because there is a strong demand for esoteric products that satisfy a craving for meaning. For my part, I am not willing to let my life be determined by a pendulum; I think it is all hocus-pocus. But I do have to acknow-



ledge that in our society this sort of thing is a powerful factor in providing people with orientation about how to lead and interpret their lives.

**NG/FH:** Now of course there is a strong tendency toward selfishness in our society. Can it also be observed within religion? For example, are people now asking what religion can and cannot do for them, what they should do for it and for the general welfare? Can we observe this kind of trend?

**Graf:** Yes, and on a grand scale. These are all forms of religion that don't so much lead to the formation of cults, but rather offer services that help people manage their lives. Religion can encourage community-building, but it can also facilitate the isolation of the individual.

I don't know whether this tendency is playing an increasing role in society. It is undoubtedly an ambivalent issue fraught with contradiction. We are witnessing the erosion of the churches. The numbers of those leaving the churches continue to climb. We are also experiencing a contrary trend: year by year the Germans' willingness to make charitable contributions increases. So I cannot say that people have lost their feel for trans-individual problem areas. I think that people prefer to commit themselves to temporary projects with which they can identify, rather than remaining loyal to a large organization from which they may feel inwardly estranged for a variety of reasons.

**NG/FH:** People have adopted a certain image of religiosity. They think it is here to stay and will continue to play a role – perhaps even a growing role – in a country such as Germany. Yet religion is also breaking up into many distinct forms just as it is starting to fray around the edges. And despite the fact that religion continues to be a meaningful experience, the mainstream churches are losing their significance.

**Graf:** In a society like our own, the average age is increasing and so – to cite one example of the implications – illnesses involving dementia will become far more prevalent. Because of this demographic transition, we will have to think more deeply about end-of-life and elder-care issues. In this new situation organizations that provide social services for older people will assume growing significance. For those reasons the two major religious charities, Caritas and Diakonie, will not lose their importance. As religious organizations, the churches have been especially hard hit by the demographic transition, because, as a rule, younger people keep their distance from the mainstream churches more than older people do. In this respect the churches will face a fundamental challenge. But I think it is important to emphasize that there are no automatic processes here. The question is whether the churches might undergo a learning process that would enable them to respond to shifts in the social structure.

**NG/FH:** When those points are taken together, the question arises whether there should be a quite different role for religion in our legal system to make room for a permanently and increasingly multi-religious society, so that everyone feels equally recognized at law and equally esteemed. As things now stand, church law in Germany privileges a few of them.

**Graf:** The topics of constitutional church law and the constitutional law of religion raise complex issues. To begin with, there is a tension between European legal norms and the place of religion in each country's constitutional law regime. There is no other area of jurisprudence in which EU countries differ more than in their respective constitutional laws of religion. In Germany we have a system known as »limping separation« of church and state. According to the Imperial Constitution as it existed during

the Weimar Republic, state and church were to be separated, but the two were expected to cooperate for the sake of the general welfare in matters such as education and social welfare, etc. There is no politically relevant actor in this country that calls this arrangement into question. Even The Left Party defends the status quo as it relates to constitutional church and religious law. Their forbearance stems from their wish to get elected; they don't want to lose political support among religion teachers.

There was once a brief period in which the Free Democratic Party tried to rock the boat of this compromise through its so-called »Church Paper.« But its proposal was retracted very quickly. Here in Germany, then, the system of limping separation is not being called into question; instead, the attempt is being made to integrate new religious actors, especially Muslims, into the German system. That is the reason we are establishing faculties of Muslim theology at state universities. We prefer to have

Muslim religious teachers and imams get educated in Germany rather than in Ankara or Cairo. That is also why we suggest to the Muslim actors that they organize themselves more effectively in a manner analogous to our churches. The English term for what we are doing is »the churchification of Islam.« For example, the proposal has been made to Muslims: develop stronger and more stable structures, and then we will give you the status of a corporate body under public law. If you organize yourselves along those lines, we will grant you this status and you will then receive public funds. In return, you will assure us of your loyalty to the state under the authority of the Basic Law. That is an interesting political deal. It is also the reason why conferences on Islam are being held and debates on integration are being conducted at all levels. Finally, it is the reason why we so persistently appeal to the Muslims to provide themselves with stronger organizational structures.

*Vivian A. Schmidt*

## **Neo-Liberal Conceptions of Citizenship and the State**

### **The Neo-liberal Challenge to Traditional Views of Citizenship and the State**

The concept of citizenship is typically understood in light of either of two contrasting political philosophies: the liberal individualist and the civic republican. Liberal individualism emphasizes human beings' economic nature, and considers the citizens' primary focus to be the pursuit of enlightened self-interest. The civic republican emphasizes instead human beings' political nature, and considers the citizen's primary focus to be democratic participation. Moreover, the liberal individualist defines citizens as having inalienable

civil, political, and (introduced later) social rights, as well as duties such as paying taxes, engaging in business, and defending the nation. By contrast, the civic republican understands citizenship less in terms of personal rights and duties—although these are generally assumed – and more in terms of active engagement in the public sphere, with an eye toward addressing shared concerns. Divergent views of the state's role follow from these respective premises. While the liberal individualist sees the state's main obligation as respecting citi-

zens' rights and protecting their *freedom from* interference with those rights, the civic republican sees that obligation as providing an open civic space that guarantees citizens' *freedom to* promote the common good and public interest.

These opposing views comprise political ideals, of course. In reality, one can see different countries' conceptions of citizenship as a mix of the two philosophies, with the balance between them depending on each country's own particular history and culture. But the two views have something in common: namely, they tend to put the polity before the economy. Neo-liberalism, however, reversed that long-standing relationship, thereby moving far beyond classical liberal-individualist views in the process. It did so by insisting that economic freedom is a prerequisite for political freedom. What is more, most proponents of neo-liberal thought were even more radically individualist than their traditional liberal counterparts in assuming that individuals acting in their narrow, rational self-interest were all that was necessary to produce the best political outcome. For neo-liberals, the state must be constrained as much as possible to give free reign to individuals' economic freedom, from which political freedom would follow.

Put another way, neo-liberalism is not just a philosophy of political economy; it is also a philosophy of political democracy and the role of the state. It conceives of the polity as made up of individuals first and the community second, with legitimate state action extremely limited vis-à-vis communal demands on the individual. Because neo-liberalism prioritizes personal liberty, it regards state intervention as the imposition of collective judgments on that liberty. Consequently, neo-liberals view the state as inherently dangerous. They assume that the public sphere will always attempt to encroach upon the private, jeopardizing not only the freedom of market actors' transactions in capitalist

economies but also the freedom of democratic citizens to make uncoerced political choices (as suggested by the title of Milton Friedman's famous book, *Free to Choose*).

For neo-liberals generally, the state is the problem, and the economy the solution. Some go even farther, contending that the market, in principle, cannot fail; only the state can. This explains why neo-liberal theorizing often portrays government as more legitimate when it is transformed from a traditional political or administrative state (which supposedly distorts markets by enabling interest

groups to gain either political advantage or administrative support through

»capture«) into an arms-length arbitrator. Neo-liberalism is equally behind the assumption that public officials themselves are narrowly self-interested, and therefore will often act against the public interest in seeking to obtain rents (as James Buchanan has argued). However, by assuming that »untrustworthy« public actors need incentives to act against their self-interest, neo-liberalism undermines the very (civic republican) altruism and trust upon which public bureaucracies have long depended. Moreover, it instrumentalizes people through a kind of »engineering of souls« (in the phrase of Michel Foucault) by seeking to shape individuals as governable, self-disciplined, enterprising subjects – not directly, through state intervention, but indirectly, through the creation of structures of incentives.

One variant of the neo-liberal philosophy that has special importance today as a result of the eurozone crisis is »ordo-liberalism,« prevalent in Germany since the 1950s and echoing the theories of Friedrich von Hayek. Essentially, ordo-liberalism is neo-liberalism with a rules-based rather than an incentive-based approach to markets, such that the role of the state is not only to ensure competition but also to guide economic activity, where necessary,

### *Neo-liberal Views of the State*

by rules and laws. Although ordo-liberal philosophy was largely overlooked during the postwar years as the welfare state grew more generous, it has come back with full force thanks to the migration of the German macroeconomic principles of »stability« and »sound money« and the rules of the Bundesbank to the European Central Bank (and European monetary policy more generally). From the Maastricht Treaty through the Stability and Growth Pact and a variety of pacts, packs, and compacts, ordo-liberalism has been about »governing by the rules« as well as »ruling by the numbers,« given the numerical targets that are embedded in those rules (Schmidt 2013b).

It is important to recognize that neo-liberalism in the political arena can be attached to other ideas about how to steer the economy, administer the state, build community, or promote the welfare of society, which can lead to very different results. Ordo-liberalism in Germany is a case in point, since in the late 1950s ordo-liberal macroeconomic steering was combined to great effect with social-democratic corporatism in labor-management relations and welfare. Notably, however, neo-liberal ideas may attach to conservative principles, as in the case of Margaret Thatcher's evocation of »Victorian values«; to social democratic principles, as when Scandinavians attempted to maintain their universalistic values as they sought to »save the welfare state« by incorporating neo-liberal elements into it; or to something new, as when the British Labour Party under Tony Blair tried to fashion a »Third Way« between Thatcher's conservative neo-liberalism and old-style social democracy. Moreover, different areas of »citizenship« may be more or less open to neo-liberal ideas. Thus, whereas financial and competition policies at the EU and national levels were almost exclusively neo-liberal, the welfare state as such remained largely committed to social-democratic

ideals even as neo-liberal policies were layered on top – making for a new synthesis that Maurizio Ferrera has called »liberal neo-welfarism«.

Notions of citizenship have changed substantially since the social-democratic consensus that defined the immediate postwar era came to an end in the 1970s under the impact of the collapse of the Bretton Woods global economic system and two subsequent oil price shocks. Arguably, the postwar period maintained a balance between liberal-individualist and civic-republican conceptions of citizenship, with a somewhat greater emphasis on the latter. But the 1980s saw the beginning of a neo-liberal era. Thereafter, every fifteen years or so brought a different kind of neo-liberalism to the fore, with different connotations for citizenship and the role of the state in economic life.

The first phase, during the 1980s, saw a more radical variety of neo-liberalism than 1950s-style German ordo-liberalism, in both its pro- free-market and anti-state positions. This phase privileged markets and pledged to »roll back the state,« not only from the economy but also from society itself. Exemplified by Thatcher's view (following Hayek) that the free market would both release the »spirit of enterprise« and guarantee liberty, it was linked to attacks on postwar notions of social justice and equality. The attack was epitomized by Thatcher's famous remarks that »there is no such thing as society« and that citizens have »the right to be unequal.«

The second phase of neo-liberalism began in the mid-to-late 1990s. In the face of the political right's frequent failures to fulfill its neo-liberal electoral promises to »roll back the state« in terms of size and regulation or at least to make things work more efficiently, a neo-liberal renewal ensued that promoted the »roll-out of the

### *The Neo-liberal Influence on Ideas of Citizenship and the State since the 1980s*

state.« Ironically, this renewal was led largely by center-left politicians like Tony Blair in the UK, Gerhard Schröder in Germany, and Lionel Jospin in France. Under their leadership, the state was transformed. No longer the main target of neo-liberal attacks aiming to get it *out* of the market, the state now became the primary tool of attack in the market. And from a haphazard process of reactive state re-regulation in response to the deleterious effects of freeing up the markets, we find a considered process of active state engagement to create, reshape, and reinforce free markets. Notably, this effort also ensured that instead of producing the limited state idealized by some neo-liberal thinkers, a new synthesis emerged that I have called »liberal neo-statism«. While the »liberal« and »neo-« aspects of that term suggest that the state has been transformed in a neo-liberal direction, »statism« makes clear that the state's intervention in the markets has actually increased.

Ironically, then, social-democratic parties were the ones to renew neo-liberalism with the roll-out of reforms of the state that completed the neo-liberal revolution that had begun with the state's more ideological conservative roll-back in the early 1980s.

None of these shifts can be fully understood, however, without also considering the role of the EU in promoting liberalization, especially during the second period. Although domestic politics do matter greatly in determining the degree to which neo-liberal ideology triumphs, the most constant pressures for liberalization have come from above. In Europe, economic integration through the EU has created a systematic bias towards the reduction of obstacles to market integration. In certain domains, like competition policy or state aid, the EU was actually the main force for change. But even in areas in which it had no major legal jurisdiction, such as labor and social policy, the EU managed to infuse

national discussions with neo-liberal ideas through a discourse focused on »improving competitiveness,« increasing labor market »flexibility,« promoting »employability,« and rationalizing the welfare state in response to »unsustainably« rising costs stemming from »longevity risks.« Moreover, with the eurozone crisis and the »European Semester« has also come the »ramp up« of neo-liberalism as a result of eurozone governance processes that combine an ordo-liberal emphasis on austerity policies with a neo-liberal stress on »structural reform.«

So how do we explain the resilience of neo-liberal ideas, particularly in light of the financial crisis (which was arguably the result of neo-liberal excesses in opening markets) and the eurozone crisis (which was arguably worsened by ordo-liberal excesses of austerity)? There are at least five lines of analysis that purport to explain such resilience since the 1980s, as proposed in my recent book, *Resilient Liberalism in Europe's Political Economy*, co-edited by Mark Thatcher (no relation to the British Prime Minister).

The first line of analysis underlines the flexibility of neo-liberalism's core principles, which makes it highly adaptable and mutable, able to move from (say) ideas about the rollback of the state to its roll out and ramp up, and to metamorphose from discredited theories such as »sound money« in the 1920s to monetarism in the 1980s and »sustainable debt« in the 2000s. The second line of analysis highlights the gaps between neo-liberal rhetoric and reality, including hollow promises to cut back the state that enabled subsequent neo-liberals to advance the claim that it was never tried. The third concerns the strength of neo-liberal discourse in debates, or the weakness of alternatives. Many neo-liberal arguments sound like common sense, and

### *The Resilience of Neo-liberal Ideas – Any Lessons for Social Democracy?*

it is certainly easier to use the metaphor of the Swabian housewife to convince the public that governments, like households, require belt-tightening than it is to employ neo-Keynesian reasoning to explain why governments need to spend during an economic downturn. Although the latter argument doubtless is correct, it is counter-intuitive and takes much more than a 30-second sound bite to explain. The fourth line of analysis stresses the power of interests – whether large firms, banks, political parties, or media tycoons – to use neo-liberal ideas strategically to promote their own advantage, while the fifth emphasizes the force of institutions in the embedding of neo-liberal ideas, such as the many pacts and compacts designed to reinforce the stability rules of eurozone governance.

The key questions for social democrats are how to go beyond neo-liberalism and how to reinforce the resilience of social

democracy itself. Answering these questions requires rethinking social democracy's core principles and coming up with new ideas about how to place politics before economics once again. At the very least, social democrats need to champion a more positive understanding of the state and its role, or even perhaps a more civic republican view of democracy, in which what is good for the polity determines decisions about the market rather than the reverse. Social democrats also must develop alternative views of how markets can and should operate: e.g., by cooperation as much as competition, and by treating citizens not as incentivized self-interested economic actors alone but as members of communities whose essential components are trust and collective responsibility. The best way to counter an ever-resilient neo-liberalism, in short, is through the renewal of social democratic thought and action.



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## **Liberalism – the Fate of a Great Idea**

As the champion of freedom and equality for all humankind, of tolerance and the end of absolutist pretensions in thought and action, liberalism actually began long before it became institutionalized as an intellectual movement in the eighteenth century and as a set of political parties in the nineteenth. In a rather obvious sense, the liberal idea was present at the birth of modernity *tout court*. It provided the battle cry for universal human rights, the separation of powers, and the embedding of the state's power in a constitutional and legal matrix,

the legitimacy of which was to be derived solely from the consent of the governed. Liberalism is the generative idea of the culture of modernity; hence, it defies all attempts by individual organizations or political currents to monopolize its interpretation. The democratic labor movement in the core countries of Europe also emerged from liberalism's emancipatory impulse. In the final analysis, its basic principles, expressed with clarity and precision and given solid grounding in Kant's practical philosophy, remained a dependable



beacon throughout the twentieth century. This was the case even though modern society at times lost its way and wandered along unsafe and often perilous paths. It is never wrong to praise the kind of liberalism embodied in Lessing's idea of tolerance, Locke's theory of fundamental rights, or Kant's doctrine of autonomy, regardless of what qualifications and reservations its history has made necessary or which political parties have (or would like to have) basked in its reflected brilliance. The core insight of liberalism is too great to be the property of a single political party. Today, any party that claims the liberal heritage as its exclusive possession will lose all credibility.

But the case of liberalism does not at all resemble the often forced image of an infallible God betrayed by His unfortunately incompetent ground crew. Even when liberalism first came on the scene as a political lodestar, a dark shadow lay upon it: the corruption of the universal idea of freedom by narrow propertied interests. It was evident fairly early on that this dark shadow could be dispelled; yet in the eyes of the most powerful elements among the godfathers and acolytes of the political parties claiming to be liberal, the distortion of liberalism by moneyed interests was not perceived as eclipsing its essential meaning. At bottom this observation remains true to this very day. However, one should not imagine that the clouds hanging over liberalism formed only because the unsurpassable idea of self-determination for all human beings had been hijacked – perverted, as it were, into the political slogan of Europe's property-owning classes. It was already latent in the thought of the most eminent intellectual founders of the »bourgeois« era: John Locke and Immanuel Kant. In Kant's republic, for instance, only property owners warranted the status of full citizens. Non-property-owners remained passive, second-class citizens, protected by the rule of law but not entitled to parti-

cipate in the framing of the rules. In other words, the liberal philosophy of the bourgeois era was already using the census to limit the franchise.

But the idea of freedom always had a universalistic element that transcended and defeated all attempts to domesticate it and use it for political ends. This is so because the idea of freedom is always, inherently, inevitably about *equal* freedom, as the French philosopher Étienne Balibar has elucidated with great precision. It has become the legacy of modern culture as a whole and is present today wherever that culture has penetrated. That is the reason why the eminent German-Jewish philosopher and theologian Hermann Cohen could still rely on Kant's categorical imperative, a century after the latter's death, to assert the right of all human beings to self-determination. For Cohen, Kant's moral philosophy provided enough leverage to overcome the bourgeois distortion of the idea of freedom; indeed, he identified freedom with the cause of social democracy, remarking that »the true founder of socialism in Germany is Kant.« Cohen reasoned that the moral prohibition against using some human beings as mere means for the ends of others implied democratization. All those affected by political decisions should be equally entitled to participate jointly in making them. In this sense democracy would need to have a social foundation. To be sure, libertarians from Hayek to Nozick, for whom true freedom is fully realized in the self-regulating market and minimal state, would cite liberal grounds for appealing Cohen's verdict. Yet they have fallen behind the times, because the liberal mainstream has learned its lesson from the crises of the twentieth century: True freedom now entails that markets need correctives and governments should make macro-economic policy.

The idea of freedom, drawn from Enlightenment sources by the liberal van-

guard, possesses a limitless potential that can never be eradicated, at least in principle. This potential is quantitative, in the sense that, by law, no human being can be denied freedom. It is also qualitative, because everything that impedes complete freedom can be challenged through political channels. The political heirs of this »idea

*Limitless Potential  
and an Ambivalent  
Heritage*

of the millennium« may quarrel about every inch of overdue progress in the process of universalizing freedom, but they quickly close ranks to ward off the foes of freedom itself, whatever they may be called: intolerance, authoritarianism, or – more and more often these days – fundamentalism. The defenders of the liberal impulse agree that the heart of the matter – the separation of political powers, democracy, and the rule of law – must furnish the basis and framework for everything else that might be deemed necessary to advance the cause of freedom. The defects of historical liberalism can be remedied, but those of resolute anti-liberalism cannot. This remains the case whether we are talking about Leninist communism, which battled the heritage of liberalism rather than embracing it, or dictatorial identity politics, either racial or religious, which scorns that legacy and persecutes its adherents. Of course we must never forget that, in its first century, political liberalism was the guiding principle of the bourgeoisie, which accommodated itself easily to the resolute rejection of democracy, even though doing so put it at odds with its own intrinsic idea. So it is no wonder that, even today, quite prominent economic-liberal voices are heard warning that we are taking democracy too seriously (because economic freedom is more important to them).

In short, the tradition of political liberalism has split into »libertarian« or »merely economic-liberal« and »social« or »civic-rights-oriented« wings. This schism can be traced back to a strategic shift of emphasis

in the interpretation of freedom as it relates to property rights, one that has been reflected again and again in political debates but that also crops up occasionally in verdicts rendered by the German Constitutional Court. Ever since the early stages of the industrial revolution and the dawn of a capitalist market economy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, different understandings of that relationship have influenced another controversy. They have shaped assumptions about how or whether the distinction between the formal validity and real-world efficacy of fundamental civic rights should become the focus of political debate. Whereas the »formal validity« of those rights is limited to legal protection against the intervention of third parties in the sphere of action reserved to each individual, their efficacy in the »real world« presumes something more. All persons should have access to the goods that form the scaffolding upon which they can turn the freedom of action guaranteed to them by law into a concrete reality of meaningful choices and conduct.

But when the right to private property is granted as lofty a status as the basic right to freedom itself, then in effect we are prevented from asking whether quasi-absolute property rights might pose unacceptable risks to the unimpeded enjoyment of liberty by each person in practical, real-world circumstances. In other words, that theoretical move – exaggerated deference to property rights – plays into the hands of libertarian or »economic-liberal« thinking by equating the right to property with freedom as such. If that were the case, then even democracy itself could be demoted to second-class status, as has happened historically. By contrast, liberalism's forefather, John Locke, posited a close and reciprocal yet tension-filled connection between the right to property and the human right to freedom, while leaving the exact dynamics of that relationship somewhat open-ended. He did not reduce the con-



cept of property to its narrowest meaning: the ownership of things. Rather, for Locke the notion of property encompassed three more or less constitutive relationships: freedom as control over one's own person, i.e., the general freedom of action inherent in private autonomy; freedom as control over one's own thoughts and beliefs, i.e., freedom of opinion, religion, and confession; and finally, freedom as control over the things that belong to a person by law. The first two dimensions of this Lockean concept of property posit a relationship of the person to him- or herself in which other people play no part, at least in principle. However, the third dimension does include the rights of others, since they have to concur and cooperate in order for this kind of property right to be realized in practice. Thus, for example, workers in the service of a boss must respect his or her right to property for that right to be meaningful.

If the scope of liberalism is restricted to the formal-legal sphere of fundamental, universal rights and the legal and political institutions set up by the state to enact and enforce them, liberalism then falls victim to a twofold dilemma, because it ends up valuing the right of the property-owner more highly than the freedom of the person who lacks property. The decision to grant top priority to the freedom of property ownership, which in effect absolutizes it, leads to modern »libertarianism« (or, as it is commonly known, neo-liberalism), in which there is no legal obligation to establish a social-welfare state or regulate the market in the interests of everyone's freedom. The scope and meaning of freedom is thus reduced by half, since it is little more than an empty promise for all those who, from the very outset, lack the material resources needed to avail themselves of it. Freedom then would be a reality only for the affluent, a privilege of the few. Whenever the use of one's own (economic) property requires the cooperation or for-

bearance of others – and as a rule these would be people without any property – freedom becomes a matter that involves the owner, his or her property, propertyless employees, and the state, which must coordinate and protect the basic rights of all human beings to exercise their freedom. That fourfold relationship holds true in the case of liberalism itself. In cases of doubt, the state must curtail the property rights of some people in order to protect the rights of others to enjoy their liberty, and it may do so by imposing taxes, establishing a welfare state, or encouraging co-determination in the workplace. This is the point at which the heirs of liberalism part ways, intellectually. There are ultimately three schools of thought that divide the liberal bequest among themselves: libertarians, (social) liberals, and social democrats.

Ferdinand Lassalle in the 1860s was the first to demonstrate that the third way of taking on the liberal dilemma was a live possibility. His pioneering approach later was developed more systematically by Hermann Heller during the Weimar Republic of the 1920s. The result has been social democracy. As one proponent of social democracy phrased his objection to political liberalism, it cannot »guarantee that the conditions will be met that would give its own fundamental, constitutive norms practical, real-world validity« for everyone. Nor can it ensure that the »state (which depends on those norms) will be able to make its citizens full members of the political community,« because it excludes the majority from the enjoyment of real freedom, thereby alienating them from the rule of law as embodied in the state. Full freedom for everyone implies that the juridical state should be supplemented by the social-welfare state. The social-democratic conclusion, then, is that the true heir of the liberal impulse is the democratic, law-governed state that also works to ensure social welfare.

To clarify the meaning(s) of liberty, Isaiah Berlin distinguished between positive freedom, which has a material dimension, and negative freedom, which is concerned solely with keeping the state at arm's length. As a classical liberal, Berlin saw an irreconcilable tension between these supreme fundamental values, one that forces us to make an »agonizing« decision: always to uphold the primacy of the negative concept of liberty. Only thus could the substantive core of the liberal understanding of freedom be safeguarded against the dangers inherent in unrestrained efforts to abridge it for the sake of social and political ends. When the social welfare state attempts to acquire the material resources it needs to ensure the positive freedom of all, it regularly interferes with the negative freedom of those who are better-situated. For example, it may impose taxes on the affluent, robbing them of a portion of their opportunities to act as they see fit, in order to enhance the positive freedom of the less favored – for example, by financing a system of public education. This version of »agonal liberalism« sees the relationship between positive and negative freedom as kind of zero-sum game, and comes down firmly on the side of the primacy of negative liberty. It is true that the state is permitted to intervene in the distribution of material resources, but when in doubt it must give precedence to property rights. In the cold light of day, however, its supposed neutrality after all amounts to partisanship, given that there are citizens who lack sufficient independent resources (such as income, wealth, or education). Only property-owners satisfy the prerequisites for the genuine exercise of their formal rights and liberties, whereas non-owners are cut off from the resources they would need to make those rights meaningful in practice. So in principle we have an asymmetrical situation. For the owners of property, negative freedom is

tantamount to a guarantee that the prerequisites of their »positive« freedom have already been met: namely, the certainty that they have enough material resources available to do as they please. For non-property-owners, on the other hand, the institutionalization of »negative« freedom alone is synonymous with the legal consolidation of their separation from the material resources they need to act as they would like. In other words, the dominance of negative freedom means that they are deprived of their opportunities to enjoy the liberty that positive freedom would bestow on them.

Yet justice, even in the liberal sense, requires equal freedom, not simply in respect to one portion of freedom (the negative side) but the whole of it, at least if freedom is going to have any meaning in the real world. And freedom is not whole or complete unless the person in question possesses the material wherewithal to lead a self-determined life. Legal equality always remains the bedrock of freedom, but the material resources that underpin freedom – wealth and income – can survive a measured dose of redistribution; indeed, they require it to the degree that redistribution is the precondition for a fair guarantee of the social goods needed to secure freedom. In the interest of freedom itself (here, the freedom of others), it is necessary to put both dimensions, positive and negative freedom, on an equal footing.

Of course humankind's great ideas do not fly toward realization on wings of their own, as Hegel imagined, even where progress that did in fact emerge from the contradictions between the idea and the reality might make us think so. Marx was right: It is usually the idea that makes a fool of itself when it collides with an interest. The interest of the enlightened portion of the bourgeoisie in legal security and freedom was the force that brought liberalism to power and enabled its central

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ideas increasingly to influence European constitutions since the nineteenth century. In 1863, Lassalle successfully exhorted the workers' educational associations, hitherto run by liberal politicians, to recognize that the time had come for them to chart an independent political course. As he pointed out, they were social democratic organizations, the goals of which went far beyond liberalism; thus, they should be consistent in pursuing their own objectives in their own way. It is frequently forgotten that those ends included not only the social content of democracy, but democracy itself, which is one reason that the Reich under Bismarck enacted anti-socialist legislation, incidentally also supported by the liberals.

Germany's liberal parties during the Weimar era split into two wings: an economically liberal wing and a wing that emphasized protection of fundamental liberal rights. Neither distinguished itself particularly in going to the defense of the rule of law and human rights. Nor did either of them spearhead the battle for democracy during the Imperial era or act as a bulwark against its liquidation by the Nazis. The historical credit for defending the core principles of liberalism's great promise goes to the account of the Social Democratic Party. Social democracy embraced and carried through the political project of defending human rights, the rule of law, and constitutional government through its unwavering commitment to democracy, both in Imperial Germany and then later in the Weimar Republic. The liberal call for autonomy, when taken to its logical conclusion, implies the merger of the formal with the real-practical premises of human self-determination. And this was, in essence, the program chosen by social democratic parties, one that constituted their very identity, although in Germany as well as other countries there were also classical liberals – sometimes even the parties that spoke for them – that likewise drew that

conclusion. The social-liberal philosophy of the Free Democratic Party's 1972 »Freiburg Theses« differs little from the liberal socialism of the Social Democrats' Godesberg Program.

The boundaries between the classical tradition of socialism and the mental world of social liberalism seemed to be fluid in that era. However, the turn toward economic or libertarian liberalism taken by Count Lambsdorff in 1982 put an abrupt end to social liberalism as the dominant strain of the FDP's official party doctrine. Indeed, the FDP followed his lead almost without a murmur of complaint. From then on, social liberalism has been nearly silenced inside the Free Democratic Party, though it does live on among the Greens and some segments of the SPD. A consistent brand of social liberalism that recognizes social and economic rights and strives to give them real standing in practice has many adherents in today's SPD. But nowadays, of course, the social-liberal vision of social democracy does not go unchallenged. The recrudescence of a kind of capitalism that seeks to renounce the historic social-democratic compromise that once domesticated it, as well as the advancing inequalities that have resuscitated many features of a class-ridden society, are once again giving social democracy a more militant profile. For social democracy today, neither the market nor private property in the means of production are sacred cows; rather, they are revocable social instruments that always must be tested anew against the criterion of the rights to liberty that all human beings possess. In fact, the historical impulse of liberalism itself, assuming that it wishes to remain consistent, actually requires that evolving market arrangements be put to the test.

The liberal impulse has lost some of its clarity today, because the intellectual-political traditions that promised to sustain it have diverged so much from one another. Libertarian market fundamen-

talism, now so prominent in the Republican Party of the USA, never managed to find expression in a major European political party since the end of WW II. When the FDP drifted close to it under Guido Westerwelle (under the banner of »la FDP, c'est moi!«), the result was that party's departure from the German parliament. The Alternative for Germany Party has flirted with libertarianism, all the while larding it with social-populist messages, because it senses that Germany's political culture rejects market fundamentalism. By contrast, social liberalism is still quite influential in the ranks of nearly all parties represented in parliament (except the Left Party), although the proportions of market and social-welfare state that each advocates vary significantly. In short, social liberalism is the hegemonic strain of thought

in this country. This is likely also the case in Europe as a whole, although it must constantly compete with social democracy, the advocates of which have good reason to think that they and their parties are the most consistent heirs of the liberal idea of freedom. Nevertheless, anti-liberalism does frighteningly well on the fringes of nearly all European countries wherever there is widespread belief that parties influenced by liberalism have not delivered on their promises. But political liberalism itself is so solidly anchored in all democratic parties that, as a public philosophy, it does not have to rely for acceptance on a »liberal« party that is constantly tempted to slide toward libertarian positions to prove to itself and others that it is uniquely liberal. Liberalism lives—even without a »liberal« FDP.



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*Marc Saxer*

## The Dizzying Pace of Change

### Conflicts over Transformation erupt around the Globe

Tahrir, Taksim, Maidan. Hundreds of thousands of people are demonstrating all over the globe. Governments have been overthrown from Tunisia to Thailand. The images look pretty much alike. But what are the features that link protests in Turkey to those in Thailand? And what distinguishes them from the demonstrations in Spain, Greece, or Brazil? What do such diverse political leaders as the Bolivarian socialist Chavez, the neo-liberal Thaksin, the Islamist Erdogan, and the pro-oligarch Janukovych have in common?

Joshua Kurlantzick of the Washington Council on Foreign Relations believes he has found the red thread that connects the mass protests: the rage of the middle classes against corruption and the abuses of power by »elected autocrats.« Starting with the campaign against the Philippine President Estrada in 2000, Kurlantzick examines mass protests in Venezuela (2001-2003), Ukraine (2004 and 2013), Kyrgyzstan (2005), Thailand (2006, 2008, 2013), Lebanon (2010), Russia (2011-2013), Tunisia (2010, 2011), Israel (2011), Egypt (2011 and 2012-2013),

Turkey (2013), and Brazil (2013 and 2014). Although both the causes and the outcomes of these uprisings differ, they often (though not always) follow the same sequence of events and the same script. With the exception of the Arab Spring, these mass protests all have been directed against elected governments. Despite all of their shortcomings, these countries are or were democracies in which the majority of the people avail themselves of their right to choose their governments through the ballot box. In the midst of these monumental upheavals in social and economic development, a few clever political entrepreneurs realized that elections could be won by offering a policy mix consisting of a basic social safety net, local development, and populist gifts. The majority of the populace, previously denied state-sponsored services, has demonstrated its gratitude to these politicians by supporting them in the voting booth. But once they attain power, these self-styled tribunes of the people quickly reveal their true colors as »elected autocrats« by threatening the opposition, muzzling journalists, and undermining democratic institutions. From the viewpoint of established elites and the capital city's middle classes, these elected autocrats have become a menace.

Rampant corruption and nepotism are perceived as a relapse into a form of barbarism that seemed to belong to the distant

### *Relapse into Barbarism*

past. Because the establishment parties fail to make their programs attractive to the majority of the population out in the provinces, they lose one election after another. In despair, the middle classes hold electoral democracy responsible for their plight and call for a strong hand to set things right again. This desire is fomented by the old elites in the bureaucracy, the judicial system, the economy, and the universities. The military often seizes this opportunity to consolidate its own political power.

Yet even authoritarian intervention does not necessarily break the power of elected autocrats. In spite of judicial or military coups and bans on politicking and parties, people's tribunes such as Chavez or Thaksin repeatedly have managed to return to power with the support of the majority of their populations. In Egypt and Thailand the alliance of old elites, urban middle classes, and the military have responded with still harsher repression.

Of course the local alignment of forces ultimately determines how these power struggles will play out and end. But although such local differences are indeed important, they should not obscure the common features of these social struggles: a decades-long transformational conflict over the reconstruction of the political and social order.

Economic development and globalization are transforming societies at a rapid clip, overextending traditional political orders, and eroding fundamental values. Yet the overdue »upgrade of the operating system« is difficult to accomplish under such conflict-laden circumstances. In essence, emergent social groups have canceled the social contract. But it is hard to renegotiate the social contract against the resistance of all those who benefit from the status quo anchored in the old order. That group is not composed exclusively of the old elites determined to defend their privileges and status. There are many other people for whom the old order provides shelter and refuge amid the dizzying changes that seem to have turned their world upside down almost overnight. Within a single generation ideas and practices concerning time, the family, work, and the assignment of roles between men and women have changed. Many people enthusiastically embrace the new possibilities, while others find that their identities are threatened by what they perceive to be the eclipse of the world into which they were born. Anxieties about downward social

mobility and loss of identity lend a note of paranoia and aggressiveness to struggles over the new order. It is not coincidental that, in times of rapid upheavals, quasi-fascist groups are on the lookout for scapegoats who allegedly must be wiped out so that an imaginary »golden age« can be restored. Antonio Gramsci once quipped gloomily from his prison cell: »when the old is dying and the new has not yet been born, demons come out to dance.«

In this transformational conflict between the forces of change and those of restoration, the middle classes do indeed play a decisive role. When the established middle class sides with traditional elites, the latter can exploit their power positions in the military, the judiciary, and the administration to stabilize the old order. But if the established middle class throws in its lot with up-and-coming social strata, transformation is inevitable. Here we notice a crucial line of demarcation between the various protest movements. In Europe, Brazil, Israel, and the United States, young, unemployed children of the middle class go into the streets to demonstrate in favor of better opportunities, whereas in Thailand, the middle class defends the old order as a means of preserving its status and privileges. This example flies in the face of the prevalent notion that the middle classes are the driving force behind democratization.

It would be worthwhile, then, to examine more closely the motivations, frustrations, and anxieties of Bangkok's »enraged citizens.« It is not easy to look past the shrill, nationalistic, sexist, violence-prone, anti-democratic, and sometimes quasi-fascist tirades of the demonstrators to identify the true causes of the middle class's rage and fear. The residents of Bangkok have by no means always been anti-democratic. On the contrary, it was urban civil society that created a liberal

democracy during the 1990s after decades of rule by an authoritarian military regime.

Today, however, some of the leading figures from that decade are asserting that Western-style democracy does not suit Thai society. How do we explain this radical change of heart? To its chagrin, the urban middle class came to realize that it would be a permanent minority under the new electoral democracy. The party of the establishment, the Democrat Party, lost one election after another to the party that embodied the interests of the Shinawatra clan. The telecom tycoon, Thaksin, had recognized that a development boom in the peripheral regions could be unleashed through a mix of local growth-promoting investments and populist gift-giving. Not only that, by satisfying the hopes and expectations of classes on the rise, he could also create a loyal electoral power base. The authoritarian style of governance practiced by the successive Shinawatra governments elected by big majorities made the position of Bangkok's middle class all the more precarious, since the minority rights and protective mechanisms written into the Thai constitution were being eroded more and more as time went on. Harsh measures against drug dealers in the north and Muslim separatists in the south cost thousands of innocent people their lives. In Bangkok itself opposition figures, activists, and journalists were now in the crosshairs of the autocratic Prime Minister Thaksin. The middle class felt threatened. The great wave of protests in 2006, 2008, and 2013 were triggered by the government's abuse of power.

What primarily mobilized the masses, however, was their impotent rage at endemic corruption. In Thailand a lively debate is still going on about whether corruption actually is on the rise, or whether broader segments of the population simply have become more aware of it due to its exposure by increasingly free media. The more decisive issue, though, is the encounter be-

*A young Electoral  
Democracy en-  
counters an old  
Patronage System*



tween a young electoral democracy and the old patronage system which rules political, economic, and social life throughout Thailand and which – mainly in the provinces – exhibits mafia-like patterns reminiscent of feudalism. A successful patron rewards his supporters, protects his clients, privileges his clan, distributes the spoils, and crushes his opponents. The elected representatives of the majority of the population brought this patrimonial logic along with them from the provinces to the capital.

As many citizens of Bangkok perceive the situation, such practices represent retrogression to the darkest periods of corruption and nepotism. The guilty parties were quickly identified: uneducated and uncivilized rural people (often disparagingly called »buffalos«), who auction their votes to the highest bidders among the rabble rousers of the political parties. From the viewpoint of the well-placed Bangkok residents, then, new social and economic development programs appeared to be little more than cynical, thinly disguised efforts to buy votes. Soon enough fear began to spread that these »populist« programs would end up bankrupting the state. Objectively the citizens of Bangkok contribute less in tax revenue to the national budget, on average, than do other Thais, yet they benefit at an above-average rate from public services. Nevertheless, the established middle classes feel cheated. In short, Bangkok's middle class feared »being plundered by corrupt politicians, who spend our money on populist projects to buy the votes of the greedy poor.« In a political cosmos such as Thailand's that bears the imprint of Buddhism, this was an untenable situation. Instead of virtuous, »good people« now there were corrupt »bad people« at the apex of society, whose immoral activities were bringing suffering into the world.

The political logic – or illogic – of the conservative protestors was obvious: If the uneducated majority was empowering

»bad men« in elections, then the franchise itself would have to be limited or abolished entirely. This anti-democratic discourse was encouraged by the traditional elites, who sensed that they could regain some ground in the battle for economic and political control of the country. Hence, under the pretext of restoring order and morality, the military and judiciary repeatedly intervened, intending to shatter the power base of the »elected autocrats.«

But in spite of bans on parties and politics, constitutional amendments, and behind-the-scenes intrigues by their opponents, the Shinawatra parties managed to return to power in 2008 and 2011 following triumphant election victories. In the aftermath of the eighteenth coup in Thailand's history, the military junta is relying on even harsher policies to achieve what their predecessors in the previous coup could not: smashing the Shinawatra clan's network once and for all. Given the far-advanced transformation and politicization of society, this attempt to turn back the historical clock may turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory.

Conversely, it also has become clear that, while electoral majorities may indeed advance the processes of democratization, consolidation of a stable democracy requires a broad social foundation that also includes the middle classes. Yet the rage of the Bangkok demonstrators suggests that the established middle class is not willing to go along with the current »deal.« This is precisely where one encounters the true dilemma of societies undergoing transformation: a new social contract granting all citizens equal rights and duties would be in the enlightened self-interest of all social groups. Yet as long as this social contract has not been finalized, the traditional elites and middle classes do not acknowledge that people out in the provinces have equal worth.

### *Collective Identity as the Basis for Social Solidarity*

In other words, social solidarity presupposes a modern collective identity in light of which every individual is understood to be endowed with equal rights and entitled to participate fully in society. The granting of full civic rights is not merely a theoretical matter. Social struggles such as those in Thailand cannot be settled until the upwardly-mobile strata in the provinces are granted the status of full participants in the country's political, economic, social, and cultural life. But it will not be possible to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities unless tax revenues are significantly expanded to finance the necessary reforms. In short, the enraged middle classes hold the tax key to the new social contract in their hands.

The only way to resolve social conflict would be to effect a compromise that included all classes: under such a compromise the elites would accept social democracy as the only legitimate form of government and would campaign for electoral mandates by offering need-based programs. In exchange for equality of opportunity, the majority would accept limitations on untrammelled majority rule in the form of checks and balances and the rule of law. Meanwhile, the middle class would get social peace, legal safeguards, and high-quality public goods as a quid pro quo for financing programs that benefit the entire political community.

To resolve the conflicts that accompany systemic transformation, the political and social order must be adapted to the imperatives of a complex economy and pluralistic society. In an environment shaped by fear of change, achieving political and economic innovation is by no means only a technical problem. Where there is no cultural tradition of social solidarity, it is not

easy to build the requisite trust, especially after years of conflicts. Perhaps the costs of transformational conflict must become unbearable before the social groups will show a willingness to compromise. It is not often understood that economic and political development depends on society's capacity to innovate, an ability that cannot be taken for granted; it depends on whether all the relevant social groups can be brought along down the developmental road. If social groups feel marginalized or believe that their identity is threatened, they will defend themselves. In every corner of the globe today we can observe the kinds of pathological excesses that systemic transformation can provoke. Hence, it is indispensable to preserve the social foundations of political and economic development. The requisite basic consensus can only be achieved through a social compromise among all classes.

The social conflicts now breaking out around the world should serve as a warning to all those who would like to take an axe to the social contract. There can be no »end of history« as long as economic arrangements and ways of life continue to change. The looming »third industrial revolution,« as Jeremy Rifkin calls it, has already begun to alter Western economies and societies in fundamental ways. The first battles over distribution issues (Occupy), co-determination (Stuttgart 21), and property rights (data retention/piracy) suggest that more and more groups are abandoning the old social contract. As development proceeds apace, struggles over how to reshape the political and social order are likely to grow more intense. The transformational conflicts of tomorrow will take place right here in our own backyard.



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Katrin Schuster

## Finding Reality in Fiction

### Nigeria and its Modern Literature

The events that took place between 1914 and 1918 are commonly referred to as a »World War«, yet debates about their meaning – especially this year – have focused on the German (or perhaps still the European) perspective. The history of the African continent is usually forgotten or repressed. There, by 1914, battles over boundaries and resources had long since been underway. By 1918 at the latest, Africa had changed so much that it was barely recognizable. The grapes of wrath sown there have flourished marvelously well, whether in Somalia, Rwanda, or the Congo.

Nigeria is unquestionably one of colonialism's most precarious »inventions.« The state of Nigeria was established by Great Britain in 1914. This feat

*Keeping the Fiction alive* was accomplished by merging three »protectorates« that were geographically contiguous, but otherwise had very little in common with one another at that time. At this year's BIGSAS Festival for African and African diaspora literature, the actor Michael Ojake, who was born in Lagos and now lives in Germany, summed up the burden of his native country in a trenchant comment: »Nigeria is a fiction!« The country has now been in existence for a century, but has never lived in peace. No one knows whether Nigeria will survive its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. So the job of writers and intellectuals, according to Ojake, is to »keep the fiction alive.«

During the three days of the Festival, which has been held every year since 2011 in Bayreuth (Upper Franconia), the words »Boko Haram« were constantly fluttering through the hall. They sometimes sounded menacing, while at other times it almost seemed as though they had been issued a

summons to appear. In still other instances, the words sounded ironic. Boko Haram was founded in 2002 as a political-religious group pledged to introduce sharia law. It did not clash violently with Nigerian security forces until 2009. During that conflict some 700 people were killed, and Boko Haram's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, died in police custody. Abubakar Shekau took over for him, and Boko Haram then became what it is even today: a collection of power-hungry, bloodthirsty men, the virulent afterbirth of the subjugation and dismemberment of the Bornu Sultanate. Beginning in 1400 the latter had ruled a united territory that today is divided up among three different states: Nigeria, Niger, and Chad.

We have grown accustomed to seeing the words »Boko Haram« translated as »Western learning is forbidden,« although there are many other variants. It is said that even the Hausa, Muslims who live in northern Nigeria, do not know exactly what it means. The well-known word »haram« does not cause much difficulty. It simply refers to whatever is taboo according to sharia law. The problem lies with »boko.« It is a Hausa word »originally meaning sham, fraud, inauthenticity and such, which came to represent western education and learning« (Paul Newman). In short, the word has undergone a shift of meaning from »deception« to »Western learning.«

One can imagine when that shift took place. The British colonialists arrived with all manner of evangelical missionaries in tow when they took over the territory of modern-day Nigeria and subjugated the powerful caliphates of the north. Of course, the West deceived others besides the Muslim population. Yet, unlike some other

groups, the Hausa refused to allow themselves to be Christianized, and so they remained subordinated, not so much numerically but in terms of education, as the country was taking crucial steps toward independence. The statement that Western learning is forbidden in Hausa Islam is little more than a tautology, since, in the case of Nigeria, »Western learning« can be equated with Christianity without much hesitation. And the situation created by Christianity in that country has caused brutal conflicts again and again, the bitterest of which was the Biafra War of 1967-1970. The primal scene of that war certainly resembles the events now taking place. At that time, too, everything began with pogroms against the »heretics« in the north.

On October 1, 1960, Nigeria got its independence, but the First Republic lasted only six years. In January of 1966, the Ibo military carried out a coup d'état against the government led at the time by the Hausa Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Balewa and the prime Minister of majority-Muslim northern Nigeria were killed. The Ibo Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi installed a military government, but survived his enthronement for only six months. At the end of July there was a counter-coup that resulted in the execution of Ironsi. In the north Nigerian Muslims began to seek bloody revenge against the Ibo, attacking Christians with machetes, knives, and axes. It is estimated that 30,000 Ibos lost their lives at that time, while another two million fled to the southeast where the petroleum deposits that sustained the country's budget were located. In that region the military dictatorship had never really ended; in fact, it was close to its zenith. On May 30, 1967, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military governor of Nigeria's southeastern region, proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Biafra.

The war between Biafra and the national army lasted for 30 months. Since Nigeria imposed a total blockade of Biafra and

Ojukwu saw himself as a man of principle, 1,000 people a day starved to death, in all at least one million. The famine began in July of 1969 when the Red Cross was forced to stop its relief efforts because an aid aircraft had been shot down. In Germany the Biafra Aid Action was founded (today known as the »Society for Endangered Peoples«), while in France »Doctors without Borders« came into being. Photographs of small children with distended bellies continue to haunt Western memory.

The fact that the media also served as a battlefield in the Biafra War has had consequences down to this day, especially literary ones. No theme from Nigerian history has been written about more often in novels and short stories than this national trauma. The first well-known work was penned by the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1979. *Sozaboy*, subtitled »a novel in rotten English,« relates the tale of a child soldier who tries desperately but assiduously to grasp the rhetorical rules and fronts in the war. The significance of honorable-sounding words such as »soldier boy,« which had originally lured him into the war, decays in the face of the reality of the victims' term »sozaboy.«

Saro-Wiwa came from Nigeria's southeast. The son of an Ogoni chief, he battled for many years as a politician, journalist, and author to protect the threatened Ogoni people, who lived in the Niger Delta, a region coveted mainly by Western oil companies and gradually destroyed by them. In May of 1994, Saro-Wiwa and eight of his associates were arrested once again, but this time the Nigerian government was deadly serious. In a trial that was pure farce, the nine members of the »Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People« were sentenced to death and hanged on November 10, 1995. Fourteen years later, the oil company Royal Dutch Shell paid \$15.5 million to the surviving members of his family, because the firm wanted to avoid a human rights trial in which Shell's com-

plicity in the death of those men would have been brought to light.

A few years after the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa an author bestrode the literary stage who today has become the poster-child of contemporary literature in Nigeria. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie debuted in 1999 with a volume of poetry and followed it up a year later with the drama, *For Love of Biafra*, a play written when she was only 21. She was born in Enugu, a town which functioned as the capital of the Independent Republic of Biafra from 1967-1970. In 2002 she published the short story »Half of a Yellow Sun« (the title refers to Biafra's flag), and then in 2006 a novel with the same title, which recently has been made into a movie and should come to theaters this year. Adichie differs from most of the authors who have written about the war, because she was born after it ended and thus has no direct experience of it.

»Half of a Yellow Sun« cleverly conceals its drawing board design brilliantly behind a dramatic story of love, sex, and betrayal. Nearly every per-

*Half of a Yellow Sun* perspective has its moments in the novel: that of the house-boy, who commits war crimes after being forcibly recruited into the army; that of the political idealist and the realistic pragmatist, and – last but not least – that of the white Englishman who has to acknowledge that he cannot tell the story of this conflict: »The war isn't my story to tell.« A baby serves as a metaphor for the young republic rooted in fractured identities and genealogies. It is adopted by the main character, Olanna, but is never

given a name; instead, it is simply referred to as »baby.« The novel ends in uncertainty about the whereabouts of Olanna's twin sister Kainene. She is not dead but has disappeared, and no one knows where to find her, which means that she cannot receive a decent burial. Thus, the file cannot be closed. The war never ends.

The most recent high-profile work about Biafra appeared in 2006. Its author was Chinua Achebe, usually treated as the patriarch of modern Nigerian (or even African) literature, who died on March 13 at age 82. For many years Achebe had expressed his views on Biafra only in passing or through stories, so the country awaited his essay »There was a Country« with bated breath. It turned out to be a peculiar work that has been rightly criticized for its propagandistic and perhaps slightly haughty pro-Biafra stance. Wole Soyinka, the first African, first black, and so far the only Nigerian Nobel Prize winner (1986), offered the harshest criticism of the essay, remarking: »I wished that Achebe had never written this book.«

UNESCO seems to have realized that it will take a long time before Nigeria finally achieves peace and tranquility. It has been awarding the title »World Capital of the Book« since 2001. Last year, the Nigerian city of Port Harcourt was selected, the first black-African city to be so honored. The city was founded in 1912 by the British governor, Frederick Lugard, to facilitate the transport of natural resources and is even today the political and economic heart of the Niger Delta. To keep this fiction alive ...



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## The European Parliament as Democratic Conscience

### TTIP-A Challenge to Politics and Society

*The acronym TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) abbreviates much more than merely a »free trade agreement« between the EU and the United States. If it went into effect like the existing CETA-agreement with its investment protection clause, it could have far-reaching consequences for the rule of law and democracy. In a talk with Thomas Meyer, the SPD deputy to the European Parliament and Chair of its Trade Committee, Bernd Lange, sheds light on the difficult negotiation process, the controversial mandate given to the negotiating team, and the relationship between the various actors and the European Commission.*

**NG/FH:** One of the fundamental problems plaguing the entire TTIP process is that it has been conducted in secret. Starting with the mandate, which was never accessible to the public, the whole way in which negotiations have been handled is quite odd. Even deputies in the European Parliament are not allowed to know everything. So people are beginning to ask themselves: Why do we want this whole thing? It does generate enormous suspicion.

**Bernd Lange:** Here we need to draw some distinctions. The European Parliament does have open access to the entire matter, as do our colleagues in the German Parliament. They may not always be aware of it, but they can access it over the server. What we do not get – and this is the delicate part – are the U.S. documents, i.e., the Americans' negotiating position. And I do find that unacceptable, because the negotiation process cannot be evaluated properly without those documents. That affects the relationship between the public and the Parliament.

Another point concerns the mandate.

Compared to those issued for previous trade agreements it is far more wide-ranging, e.g., as compared to the agreement with South Korea. This has naturally provoked quite a bit of public discussion. One of its weak points is that this mandate has never been made public. That is the reason why our basic demand is: Let us publish the mandate and the basic negotiating documents so that we can encourage a reasonable society-wide discourse.

**NG/FH:** The rumor is that the mandate is far from innocuous. It might permit things to be done that would be highly problematic from the viewpoint of Social Democrats, labor union members, and society itself.

**Lange:** It is indeed a very broad mandate, and that is something new when we compare it to classic trade agreements. It contains one section that is not acceptable for reasons of democratic accountability because it would permit too much intervention in regulatory fields that we would prefer to keep under our own control and supervision. We have to tell the Commission very clearly where the boundaries of their negotiating mandate lie.

I believe that we must think about whether the negotiating mandate as a whole is something that still ought to be pursued, or whether we should take a critical look at it in November.

That would be the right time, because then there will be a new Commission. Besides, by that time the midterm elections will be over in the USA, so we will have a better grasp of the situation there. So far the United States has not even budged in the negotiations. Finally, the mandate provides for the possibility of an in-

vestment protection mechanism, based on an arbitration board, that does not exist in any other trade accord. Presumably that will be the biggest stumbling block in the way of the trade agreement.

**NG-FH:** Experts have taken a highly critical position on the so-called ISDS clauses (*Investor-State Dispute Settlement*, ed.) in the pending CETA treaty between the EU and Canada, because those clauses leave open the possibility that arbitration procedures will be triggered in certain cases. Wouldn't that be a back door TTIP for American firms that have subsidiaries in Canada, which of course could be established anytime?

**Lange:** Obviously, that is something that will have to be weighed carefully. Even in the treaty with Canada, arbitration courts are not necessary. In the European Parliament we have already passed a resolution in which we state exactly that. In this respect it will be a preliminary litmus test of whether we are going to accept a treaty of this kind. I don't take that for granted, because there are many arguments that speak against authorizing arbitration jurisdiction outside of the regular courts. Incidentally, Germany has not agreed to this practice in its trade accords with OECD countries, and we should not accept it for TTIP either. The process will likely drag on for another six months; at that point the text will be submitted to the Parliament. The question is whether we should accept the text of the treaty at all in its current wording, or whether we should insist that the government renegotiate it.

**NG-FH:** How do things stand now in the European Parliament? Is there a majority for positions such as these, or does one have to be cobbled together against resistance?

**Lange:** In the old Parliament we would have had a majority for it, but I can't yet

gauge precisely how things will look in the new one. But I believe we can channel the discussion in that direction.

**NG-FH:** Can we go over the contents of the treaty again? I don't want to rehash all of the critical points, but I would like to pick out a few of them. Apart from the issue of arbitration proceedings, the rest of the treaty also seems problematic. Let's assume for a moment that the treaty could be concluded without the arbitration procedures. Even then, protections for labor and the environment would be negatively impacted—central concerns of social democracy. And if there were arbitration courts, they could override the rule of law and democracy in favor of business. Where are the principal dangers?

**Lange:** ISDS is a no-go for me. Even if certain reforms were instituted, the general problem would not be solved. Neither Germany nor the EU has concluded an accord such as this with any country that has a reasonable legal system.

Then, of course, one has to look at the other areas where we have interests that should be pursued aggressively, e.g., whether tariff systems, crash tests, and certifications could be improved in order to save money. One has to balance these interests, because there are also areas in which we must be careful to protect our own position. This would be the case, for example, if further liberalization of the service sector came up for debate. Let us say that requirements for architects and engineers from the USA were eased so that they could work here; such a step cannot mean that, in return, we would have to liberalize certain sectors of public services. Or let us consider labor law: We must make sure that employees from the USA are hired on our terms and not those of their own country. Or that companies have to accept core labor norms, which would also lead to an improvement in the situation in the United States. In

these areas one has to look carefully at what can be achieved. Up to now there is still no text – only position papers from both sides. Now everything will depend on negotiating skills.

**NG-FH:** The press is reporting that the concept of »mutual recognition« has come up often in previous papers. The problem associated with that concept arises quite clearly with respect to food security – procedures in the USA are notably less stringent than they are here. Is this »mutual recognition« a gateway for, let us say, the importation of noxious chemicals? Wouldn't we then have to accept the less-stringent American norms when we import goods from there?

**Lange:** Exactly, and that is the reason we can only allow it in certain areas where it is safe. It is highly problematic in the area of chemicals. Here European legislation is very good, whereas the United States does not draw important distinctions. Also, over there they simply respond to risks as they arise. Risk analysis is very weak. Moreover, there are quite different approaches when it comes to chemicals in pharmaceutical products and cosmetics. Evidently, these differences have led to many more chemicals being banned in Europe. It is very difficult to compare the two systems.

**NG-FH:** In German debates there is a rising chorus of voices warning against creeping de facto expansion of the areas that are to be subject to the treaty rules. To avoid that, would it be possible to agree on positive lists that define, in crystal-clear language, which areas of the economy will be subject to the treaty and which ones not? Is there any chance that something like that could have a place in the treaty?

**Lange:** Personally, I will go to bat for it and always remind the Commission about it. The risk inherent in a negative list and a

vast area of exceptions is that even then one thing or another will be overlooked. For that reason, the principle of a positive list in a trade accord is clearly better.

**NG-FH:** How do things look in the field of art and culture, for example in the mass media, communications, and electronic media? Are those areas excluded?

**Lange:** If you look at the mandate, audiovisual services are exempted and the promotion of cultural diversity in Europe is explicitly emphasized in six different places. That means that not much should change, actually. On the other hand, the United States is also trying to advance its interests. They have put forward a proposal to include audiovisual services in the negotiations, even though they know that such a thing contradicts our position. As is proper, the Commission did not negotiate about that. We have to be very careful that the USA doesn't get its way in these areas.

**NG-FH:** So this is really not the right time to start relaxing?

**Lange:** Absolutely not! We must keep rapping the Commission on the knuckles.

**NG-FH:** There are hard-boiled neo-liberals involved in the negotiations on the Commission's side. Assuming that one had an interest in ensuring that social and ecological policies remained a live option in Europe, one might see this state of affairs as quite problematic. For example, we read that the negotiating team has had a quite a few more meetings with lobbyists from the business community than it has with those from NGOs. There are thus some clear risks built into the proceedings.

**Lange:** I certainly agree with you there. The Commission really is biased in favor of business interests. And it tends to favor the big players over the common good.



That has to be corrected, both in respect to economic and to social and sustainability aspects.

**NG/FH:** Isn't there also a danger that public pressure will in fact lead to improvements but that, as negotiations near the end, there will be arguments about all the previous efforts and the many small compromises achieved, so that ultimately a sub-optimal scheme with serious flaws will be accepted, an accord with many problematic elements?

**Lange:** In response to that question, I would reply that the European parliament is the democratic conscience of the EU, so it will be very cautious in reaching its decision. That was apparent already in the case of ACTA, the planned accord intended to protect digital property. Twenty-seven governments, the European Commission and twenty nation-states agreed to it, and a lot of pressure was brought to bear on us to accept the agreement, despite some weaknesses in it, because the negotiations had taken so long. The European Parliament rejected the accord and now it is dead.

People always act as though a mixed agreement is absolutely necessary, because the Bundestag and Bundesrat in Germany as well as other European parliaments will have a chance to vote. I don't know of a single case in which the parliament has not followed the government's lead. It would be unique for a parliament explicitly to repudiate the government in order to reject an accord. In light of that fact, one should not sell short the EU Parliament's role as a democratic conscience.

**NG/FH:** But the Social Democrats are pretty much united in their critical posture – or are they divided?

**Lange:** Naturally, the discussion has provoked an array of different responses. Within limits, the critique of ISDS is quite wide-

spread. But when it comes to the other issues, there are different evaluations. Germany and Austria have had a lively public debate. The Swedes discuss it less, because they are highly export-oriented, and are more likely to spot opportunities in it. France is sharply focused on the cultural aspects, while in Spain they are looking to exports to help them overcome the economic crisis. In short, there are differences of nuance, but in the final analysis the crucial tasks are to maintain standards in the areas of social policy and the environment, and to keep up the critique of ISDS. Those are the things that have united Social Democrats.

**NG/FH:** Now there is also another argument, a surprising one in light of the previous discussion, that sees TTIP as a possible tool for reshaping globalization in progressive ways, especially in respect to social and ecological issues. In other words, this argument interprets the TTIP as an opportunity for social democracy. Can TTIP really become a social lever to influence the globalizing market economy?

**Lange:** In the realm of pure theory that might be the case, but of course you have to look at the real persons who are involved here. Naturally, we have contacts with American labor unions, and they hold a position very similar to our own, saying that ISDS ought to be rejected. But they want to see whether a change is possible in the area of wage earners' rights. As we know, there are serious problems on just that point in the southern states. Certain core labor norms, fundamental ones, are not accepted there. For example in the American South only slavery and child labor are prohibited. In other words, down there they subscribe to only two of the eight core labor norms. Furthermore, collective bargaining rights are not protected. So on those issues it might be possible to accomplish something. We have

formulated the demand – a kind of »red line« for social Democrats – that all eight core labor norms must be implemented. To that degree one can use the trade accord to achieve real improvements for human beings, if one makes serious efforts to do so. Right now I doubt whether that is the central objective of the negotiators from the European Commission, and I also doubt whether it's the objective of the American negotiators.

**NG/FH:** There is a highly ambiguous argument making the rounds recently that can be summed up more or less as follows: whatever the shortcomings of this accord may be, its geostrategic significance outweighs everything else, particularly its role in enabling the Europeans and Americans to close ranks more resolutely in global politics. Does this argument have enough potential to neutralize critique?

**Lange:** There are two ideological positions in the European Parliament. One of them rejects everything. It wants to claim the scalp of capitalism and does not examine

the specific content of the accord in detail. The other ideological position assumes that the Americans are our friends. They think that we need geostrategic and geopolitical cooperation. They therefore want to sign, regardless of what is in the accord. There are noisy debates between the adherents of these positions. Here, the Social Democrats have the only appropriate stance, one that seeks improvements in sustainability and labor policies, and greater economic equality, and puts forward clear policy lines. That is the basis for our judgments. The issue is not about defeating capitalism or improving the global geostrategic situation. One has to see what is possible. That is not intended as a compromise, but rather as an objective evaluation. The decisive thing will be to see whether we can sharply reduce the list of issues on the table, use the time well, and reflect on whether negotiators can work with a more tightly defined mandate or whether we will just have to say that this is not going to work. Above all it is sobering to note that the United States has barely budgeted at all for the last year and a half.

*Christoph Ostheimer*

## **Religious Fanaticism Meets Modern Technology**

### **The »Islamic State« on the Internet**

Because of their multi-national composition, the combat units currently engaged in the many civil war theaters around the Arab world seem reminiscent of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War – at least at first glance. But in other respects they bear no resemblance to the volunteer units of the 1930s. Instead, we are dealing with radical Islamist forces that care little about a democratic or socialist future. Their real goal is to restore an ima-

gined, glorious past in line with the values of their fundamentalist exegesis of Islam. At present, the most dangerous of these groups is probably the one that calls itself the Islamic State or IS (previously known as the Islamic State in Iraq and [greater] Syria, ISIS). Beginning in June, the terrorists made a partial alliance with some other Sunni rebel groups, such as the followers of Saddam Hussein's deposed Baath party. Their combined forces managed to



gain control over large parts of Iraq along with some neighboring territories in Syria where they proclaimed an Islamic caliphate. The leader of this unprecedented terror regime is the »caliph,« Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who ultimately claims authority over the entire Islamic world. The IS calls upon Muslims worldwide to get involved in the armed struggle and help it achieve its objectives; meanwhile it is constantly enlarging the territory under its control.

To fill the ranks of its fighters with new recruits from all over the world and spread fear among its opponents, the declared enemies of enlightenment and modernity make use of the most modern means of communication. Whereas the International Brigades still had to rely on war reporters like George Orwell, the IS can disseminate its hate-filled messages throughout the world almost instantaneously via Smartphones and the Internet. Professionally-crafted videos reminiscent of trailers for action blockbusters show quick cuts of jihadists marching in martial array, a variety of battle scenes, as well as war crimes such as the mass murder of prisoners.

Potential recruits are lured in not just by the hope of paradise, but also by rather secular benefits. Adventure, social recognition, or just plain wealth are all offered implicitly as rewards for signing up. The IS videos, stressing camaraderie, religious devotion, and fantasies of power, yet staged with the aesthetic of action films and first-person shooters, are miles away from the long-winded tracts of an Osama Bin Laden. The broad audience range that such propaganda is intended to cover is indicated by the fact that versions of it also exist in Western languages.

And in fact there are quite a few citizens of Western nations fighting alongside Muslims from Arab or Central Asian countries in a plethora of terror brigades. One British citizen has attained awful notoriety for appearing as the executioner of foreign civilians in some execution videos evident-

ly intended for a Western audience. According to official security sources there are at least 400 Germans among the jihadists, including a by-now notorious Berlin resident by the name of Denis Cuspert, who was once well known as the rapper Deso Dogg. Cuspert first was radicalized by his association with Salafist circles before joining the Syrian Al-Nusra Front in 2013. In 2014 he switched sides to the IS, for which he now composes battle songs and propaganda messages. In July of 2014 he turned up in a video celebrating the seizure of a natural gas field in the Syrian province of Homs. Cuspert is shown next to corpses, some mutilated, while another German Islamist gloats about war crimes. Cuspert's defection from Al-Nusra to the IS shows in exemplary fashion how far ahead of other Islamist groups the IS has moved. Its superior appeal is evident in its military victories, copious financial resources, and plundered war materiel, not to mention its brutality and radicalism. But one should not overlook the professionalism of the propaganda it churns out in an effort to recruit new fighters.

The terror group also uses Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, thus taking advantage of the offerings on Web 2.0. Their excessive use sometimes has brought results that are downright absurd. For example, alongside images of martial fighters and destroyed places of worship, one sees digitally-altered photos of tanks taken through color filters as well as sleeping kittens curled up beside machine guns. Images of cats, such as the so-called lolcats, have enjoyed wide popularity on the Net for quite a while now. The IS terrorists justify their images of the »cats of jihad« by citing a tradition that Abu Huraira, one of Mohammed's companions, had a soft spot for them. Evidently, the propagandists of jihad are willing to pull off some rather daring sleights of hand to ingratiate themselves with the youth and Internet culture.

The jihadists also have shown themselves to be adept at technology. In April, they managed to devise their own app that overwhelmed Twitter with propaganda by circumventing the short messaging service's spam filters. The one thing that has given the IS fighters a decisive advantage in their social network campaigns is their ability to disseminate images, videos, and tweets even in real time. In a way similar to what happened in Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring, viewers get the feeling that they are right there live on the scene if they just follow the right hashtag.

Furthermore, the group publishes »business reports« on the Internet laying out, in the professional manner usually seen with big companies and down to the last detail, the number of fighters, their attacks, and the military equipment they have pillaged. These »track records« serve mainly to help the group attract donations, for example from wealthy patrons in the Gulf States. When considered together with their other sources of funding such as protection rackets, sales of raw materials, and fencing looted cultural treasures, these donations have made the IS the world's richest terrorist group and enabled it to offer major financial assistance to its fighters. That is yet another important factor in the IS's successful recruitment campaigns.

The IS propagandists also see to it that the »caliphate« is depicted as a stronghold of Islamic order and stability in contrast to the chaotic, disintegrating Arab nation-states. They do this by broadcasting images of cheering civilians, staged loyalty oaths, and street parades, the routes of which are lined by their ever-present black flags. In this way, they complement the fear and terror spread by their threats and executions with scenes of a »godly« political and social

order in the new caliphate. One should not underestimate the role that this Internet strategy might play in enabling the IS to solicit more donors and recruit more young men. The terror group clearly attaches special significance to its Net campaign on account of the latter's global reach. That much became clear when it granted a team from Vice News, a messaging portal directed at a young, net-savvy audience, the exclusive opportunity to film a documentary in territories occupied by the IS – accompanied of course by a propaganda officer.

By combining an anti-modern ideology with modern propaganda and organizational models, the IS has transformed itself into the world's currently most successful jihadist group. State-like structures are linked to a terrorist economic enterprise with global reach. Unsurprisingly, the operators of social networks are less than enthusiastic about the use of their platforms by IS and other groups, especially given the revolting excesses of violence disseminated over their media. YouTube, Twitter & co. are aided by users who report the accounts and can recommend them for closure. A variety of individuals and groups, especially those from the Islamic world, try to dissuade potential recruits to terrorist organizations from joining and generally oppose cyber-jihad by broadcasting (e.g., under the hashtag #NO2ISIS) critical articles and messages from Islamic clerics. Kurdish groups, too, as well as their supporters, use social networks intensively to draw attention to their desperate plight in IS-occupied territory and the looming threat of genocide there. In other words, there is a struggle against the terrorist International going on in the Internet that is analogous to the conflict being fought out in Iraq and Syria.



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