Religion and the Populist Radical Right in Western Europe

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Declaration of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand the role of religion in the discourse of Western Europe's populist radical right parties. Populist radical right parties have made extraordinary electoral gains in a number of Western European nations. Many of these parties call for a return to Christian and/or Judeo-Christian values, and for the Christian and/or Judeo-Christian identity of their respective nations to be respected and preserved. Muslims, in particular, are singled out by the populist radical right as a threat to Western Christian values and identity. Yet these populist radical right parties do not appear to be advocates of a religious doctrine or way of life; rather, they most often frame themselves as defenders of secularism. This is curious: if populist radical right parties in Western Europe are secular, when then has Christian or Judeo-Christian identity become such an important aspect of their discourse?

Building on sociologist Rogers Brubaker's observation that populist radical right parties in Western Europe are not genuinely religious, but rather Christian identitarian in orientation, this thesis contends that populist radical right parties use religion in their discourse in order to exclude Muslims from European society, and to protect their respective secular nationalisms. Therefore the primary question asked in this thesis is: why is religion used as a tool to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe?

The thesis proposes a hypothesis: Western Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of Western European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into Western European 'culture.' This recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed secular Europeans to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian. These effects have precipitated the formation of Christianist secularism, a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' A group of populist radical right parties in Western Europe, then, have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define their respective national identities in religio-civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.'

To test this hypothesis, the thesis analyses the discourse of two populist radical right parties in Western Europe: The National Front (now known as *National Rally*) of France, and the Party for Freedom of the Netherlands. This analysis has two parts: The first tests part of my hypothesis: that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture.' The second consists of Critical Discourse Analysis of three selected texts produced by the respective leaders of the National Front and Party for Freedom, Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders, produced during the 2012-2017 period. The Critical Discourse Analysis seeks answers in the selected to the following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist secularism? (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society?

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Religion and the Populist Radical Right in Western Europe: An Introduction

Has religion returned to Western European politics?[1] Throughout the continent, populist radical right politicians are calling for a return to Christian or Judeo-Christian values, and for the Christian identity of their respective nations to be respected and preserved.[2] Muslims, in particular, are singled out by the populist radical right as a threat to Western Christian values and identity.[3] And populist radical right parties are, increasingly, winning a greater share of the vote while spreading this message.

At first glance it may appear the rise of the populist radical right indicates that, after decades of secularisation, Western Europeans are returning to the religion of their parents and grandparents. Yet this does not appear to be occurring. There are no indications that Europeans are, by and large, becoming more religious. Fewer and fewer Western Europeans are attending church, and disbelief in the Christian God and traditional Christian sexual morality is growing year by year. Western Europeans, rather, appear to be increasingly irreligious.[4] Moreover, the parties of the Western European populist radical right do not tell their supporters to go to church, believe in God, or practice traditional Christian values. Instead, they do something rather strange: they claim that their respective national identities and cultures are the product of a Christian or Judeo-Christian tradition which either encompasses – or has produced – secularism.

For example, in an interview conducted by Cecile Alduy, French National Front leader Marine Le Pen remarked upon the challenge posed to French culture by Muslim immigrants.[5] Having lauded *Laïcité* as a necessary form of protection for homosexuals, women, and secular Muslims against religious law, Le Pen opined that Muslim immigrants had been making "increasing demands that collide with the mores, the codes, the ways of life, the

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[1] Elements of this thesis were previously published in Nicholas Morieson, "Are contemporary populist movements hijacking religion?" *Journal of Religious and Political Practice,* 3(1-2), pp.88-95, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2017.1292171.

[2] Nadia Marzouki and Duncan McDonnell, "Populism and Religion," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* , McDonnell, Roy (eds), C. Hurst and Co: London, 8, 2016.

[3] Ibid, 5-6.

[4] A Pew survey indicates that Europeans are remarkably irreligious. See "How Religious commitment varies by country among people of all ages," *Pew Research Centre,* June 13, 2018. http://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/how-religious-commitment-varies-by-country-among-people-of-all-ages/. Church attendance remains very low in most Western European countries. See "Being Christian in Western Europe," *Pew Research Centre,* May 29, 2018. http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/.

[5] Throughout this thesis I refer to the French political party now known as *National Rally* by their previous name, *National Front (Front National).* I do this because during the period surveyed in my case studies – 2012-2017 – Marine Le Pen had not yet changed the party's name. Thus I prevent any confusion by using the name with which the party referred to itself during 2012-2017 (and indeed from the party's conception until 2018).

habits, of a country very anciently founded on Judeo-Christian values."[6] These are interesting and telling remarks. *Laïcité* was devised in opposition to the political and cultural domination of the Catholic Church, and the secular values it extols in contemporary France – equality under the law for homosexuals, women, and non-Christians – differ in important ways from traditional Christian values.[7] Indeed, some Christians and non-Christians would find *Laïcité* and Judeo-Christian values as almost antithetical. How, then, is it possible to reconcile Len Pen's desire to protect France's Judeo-Christian values from Muslim immigrants with her belief in *Laïcité* and a public sphere absent of religion?

Le Pen is not alone in holding that Judeo-Christian values and secularism[8] must be defended from the growing threat of Islam. Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 a number of populist right-wing[9] anti-immigration, anti-Muslim political parties have achieved a significant measure of electoral success across Europe and inside European Union (hereafter EU) parliament. The hallmark of these populist parties is the fusion of xenophobia, particularly a fear of Muslim immigrants and their culture, with anti-establishment feeling largely directed at 'elites,' centrist parties, and the European Union. Yet while each of these populist parties must be considered unique, they nonetheless share a common belief that the 'Judeo-Christian' and/or Christian identity and values of Europe must be protected from globalisation and Islamisation. This, then, is the puzzle which this thesis explores: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe?

Almost all the electorally successful populist right-wing parties of Western Europe have made the alleged imminent Islamisation of Europe the central issue around which they

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[6]Marine Le Pen, quoted by Alduy, Cecile in "Has Marine Le Pen Already Won the Battle for the Soul of France?"*The Nation,* March 5 2014. https://www.thenation.com/article/has-marine-le-pen-already-won-battle-soul-france/.

[7] On Laïcité and French politics and society see Talal Asad, "Reflections on Laïcité and the Public Sphere," *Social Science Research Council: Items and Issues,* 5:3, 2005. http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7Ba11f41f4-3160-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf

[8] Laïcité can be distinguished from secularism. Laïcité is a French state based arrangement, and not a widespread sociological phenomenon. See Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam,* George Holoch (Trans.) New York: Columbia Press, 2007.

[9] See Anton Pelinka "Right-wing populism: Concept and typology," in *Right-wing populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse,* Wodak, KhosraviNik, Mral, London:Bloomsbury, 2013 pp.3-23 for a discussion of the nature of right-wing populism. For a critical view of the possibility of defining populism, see Margaret Canovan, *Populism*, London: Junction Books, 1981. My own understanding of right-wing populism is informed byPelinka.

mobilize support.[10] For example, the Dutch Party for Freedom appears to have built its support partly upon the claim that unless Muslim immigration is halted, the Islamisation of the Netherlands will become inevitable. Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders demands that "Judeo-Christianity and Humanism" be made the "leading culture" of the Netherlands in order to protect the country's "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" identity and heritage.[11] In a parallel development, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), which has claimed that Muslim immigrants threaten Britain's 'Judeo-Christian values,'[12] won the largest share of seats in European Parliament at the 2014 European Union elections in Britain.[13] Such was UKIP's significance in Britain that the mainstream Conservative Party has, for fear of losing much of its traditional constituency to UKIP, adopted some of UKIP's Euroscepticism and rhetoric of protecting 'Christian' values.[14] Elsewhere in Western Europe the electoral shift to the populist right has been more dramatic. The anti-immigrant and deeply anti-Muslim Swiss People's Party, which successfully campaigned in 2009 to ban the construction of new Minarets in Switzerland, now holds the largest number of seats in Swiss parliament.[15] A similar effect can be detected across Scandinavia, where the parties of the populist radical right have become the second or third largest parties in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland.[16]

The newfound electoral success of the populist right is significant, because it has been driven by a transformation of radical right politics. Traditionally, radical right politics has been driven by a concern with 'race' and ethnicity, and a commitment to preserving traditional values and hierarchies. The contemporary populist radical right denies being racist, condemns anti-Semitism, and claims itself to be a protector of secular, liberal values, and of the working classes from 'elites.'[17] In the place of the politics of 'race,' the populist radical right concerns itself with the alleged cultural and religious threat posed by religious immigrants to national cohesion and European Judeo-Christian civilisation.

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[10] Hans-Georg Betz and Susi Meret, "Right-wing populist parties and the working class vote: what have you done for us lately?" in *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, Jens Rydgren (Ed.) London and New York: Routledge, 2013, 116.

[11] See Wilders quoted in Teun Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, 114.

[12] Nigel Farage, quoted in Kiran Moodley, "Nigel Farage says Britain needs to stand up for its 'Judeo-Christian values' to combat home-grown militants," *Independent,* September 4 2014.

[13] "UK election results," *BBC News,* http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/events/vote2014/eu-uk-results

[14] Steven Swinford, "David Cameron says Christians should be 'more evangelical'",*The Telegraph,* 16 April 2014.

[15] "Switzerland swings to the right, as anti-immigration party wins election," *Reuters,* 2015.

[16] Mark Leonard, "Why even Scandinavia is moving to the right," *The New Statesman,* July 2 2015.

[17] For a full discussion of the transformation of the European far-right see Chetan Bhatt, "The New Xenologies of Europe: Civil Tensions and Mythic Pasts," *Journal of Civil Society,* 8:3, (September 2012) pp. 307-326.

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That religion has become a central element of populist right ideology is an especially significant development. After all, religion appeared to have declined as a significant issue in Western European politics during the 20th century. Why has it returned to prominence? In the 1960s and 1970s it was widely believed that the process of modernization – industrialization, urbanization, and scientific education – would precipitate secularisation,[18] the privatization of religion, and religion's separation from politics and public life.[19] This set of assumptions were core aspects of Peter Berger's secularisation thesis.[20] Yet by the 1980s it was becoming clear that the secularisation of the world had not come to pass. One of the architects of secularisation theory, sociologist Peter Berger, subsequently amended secularization theory to show how modernisation need not entail secularisation, and that religion can thrive in a globalised modern world.[21]

However, Berger argued as recently as 2014 that Western Europe has remained largely secularised and that religion has little influence over public life and political decision making in a Western European context,[22] a view shared by a number of other prominent sociologists.[23] Yet if Western European politics is secular, why should populist radical right parties in Western Europe experience electoral success while praising Christian and/or Judeo-Christian values, and calling for the religious heritage of Western Civilisation to be preserved? Moreover, why has religion become a central element in populist radical right discourse?

The question is especially pertinent because the populist radical right has grown highly influential and powerful in Western Europe since the 2000s. Indeed, the populist radical right

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[18] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *TheDesecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* Peter L. Berger (ed.) Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 3-5.

[19] See Peter L. Berger *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books, 1967; Bryan R. Wilson*, Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment,* London: Watts, 1966, and Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society,* New York: Macmillan, 1967, on the original secularisation thesis.

[20] Peter L. Berger *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books, 1967.

[21] See Berger, 1999.

[22] Peter L. Berger, "Peter Berger on Resurgence of Religion and Decline of Secularization Theory". YouTube. 2 March 2015.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHlDyR102G8.

[23] This view is not Berger's alone, but is echoed in Bryan Wilson, "The secularization thesis: criticisms and rebuttals," in *Secularization and Social Integration,* Laermans, Wilson, Billiet, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998 pp. 44-66; Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West,* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002; Steve Bruce, "The curious case of an unnecessary recantation: Peter Berger and Secularization," in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion,* Heelas, Martin, Woodhead (eds), London and New York: Routledge, 2011 pp. 87-100; Bryan S Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the state,* Cambridge:Cambridge University Publishing, 2011, 11.

is no longer a spectre haunting Europe; it is a powerful player in mainstream European politics, able to shape the foreign and domestic policies of numerous Western and Eastern European nations, and a powerful bloc inside European parliament. In Austria, the Netherlands, France, Poland, Switzerland, Italy, and Hungary, populists have dismantled the comfortable centrist consensus on the efficacy of neoliberalism and mass immigration of Europe's traditional governing parties. Indeed, populism's growth has come primarily at the expense of Europe's mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties, some of which experienced a dramatic loss in support in a remarkably short period.[24]

During the 2012-2017 period, populist radical right parties experienced rapid growth and unprecedented electoral success. In 2017, the Marine Le Pen led populist radical right National Front achieved its best ever result at a French election, winning more than 33% of the vote in a Presidential run-off election, and emerging as the second most popular party in France.[25] Significantly, the 2017 French Presidential elections saw the traditional governing parties of the centre-right and centre-left eclipsed by the National Front and a new technocratic neoliberal movement – *En Marche!* – led by investment banker turned politician Emmanuel Macron.

Dutch parliamentary elections in 2017 saw not only the populist radical right Party for Freedom win its highest share of the vote, and emerge as the second largest party in the Netherlands, but also saw the emergence of a new and increasingly popular populist radical right party, the 'Forum for Democracy.' In 2015 the populist radical right Law and Justice party won elections in Poland. Hungarian politics became increasingly dominated throughout the period by radical right populism, in particular by President Viktor Orban's Fidesz party, and the more extreme Jobbik party.[26] The third largest party in Germany, despite the country's post-war aversion to radical right politics, is a populist radical right party – the

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[24] In the 2018 Italian elections the centre-left Democratic Party and centre-right *Forza Italia* suffered a 6% and 7% loss of support respectively. See "Italian Elections2018: Full Results," *The Guardian,* March 5, 2018. *https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2018/mar/05/italian-elections-2018-full-results-renzi-berlusconi.* At the 2017 French Presidential elections the centre-left Socialist Party and centre-right *Les Republicains* candidates both failed to make the second round of voting. After parliamentary elections in 2017, the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) retained just 9 of the 38 seats it held after the 2012 parliamentary elections. See "Dutch Election Results," *The Economist,* March 16, 2017. https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/03/16/dutch-election-results.

[25] See the official results from the French interior ministry as reported in The Guardian, Sean Clarke and Josh Holder, "French Presidential election May 2017 – full second round results and analysis," *The Guardian,* 26 May, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/may/07/french-presidential-election-results-latest.

[26] Zoltan Adam and Adndras Bozoki note the 'takeover' of Hungary by right wing populists in "The God of Hungarians: Religion and Right-Wing Populism in Hungary" in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* C. Hurst and Co:London, 2016, 130-132.

Alternative for Germany.[27] The rise of the populist radical right is thus a Europe wide phenomenon, affecting the majority of – though not all – European nations.

What is the populist radical right?

It can be somewhat difficult to define the boundaries of the populist radical right. I use the term to describe parties which are – to use Cas Mudde's categorisation – nativist, authoritarian, and populist. Mudde argues that populist radical right parties are nativist insofar as they claim "that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ...and that non-native elements ...are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state." They are 'authoritarian' – insofar as they show "a general disposition to glorify, to be subservient to and remain uncritical toward authoritative figures of the ingroup and to take an attitude of punishing outgroup figures in the name of some moral authority".[28] Equally, they are populist insofar as they hold to "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonte generale* (general will) of the people.[29]

This categorisation, while fitting, tells us little about what populist radical right parties in Western Europe are actually like. In the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe, nativism, authoritarianism, and populism all play important roles, but what is interesting is how religion and religious identity intersects with each of them. For example, the populist radical right's nativism is influenced by its conception of 'the people' and the culture of their respective nation-states as (Judeo-)Christian and secular. Thus they may argue people who share a Judeo-Christian heritage and secular worldview form the native 'ingroup,' and furthermore that people who do not share this heritage and worldview are a threat to the culture and identity of 'the people.' Equally, despite claiming to be defenders of freedom, the parties of the populist radical right believe that as representatives of 'the people,' they have the right to exclude non-native (i.e. non-Christian and secular) people

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[27] See Sean Clarke, "German Elections 2017:Full Results," *The Guardian,* September 25, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/sep/24/german-elections-2017-latest-results-live-merkel-bundestag-afd.

[28] Adorno et al quoted by Mudde in Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press**,** 2007, 22.

[29] Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 2004, pp. 542– 563, 543.

from their societies, and to give a privileged place to Judeo-Christian and secular culture and identity.

Populist radical right parties in Western Europe frequently frame themselves as defenders of a Judeo-Christian and Humanist, or Christian and secular, tradition, and claim Islam is inimical to this tradition because it cannot secularise.[30] This framing has become an important element in their conception of 'the people,' as well as their conception of the outgroups they allege are threats to 'the people' and their nation-state. As a result, discourse is vital to populist radical right parties, insofar as they see politics "in terms of a 'metapolitical' contestation of the power to define concepts and shape discourse.[31] Expressions of Christian and Judeo-Christian identity are thus a significant part of the discourse of the populist radical right. They play an important role in constructing 'the people,' and determining who can be counted among the ingroup and who must be excluded. How, then, can the populist radical right's discursive use of religion be explained?

Making sense of religion's role in Western European populist radical right discourse

Religion's role in populist ideology and discourse has been noted by several scholars, but formal studies of the use of religion by populists are rare. Moreover, studies analysing and categorising the different ways in which religion is used by various populist parties are extremely rare. Because the purpose of this thesis is to understand how populist radical right parties use religion in their discourse, it is necessary to define the boundaries of 'religion' and 'the secular' in order to understand the role each plays in the discourse of the parties examined in this thesis. Defining these terms, however, is difficult. For example, in his influential essay "Religion as a cultural system," anthropologist Clifford Geertz described religion as "(1) a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-

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[30] See for example the following speeches by Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen, in which their respective national cultures are described as secular and Christian, or Judeo-Christian and Humanist, while Islam is demonized as antithetical to this jointly secular and religious culture and intellectual tradition. See Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," *Geert Wilders Blog,* November 8, 2016. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/in-de-media-mainmenu-74/94-english/2015-wilders-plan-time-for-liberation.; Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, *Gates Institute Online*, February 5, 2017. https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9900/le-pen-speech. See also RFI, "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," *RFI*, January 28, 2011; Marine Le Pen, "Has Marine Le Pen Already Won the Battle for the Soul of France?" 2014.

[31] Hans Georg Betz & Carol Johnson (2004) Against the current—stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right, Journal of Political Ideologies, 9:3, 311-327, 324. DOI:10.1080/1356931042000263546 https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263546.

lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[32] This may at first appear to be a sensible, coherent definition of religion. Yet as Talal Asad pointed out, religion cannot – and should not – be essentialised and reduced to a set of signs and symbols expressed in a visibly uniform fashion across all cultures and in all times.[33]

For Asad, Geertz's definition of religion mistakenly separates a phenomenon called 'religion' from other phenomena such as politics, economics, science, and so on. Only by observing this false separation, as Asad points out, is it possible to argue that "religion has the same essence today as it had in the Middle Ages, although its social extension and function were different in the two epochs."[34] Asad challenges Geertz's influential conception of religion by arguing that the "separation of religion from power is a modern Western norm, the product of a unique post-Reformation history."[35] He argues that it is a mistake to presume that Christians in earlier times and places shared the West's contemporary understanding of religion. Pre-modern Christian Europeans, according to Asad, did not merely differ from today's Europeans insofar as they believed that religion ought to inform political debate. They differed from contemporary Europeans inasmuch as they saw no separation between the political and the religious. As Charles Taylor has noted, in the European Middle Ages belief in Christianity was not a matter of personal faith, it was axiomatic.[36] Religion, as most Westerners understand it today, did not exist. Thus Asad argues that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes."[37]

Asad's argument about religion and the secular being the products of discursive processes points the way to a different way of understanding religion and the secular. As José Casanova has noted, "'the religious' and 'the secular' are always and everywhere mutually constituted."

[32] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system," *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays,* London: Fontana Press, 1993, 90.

[33] Talal Asad, "The Construction of religion as an anthropological category," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 121-122.

[34] Asad. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," 115-116.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Charles Tayor, *A Secular Age,* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007, 1-3.

[37] Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," 116. Fitzgerald goes further, and calls for the abandonment of the concept of religion by scholars. See

In other words, it is not possible to understand one without understanding the other, for the concepts have evolved together. Religion and secular are thus in this thesis understood not as solid, unchanging, Platonic notions existing forever, but in accordance with Casanova's understanding of a shifting secular-religious binary, in which the secular has increasingly defined the boundaries of the religion, so much so that religion now occupies a relatively small and private place in Western European life. What, then, is the relationship between religion and the secular? 'Secular,' Casanova writes, "emerged first as a theological category of Western Christendom that has no equivalent in other religious traditions or even in Eastern Christianity." He notes that "the Latin world saeculum ...meant an indefinite period of time" but "became one of the terms of a dyad, religious/secular, that served to structure the entire spatial and temporal reality of medieval Christendom into a binary system of classification separating two worlds, the religious-spiritual-sacred world of salvation and the secular-temporal-profane world."

Thus 'the secular' began as a "particular Western Christian theological category," which "served to organize the particular social formation of Western Christendom."[38] Of course, as Taylor points out, the mere fact that secularisation has its roots in a specifically Western context need not mean that only in the West do we find a distinction between the sacred and secular.[39] Moreover, as Casanova points out, the "secular is by no means profane in our secular age."[40] Nonetheless, secularism as a worldview remains, as Elizabeth Shakman Hurd has noted, a peculiarly Western and Christian method of differentiating between things, people, and places, sacred and profane.[41] In time, secular differentiation increased, with a greater number of concepts, structures, places, and things becoming classified as 'secular.' Today, as Casanova observes, "'the secular' has become the dominant category that serves to structure and delimit, legally, philosophically, scientifically, and politically, the nature and the boundaries of 'religion'."[42] So powerful has the secular become, that secular governments may distinguish 'good religion' from 'bad religion,' on the basis that religion must always be

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[38] Jose Casanova, "The secular and secularisms," *Social Research,* 76(4), 2009, 1063.

[39] Charles Taylor, "Western Secularity" in *Rethinking Secularism,* ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Johnathan Van Antwerpen, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 33.

[40] Jose Casanova, "The secular and secularisms," *Social Research,* 76(4), 2009, 1064. Casanova points to "sacralized secular phenomena as nation, citizenship, and human rights." Ibid.

[41] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "Secularism and International Relations Theory," in *Religion and International Relations Theory*, (ed. Jack Snyder) New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, 60-90. See also Jose Casanova, "Re-thinking public religions," in Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, Monica Duffy Toft (editors), *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 27-28.

[42] Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," *in* Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (editors) *Rethinking Secularism,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 72.

private and non-political. Political religion, then, can be labelled illegitimate, and a danger to the public sphere due to religion's innate irrationality.[43] In other words, secularism increasingly defines the boundaries of religion, relegating it to the private realm and to personal belief.

To be secular is not merely, then, to lack belief in God or to refuse to practice a religion, although this is how many secularists might describe their condition. Rather, the secular "is a historical condition that requires the perfect tense," and "a condition of 'having overcome' the irrationality of belief."[44] Thus secularism understands the increasingly anthropocentric nature of Western culture as "as a process of maturation and growth, as a "coming of age," and as progressive emancipation." Secularism, then, is not the absence of religion, but something in itself. Thus Casanova observes that

> "The function of secularism as a philosophy of history, and thus as ideology, is to turn the particular Western Christian historical process of secularization into a universal teleological process of human development from belief to unbelief, from primitive irrational or metaphysical religion to modern rational postmetaphysical secular consciousness. Even when the particular role of internal Christian developments in the general process of secularization is acknowledged, it is in order to stress the universal significance of the uniqueness of Christianity as, in Marcel Gauchet's expressive formulation, 'the religion to exit from religion.'"

The power of secularism, and its ability to delineate the boundaries of religion, has come under criticism in recent decades, marking a change from an earlier period in which secularism was treated as if it were merely the absence of religion. Saba Mahmood, for example, has critiqued the secularism practiced in the state of Egypt. According to Mahmood, the secular Egyptian state has taken upon itself to delineate the boundaries of religion, and has done this in order to create a secular public space and thereby engender 'religious freedom' for all, especially for minority religious groups such as the Coptic Christians.[45] This

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[43] See Erin Wilson, & Luca Mavelli, 'Good Muslim/ bad Muslim' and 'good refugee/bad refugee' narratives are shaping European responses to the refugee crisis. *LSE Religion and the Public Sphere Blog*, 2016. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/76440/1/%E2%80%98Good%20Muslim_%20bad%20Muslim%E2%80%99%20and%20%E2%80%98good%20refugee_bad%20refugee%E2%80%99%20narratives%20are%20shaping%20European%20responses%20to%20the%20refugee%20crisis%20_%20Religion%20and%20the%20Public%20Sphere.pdf

[44] Jose Casanova, "The secular and secularisms," *Social Research,* 76(4), 2009, 1054.

[45] Mahmood writes "While Islamic concepts and practices are crucial to the production of this inequality, I argue that the modern state and its political rationality have played a far more decisive role in transforming preexisting religious differences, producing new forms of communal polarization, and making religion more rather than less salient to minority and majority identities alike. Furthermore, I suggest that insomuch as

attempt has backfired, however, she argues, because by doing so the state has marked the Copts out as fundamentally different.[46] In doing so, she argues, the state has driven the Copts into an uneasy alliance with the authoritarian secular state, which they must do for their own protection from the hostile Muslim majority, which recognises the Copts as an 'other' in their own country. In a similar way, and bringing these ideas into the discipline of International Relations, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd has shown how secular states the world over have created 'religious freedom' laws which, far from bringing religious harmony to their nations, have by strictly defining the boundary between the religious and secular, and between different religions, increased disharmony and sometimes created violence.[47]

Secularism, then, has been labelled by a number of scholars as problematic, and in a number of different ways. In the European context, secularism has come under criticism for pushing valuable ideas drawn from religious people and religious sources from the public sphere.[48] Therefore there has been a movement among scholars towards finding a post-secular political arrangement, whereby religion is no longer excluded from the public sphere, and the beneficial aspects of religion may be enjoyed by all. The condition of post-secularity is perhaps peculiar to Western Europe, where the ability of secular governments to define and regulate religion has come under pressure more recently, particularly due to increasing Muslim immigration, beginning in the 1970s and continuing until today. The growing presence of Muslims, and their greater religiosity compared to white Europeans, has led to much debate about whether Muslims have a place in 'secular' Europe. A large Muslim population appears to many Europeans to mark a challenge to the primacy of secularism, and indeed to the Judeo-Christian-secular tradition. This challenge stems in part, it appears, from the belief that reason and critique – the hallmarks of the Western intellectual tradition – are absent in Islam.[49] This is not to deny that simple racism and xenophobia are sometimes behind fear and hatred of Muslims and Islam. Nor do I mean to disregard the impact that

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secularism is characterized by a globally shared form of national-political structuration, the regulation of religious difference takes a modular form across geographical boundaries." Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, 2.

[46] Ibid.

[47] See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "Expert Religion: The Politics of Religious Difference in an Age of Freedom and Terror (December 2015)." Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS 2015/97. SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2707180 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2707180

[48] Habermas was perhaps the first major secularist thinker to critique secularism's intolerance of religion and religious people, and the deleterious nature of this intolerance. See Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society." *New Perspectives Quarterly.* 25 (4), 2008 pp.17-29.

[49] Engaging with this notion, Irfan Ahmad has argued that critique is not merely secular, but is contained within the Islamic tradition. See Irfan Ahmad, *Religion as Critique: Islamic Critical Thinking from Mecca to the Marketplace,* The University of North Carolina, 2017.

Islamist terrorism has had upon Europeans' attitude towards Islam and European Muslims. Indeed, a mixture of racism and fear or terrorism may have engendered, among some Europeans, a racialising of Muslims.[50] Indeed, the narratives established by the so-called Global War on Terror have helped create an image of Muslims as an angry, violent, irrational, and dangerous people. Right-wing and far-right parties in the West, then, might be understood as using this stereotypical image of Muslims to their advantage, arguing that Muslims are simply too dangerous to be allow to migrate to Western nations due to their alleged propensity for violence.

Yet the religious element seems curiously important in Western Europe, due to Europe's secularisation, and the manner in which secular differentiation and hostility to public religion has become a vital element in post-war European politics and culture. Islam seems to challenge certain basic elements of post-war European life, and is therefore viewed by some Europeans as a dangerous and alien force come to irrevocably change their culture. Indeed, the rise of the populist radical right in Europe, which is uniformly hostile to Islam, may be understood as evidence of Europeans' inability to tolerate religion in public life. Yet populist radical right parties in Western Europe do not merely attempt to suppress Islam and exclude Muslims from the public sphere; they frequently portray themselves as defenders of Christianity, and/or Judeo-Christianity.

To understand Western European populist radical right parties' relationship with religion it is helpful to look to the ways in which they use religion in their discourse. Specifically, it is helpful to ask whether their discourse secular in the sense that it uses Christianity – the religion that overcame religion and secularised – to buttress secularism and keep religion in the private sphere. Or whether it marks further evidence of emerging post-secularism in Western Europe. More broadly, it is useful to ask whether populist radical right parties use Christianity and/or Judeo-Christianity in their discourse to advance the secularist project of differentiation between the religious and secular, or to bring Christianity/Judeo-Christianity inside the public sphere?

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[50] See Nadia Fadil, "Taming the Muslim Woman," The Immanent Frame, May 24, 2018. https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/24/taming-the-muslim-woman/; Nadia Fadil, "Are we all Secular/ized yet?: reflections on David Goldberg's 'Are we all post-racial yet?" Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2261-2268, 39 (13), 2016 https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1202424; Guhin, J. (2018). Colorblind Islam: The racial hinges of immigrant Muslims in the United States. Social Inclusion, 6(2), 87–97 DOI 10.17645/si.v6i2.1422.

It is perhaps not possible to decisively answer the question, 'are populist radical right parties secular?' There will always be a blurred boundary between the religious and secular. Moreover, even religious parties in Europe, simply due to existing within a secular space, are in some ways secular. For Casanova, Western Europeans are secular, in this narrow sense. However, he writes, there is a "secular secularity" quite apart from this everyday secularism, a "phenomenological experience not only of being passively free but also actually of having been liberated from religion as a condition for human autonomy and human flourishing." It is possible, then, to ask whether populist radical right parties are secular in this narrow sense, and thereby determine whether their use of religion is signed to buttress secular differentiation, or in some sense a genuine expression of a desire to return religion to public life.

This thesis draws heavily upon the observation made by Rogers Brubaker on the use of religion by a particular group of Western/Northern European populist parties. Noting that these parties are – to varying degrees – ostensibly secular and liberal, civilisationalist, philo-Semitic, and yet on the other hand dedicated to preserving their nation's and civilisation's Christian or Judeo-Christian identity, Brubaker labels their worldview "Christianist secularism." This characteristic blending of Christian identity and secularism, he observes, is common only to a certain group of parties located in Western – and particularly Northern – Europe. Brubaker observes this most visibly in the Netherlands, and in particular in the discourse of Dutch 'Party for Freedom' leader Geert Wilders. Wilders, Brubaker notes, is the most prominent exponent of the Christianist secular worldview, and describes in his rhetoric a world in which 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' societies must battle retrograde and barbaric Islam for their survival.[51]

Brubaker's explanation for populist radical right parties' paradoxical blending of Christian identity with secularism, is that it is the result of increasing civilisation based identification among Europeans. The "partial shift" towards civilisation based indentification, he writes, has occurred due to a perceived "civilizational" threat posed to Europe by Islam.[52] This perception has given rise to an "identitarian Christianism" which is devoid of any spiritual or 'religious' content, but rather defined by "a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an

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[51] Ibid, 1197.
[52] Rogers Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40:8, 1191-1226, 1193, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700

ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech."[53]This

position accords well with other scholars observations of the development of a religion based

civilisational identity among Western Europeans. Obviously, there are echoes of Samuel P.

Huntington's clash of civilisations thesis in Brubaker's arguments. However, observations

such as Luca Mavelli's, who argues in *Europe's Encounter with Islam* that "vindication of

Europe's Christian roots has increasingly emerged as a response to the fear engendered by the

Muslim other," tell us more about the rise of Christianism in Europe than Huntington's

broader theoretical framework of the supposed inevitability of clashing civilisations.[54]

Rather than the result of naturally clashing civilisations, the rise of secular Christianism

appears to be related to the end of religious faith, but persistence of 'cultural Christianity' in

Western Europe. Thus Oliver Roy observes that "even if the identity of Europe is Christian, it

is no longer a religious identity because the faith has left."[55] Rather, precisely because

Christianity has itself been secularised as European 'culture,' "staunch secularists can now

defend a Christian identity."[56] A similar observation is made by Christian Joppke, who argues

that Western secularism incorporates and secularises Christianity and Christian symbols,

transforming them into 'culture,' while rejecting other religions and their symbols as

'religious' and therefore an affront to secularism.[57] This secularising of Christianity into

culture, then, makes it possible for Europeans' to defend 'Christian identity' while

disavowing Christian teachings and affirming liberal secular values in their place. These

observations are also somewhat in accordance with Jürgen Habermas' observation that that

the increasing visibility of Islam in Europe is making Europeans more aware of the existence

of public religion, and helping to reshape European religious self-identity and perceptions of

religion.[58]

Brubaker's observation of a growing secular Christianism appears particularly salient when

placed against other scholars' observations of the paradoxical discursive use of religion by

secular Western European populist radical right parties. His arguments, however, have not

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Luca Mavelli, *Europe's Encounter with Islam,* London and New York: Routledge, 6, 2012.

[55]Ibid, 19.

[56] Olivier Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," *The International Spectator,* 48:1, 2011, 11-12.

[57] Christian Joppke, *The Secular State Under Siege: Religion and Politics I n Europe and America,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015, 4.

[58] Jürgen Habermas, "Opening up fortress Europe," *Sign and Sight,* November 16, 2006, http://www.signandsight.com/features/1048.html; Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society." *New Perspectives Quarterly.* 25 (4) 2008, pp.17-29, 20.

been tested. This thesis, then, synthesises the arguments of Brubaker and a number of other scholars into a hypothesis which is tested over the course of two case studies of prominent Western European populist radical right parties.

Thesis Question and Hypothesis

The primary question asked in this thesis is: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe? My hypothesis – based on my reading of the literature on the topic – is that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' This recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed secular Europeans to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian. It has thus created Christianist secularism, a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' A group of populist radical right parties in Western Europe have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define their respective national identities in religio-civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.'

The thesis examines the Western European populist radical right's use of (Judeo-)Christianity in their discourse. The primary use of this discourse is to separate the ingroup 'the people' from outgroups consisting of Muslims and 'elites.' The questions that remain are 'how?' and 'why?' Asking why is important, because it is difficult to comprehend how parties expressing a desire to return to Judeo-Christian values or to preserve their nation's or civilisation's Christian identity, could win elections in deeply secular – even irreligious – parts of Europe. The thesis thus analyses the discourse of populist radical right parties in the Christianist group in order to understand how Christianity is used, and why parties using Christianist secular discourse are increasingly electorally successful. The decision to ask these questions is premised by the notion that analysing the use of Christianity in the discourse of the populist radical right allows us to understand the reasons behind the return of religion to Western European politics.

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Methods

This thesis uses two major research methods: case studies[59] and critical discourse analysis.[60] The primary method is case studies of the French National Front and Dutch Party for Freedom in the 2012-2017 period. I choose the 2012-2017 period for two major reasons. First, because the period coincides with the greatest electoral success of populist radical right parties in Europe.[61] Second, because the National Front and Party for Freedom faced elections in 2012 and 2017, and responded to the 2015 immigration crisis, during this period. 2012-2017 is an especially useful period to study when trying to understand the rise of populist radical right parties in Western Europe. Populist radical right parties broke through from the fringes and into mainstream politics in a number of European nations during this period. Equally, the period coincided with an 'immigration crisis' which saw more than one million (mostly Muslim) refugees enter Europe.

The National Front and Party for Freedom are especially comparable in the 2012-2017 period. Both faced elections in 2012, both rejected mainstream Dutch and French approaches to the 2015 immigration crisis and opposed allowing Muslim refugees to settle in Europe, and both enjoyed increased popularity 2016-2017, culminating in electoral success in 2017. In these ways the two parties' political trajectories are strikingly similar, though there are also a number of important differences.

The Party for Freedom and National Front are two of the most powerful populist radical right parties, with influence within their respective nations and inside the European Union Parliament. They are ideal for comparison for several reasons. While products of unique historical forces, both parties are representative of wider Western European populist radical right secular Christianist parties, and display in their discourse, to varying degrees, "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly

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[59] See Mabry, Linda, "Case Study in Social Research," *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods*, PerttiAlasuutari, Leonard Bickman and Julia Brannen (eds), London: SAGE, 2008,214-28

[60] See Norman Fairlough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis" in T.A. Van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction,* vol. 2, London: Sage, 1997.

[61] See Pippa Norris, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why." *The Washington Post,* March 11, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/11/its-not-just-trump-authoritarian-populism-is-rising-across-the-west-heres-why/?utm_term=.dbe9847566fa;Ronald F. Inglehard and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash, Paper for the roundtable on "Rage against the Machine: Populist Politics in the U.S., Europe and Latin America", 10.00-11.30 on Friday 2 September 2016, annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, 2. https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1401.

liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech."[62] Moreover, both speak of the values of their respective societies, and of their collective civilisation, as a secularised form of '(Judeo-)Christianity. At the same time, the two parties differ in important respects – particular in their histories and ideological trajectories – allowing for a useful comparison between them.

For example, the National Front is an example of a neo-fascist and conservative Catholic party which has transitioned to become a populist radical right Christianist secular party.[63] The Party for Freedom, however, lacks the National Front's historical links to fascist and integralist movements. Rather, its founder, Geert Wilders, broke away from the ruling liberal-conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and formed his own populist movement, modelled in part on the personal style and ideology of slain anti-Islam populist politician Pim Fortuyn and the religion based identity politics of former People's Party for Freedom and Democracy leader Frits Bolkestein.[64]

Case studies of these two parties will serve to explicate the relationship between (Judeo-)Christianity and secularism among populist radical right parties and in the wider politics of Western Europe, and help provide a solution to the question asked in this thesis: Why do populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion in their discourse as a tool for ingroup and outgroup formation? Thus studies of the National Front and Party for Freedom enable me to test my hypothesis under different cultural and political conditions in Western Europe, thereby improving the accuracy of my analysis and conclusions.

The case studies each comprise two chapters. The first provides the political, social, and historical context for the discourse analysis which forms of majority of the second chapter, and tests part of my hypothesis: that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture:' two factors which have in turned made it possible for non-religious Europeans to identify as 'Christian,' and thus allowed populist radical right parties to claim a Christian identity and exclude Muslims from 'Christian' Europe. In order to understand the historical context in which the two parties operate I draw

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[62] Ibid.

[63] See Olivier Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 79-87.

[64] For details of Bolkestein's relationship with Wilders see Willem Mass, "The Netherlands," In James Hollifield, Philip Martin, Pia Orrenius, *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective, Third Edition,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 271.

upon scholarship examining the history of religion, and indeed of secularism, in France and the Netherlands respectively.[65]

The second part of the case studies consists of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of three selected texts produced by the respective leaders of the National Front and Party for Freedom. CDA approaches language as a social practice, and thus as socially (and politically) consequential language practices which "may have major ideological effects" that "can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between ...social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people."[66] Thus "language and other social practices are always in unity," making certain that language influences and expresses the social power of groups and individuals.[67]

Following CDA techniques developed by Norman Fairclough these two chapters examine the discourse on religion of the Party for Freedom and National Front, not only as statements of their own beliefs, but as they are related to broader French and Dutch social practice and politics.[68] Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis involves analysing both the text itself, the methods by and for which the text was produced, and the relationship between the text and wider society. Therefore I analyse both the language of the texts produced by the two parties and their respective leaders, but consider the reasons the texts were produced and their relationship to French and Dutch politics respectively. Fairclough's CDA is a type of "discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles

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[65] See for example Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007*;* Koen Vossen *The Power of Populism: Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands,* New York: Routledge, 2016; James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen,* New York: Routledge, 2007; Peter J. Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse, and Power,* London:Routledge, 1999.
[66] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis,* London:Sage 2009, 6.
[67]Ibid, 10.
[68] See Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992. See also See Norman Fairlough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis" in T.A. Van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction,* vol. 2, London: Sage, 1997.

over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony."[69]

The CDA based case study chapters borrow this broad framework, and are structured to include, first, a summary of the text being examined, in which the major themes and structure of the text is described. Second, and building on the summary of the text, analysis of the language used in the text. Third, and building on the summary and language analysis, an ideological analysis. The purpose of this is to uncover the meaning of text and to situate the text within a wider political/social discourse which it may reproduce or help to produce. This segment attempts to understand and/or uncover the link between the discourse evident in the selected texts and the wider populist radical right discourse on religious identity. It thus draws on the context provided in earlier chapters on religion and populist radical right parties, and tests whether Christianist-secular politics has been made possible by Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe, which has made explicit the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture,' and therefore allowed Christian identity to be used to define 'the people' exclude Muslims from (Judeo-)Christian Western civilisation.

The purpose of the CDA is to seek answers in selected texts produced by Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders respectively to the following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[70] (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society? The CDA thus pays special attention to the manner in which conceptions such as "the people,' 'Islam,' and 'Christianity,' are constructed in the texts, how they are used to create an exclusive nationalist identity, and their role within the party's ideology. A methods chapter (chapter 3) is included in this thesis which explicates my methods and methodology in detail. Here I provide a four step explanation of my method.

1. Select three texts produced by Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders respectively, and at three points: during the 2012 election campaign, during the 2015 immigration crisis, during the 2017 election campaign. Texts are selected according to certain criteria. They must be in

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[69] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language, Second Edition,* Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013, 93.
[70] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

English, have content related to national identity, and be broadly representative of the political positions of the leader and their respective party. Texts produced by Wilders are sourced from his personal website; texts produced by Marine Le Pen are sourced from *Time Magazine,* and translations of Le Pen's speeches on the *Gates of Vienna* weblog and *Media Research Centre TV* website.[71]

2. Subject each text to Fairclough's process of Critical Discourse Analysis. First, analyse the language of the text to comprehend how Marine Le Pen and Geert Widlers construct national and civilisation identity, and the manner in which religion is or is not invoked as part of this construction. Second, interpret the text as a product of party ideology and discourse. Third, interpret the text within a wider National and Western European political and social context. To do this the text is compared with and contrasted against data from other sources (party manifestos, other statements by party members and the leader, other politicians, and most of all the information gathered in the preceding chapter) to build a picture of what is being communicated in the texts, and its wider political and social significance.

3. Following these steps, determine whether the data produced supports my hypothesis by inquiring of it the following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[72] (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society?

4. In a separate chapter, compare and contrast the data produced in the case studies, and consider what it means in a wider European political and social context. Was the hypothesis correct? In what ways was it correct and incorrect? What was missing? Most importantly, answer the thesis question: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe? In a final chapter, compare and contrast the data produced in the case studies, and consider what it means in a wider European political and social context. Was the hypothesis correct? In what ways was it correct and incorrect? What was missing? Most importantly, answer the thesis

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[71] It must be admitted that, being translations, these texts cannot be considered as authoritative as the original French text. This is no doubt an inadequacy of my thesis, though one which cannot be helped, being an English language thesis.

[72] Ibid.

question: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe?

It may be objected that this thesis errs in not analysing the possibility that racism, or fear of terrorism, is behind the rise of anti-Muslim feeling and ultimately behind the rise of populist radical right movements across Western Europe. This thesis does not deny the influence of xenophobia, nor the partial racialisation of Islam and Muslims in Europe. There is much scholarly literature on these topics, particularly intersectional literature examining the intersection of religion and race as experienced by Muslims in the West.[73] The thesis, however, is concerned with the often overlooked influence of religious prejudice on Western European politics. The complexities of the relationship between race and religion, then, are beyond the scope of this thesis. That being said, the thesis advances the contention that populist radical right parties have become more focused on religious difference, rather than skin colour or racial difference, and that their dominant conception of the West as a Christian or Judeo-Christian civilisation draws primarily on differences in religious heritage between the West and Islam. In a similar way, there is much literature on terrorism in Europe, and the manner in which terrorist attacks have affected Europeans' attitude towards Islam and European Muslims.[74] This thesis does not much engage with this literature, for the reason that while there is no doubt that terrorism has exacerbated Europeans' fears of Islam, the study of the discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom contained herein finds that the two parties respectively complain surprisingly little about terrorism, but are clearly more afraid of demographic change leading to Muslim domination and its hypothetical effect on European culture, religion, secularity, and civilisation. Therefore, while not ignoring the salient issue of terrorism, the thesis concentrates mostly on the issues related to Islam, secularism, and Christianity brought up in the texts analysed herein.

Chapter synopsis

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[73] See in particular Nadia Fadil, "Taming the Muslim Woman," The Immanent Frame, May 24, 2018. https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/24/taming-the-muslim-woman/; Nadia Fadil, "Are we all Secular/ized yet?: reflections on David Goldberg's 'Are we all post-racial yet?" Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2261-2268, 39 (13), 2016 https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1202424; Guhin, J. (2018). Colorblind Islam: The racial hinges of immigrant Muslims in the United States. Social Inclusion, 6(2), 87–97 DOI 10.17645/si.v6i2.1422.
[74] Nadia Fadil, "Taming the Muslim Woman," The Immanent Frame, May 24, 2018. https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/24/taming-the-muslim-woman/; Peter Mandaville, "Designating Muslims: Islam in the Western Policy Imagination," *Cambridge Institute on Religion & International Studies,* 2017. http://religionanddiplomacy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/TPNRD-Designating-Muslims.pdf.

This thesis contains eight chapters. Chapter one defines 'populism' and examines its characteristic elements, describes the most common definitions and methods of analysing populism, and explains my decision to define populism as a "thin centred ideology" which divides society into "two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the 'pure' people and the 'corrupt elite.'"[75] The chapter discusses how populism's 'thin ideology' allows it to be grafted on to more substantive political ideologies to form left-wing and right-wing populism, as well as other forms which do not exactly correspond to the traditional left-right political dichotomy.

The chapter defines 'populist radical right' ideology as the thin ideology of populism grafted onto a radical right programme. Drawing on Mudde's definition of radical right populism as having three core aspects – nativism, authoritarianism, and populism – it examines the history of the family of populist radical right parties, and charts their growth from the 1970s into the 2010s.[76] Finally, the chapter describes the place of religion in the discourse of Western European populist radical right parties, and demonstrates its unique importance among populist radical right parties. It examines populist radical right parties' discourse on religion, and locates a puzzle in their use of religion: Why is religion – in supposedly secular Western Europe – used as a method of differentiating 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right?

Chapter two examines the use of religion by populist radical right parties to ascertain, first, whether it is religious or secular in nature, and second, the relationship of this discourse with the increasing Muslim population of Europe and European reaction to the growth of Islam. The section compares the discourse used by populist radical right parties on religion with the at least superficially similar discourse used by Christians and post-secularists who wish to de-secularise Europe in order to test the religiosity/post-secularity of populist radical right discourse. Drawing on the observations of Jürgen Habermas on the effects Muslim immigration have had on European self-identification and understanding of the place of religion in contemporary society, it contends that Europeans' encounter with Islam and Europe have produced two significant and different reactions among Europeans.[77] First, a desire to accommodate Islam and Christianity within the public sphere, so as to integrate Muslims into European society, and facilitate a dialogue of mutual learning between religious

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[75] Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 2004, pp. 542– 563, 543.
[76] Cas Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 2.
[77] Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society." *New Perspectives Quarterly.* 25 (4), 2008 pp.17-29

and non-religious Europeans. Second, a closer identification between Christianity and contemporary secular European culture, which perceives European culture and values as Christianity secularised, and perceives Muslims as a religious threat to secularised Christian culture.

Second, the chapter examines the literature on religion and populism, focusing on scholarship on religion and populist radical right parties in Western Europe, and drawing on the work of Olivier Roy and Rogers Brubaker in order to understand how secular political parties are able to use religion to exclude certain religious identity groups from European society.[78] It examines the notion that populist radical right parties in Western Europe are best described as 'Christian identitarians' who view European culture and politics through a secular Christianist worldview. The chapter thus examines Roy and Brubaker's categorisation of populist radical right parties' discourse on religion as wholly secular, and draws on scholarship which finds concepts of the sacred – in the form of a worship of the state and the 'will of the people ' – embedded within populism.[79]

The chapter also draws on my review of scholarship on religion and populist radical right parties, and forms a hypothesis in answer to my thesis question Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe? The chapter thus argues that populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in their discourse because they have embraced what Rogers Brubaker terms 'Christianist-secularism.'[80] 'Christianist secularism' has itself come about as a result of Muslim immigration to Europe, which has made secular Europeans more aware of public religion, and cognizant of the particular – and especially Christian – nature of the their own secular culture. Furthermore, the chapter argues that the arrival of Muslims in great numbers in Europe appears to have highlighted to Europeans the manner in which Christianity has been secularised into culture, demonstrating cultural continuity between Europe's religious past and its secular present which may not have been as obvious before the arrival of Muslims.

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[78] See for example Olivier Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," *The International Spectator,* 48:1, 5-19, 2013. DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2013.759365. Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," pp.1191-1226, 2017.

[79] Daniel Nilsson DeHanas & Marat Shterin, "Religion and the rise of populism, Religion," *State & Society*, 46:3, 177-185, 2018. DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2018.1502911.

[80] See Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016. The term 'Christianism' Brubaker has adopted from British-American writer and intellectual Andrew Sullivan, who Brubaker notes used it to describe the ideology of the Christian right in the United States. See Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1214, 2017.

The third chapter describes in detail my thesis questions, hypothesis, rationale for case studies, and my methods for testing my hypothesis. Chapter four is the first part of my two chapter case study of the Party for Freedom of the Netherlands. The Chapter provides, first, the historical and political context for the discourse analysis chapter that follows, and, second, tests part of my hypothesis: that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' By testing this it is possible to establish whether recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed for non-practicing Christian Dutch – such as Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders and many of his supporters – to identify themselves as Christian or Judeo-Christian.

The chapter tests this part of my hypothesis by examining national identity in the Netherlands before and after secularisation, the impact of Muslim immigration on Dutch identity, and most importantly populist right-wing and radical right politicians and parties' response to Muslim immigration to the Netherlands. The chapter contends that the entrance of Muslim immigrants into the heavily secularized post-war Netherlands, which no longer divided people into 'pillars' based upon religious identification but sought to solidify a single secular-nationalist identity, played a vital role in creating the conditions required for Christianist secularism to emerge. The chapter then presents an example of the political effects engendered by the emergence of Christianist secularism in the Netherlands, itself a product of the entrance of Muslims into a secularised and de-pillarised Dutch society. This section examines the formation and development of the Party for Freedom, and considers the reasons behind the party's rapid rise in 2010-2012. The chapter contends that the Party for Freedom's use of religion in its discourse can be situated within a particular Christianist secular Dutch discourse on religion, which emerged in the 1990s and is associated with murdered populist politician Pim Fortuyn, and Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders' political mentor Frits Bolkestein.

Finally, chapter four attempts to explain the 'return' of religion to Dutch politics in the 1990s and 2000s. It examines the rise of the Party for Freedom, and explores the reasons it has experienced electoral success while using religion to separate 'the people' from 'others,' thereby linking contemporary secular Dutch culture with Judaism and Christianity, and demonizing Islam as incompatible with Dutch culture. The chapter thus examines whether the party's Christianist secular discourse is the product of Muslim immigration (and Muslim

difference) demonstrating to Europeans the secularised Christianity embedded in their culture.

Chapter five consists of a Critical Discourse Analysis of three texts produced by Geert Wilders, and by examining his language attempts to understand the underlying messages, purposes, and ideology of the texts, as well as understanding the political and social practices to which they are related. This chapter consists of two elements. First, a Critical Discourse Analysis of three texts written by Geert Wilders, one during the 2012 election campaign, one during the 2015 immigration crisis, and another during the 2017 election campaign. Following this is a discussion of the data produced by the CDA, in which my hypothesis is tested against the findings produced by the CDA and my discussion of its results.

Chapter six is the first part of my two chapter case study of the National Front. It provides, first, the historical and political context for the discourse analysis chapter that follows, and, second, tests part of my hypothesis: that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' The chapter demonstrates how the party's use of religion and sense of France's religious identity has changed over time, and been received differently by the French public throughout the past four decades. It describes how as France became more secular, and as the party's supporters became more secular, the National Front retained its strong religious identity and use of Catholic symbolism. It also shows how under Marine Le Pen's leadership the party began to position itself as both a defender of *laïcité* and secular republican values, but also of Christianity and France's Catholic heritage.

The chapter describes, first, the religious and political context in which the National Front came into being, and contends that the National Front began as part of a long tradition in right-wing French politics which explicitly links French culture to Catholicism and opposes *laícité*. Second, it examines the National Front under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen (1972-2011.) It contends that under Jean-Marie Le Pen the National Front remained a radical right, anti-Semitic, Catholic identity political party, though one which over time became focused on the threat of Islam to the "Judeo-Christian" French state.

Third, the chapter examines the Marine Le Pen led National Front (2011--), and demonstrates how the party's rhetoric on religion shifted during this period, as Marine Le Pen moved the

party away from the anti-Semitic radical right and towards the populist radical right. The section contends that under Marine Le Pen the party moved away from its traditional Catholic identity politics, and reconceptualised *laïcité* as an integral part of France's Judeo-Christian heritage. Finally, the chapter argues that Marine Le Pen's use of religion in her discourse should be understood in the context of a broader re-conceptualising of French identity and religion after large scale Muslim immigration to France, and as an expression of the Christianist secularism prevalent among a number of populist radical right parties in Western Europe.

Chapter seven consists of a Critical Discourse Analysis of three texts produced by Marine Le Pen, and by examining her language attempts to understand the underlying messages, purposes, and ideology of the texts, as well as understanding the political and social practices to which they are related. This chapter consists of two elements. First, a Critical Discourse Analysis of three texts written by Marine Le Pen, one during the 2012 election campaign, one during the 2015 immigration crisis, and another during the 2017 election campaign. Following this is a discussion of the data produced by the CDA, in which my hypothesis is tested against the findings produced by the CDA and my discussion of its results.

Chapter eight collates and compares the data produced in the case study chapters in which this hypothesis was tested. I make five major findings. The first two relate to my hypothesis that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' The chapter contends, first, that Muslim immigration engendered a sense that secularism is non-universal, and a product of Europe's (Judeo-)Christian heritage and values, among a significant number of French and Dutch.

Second, it contends that exposure to Islam and Muslim difference has made visible the secularised Christianity embedded in French and Dutch culture respectively. Together, these effects have made it possible for French and Dutch to identify as secular and – in a civilisational sense – Christian. In other words, the development of Christianist secularism stems from these two factors. Third, it contends that the respective discourses of Dutch Party for Freedom and National Front of France in the 2012-2017 suggest that the two parties are examples of 'Christian identitarianism' and 'Christianist secularism' in Western European politics. For both parties, Christianity or Judeo-Christianity is a tool used to differentiate an ingroup from outgroups. The outgroups, Muslims and 'globalist elites,' are categorised as a

threat to the secularised Christian culture the parties' claim defines and sustains their culture and civilisation.

Fourth, the chapter contends that in the 2012-2017 period Islam is constructed in the discourse of both the National Front and Party for Freedom as a monolithic force dominating the lives of its adherents, making Muslim immigrants unique insofar as they alone cannot secularise by privatising their religious beliefs and practices. This being so, Islam is constructed as a threat to secular differentiation of religion and politics, church and state, and moreover to the 'cultural Christianity' which defines contemporary French and Dutch culture, values, and heritage.

Fifth, the chapter contends that Christian identity – grafted onto a secular worldview – is used by the National Front and Party for Freedom throughout 2012-2017 to create a Judeo-Christian and Humanist or Christian and secular ingroup, which they designate as 'the people,' and to create two outgroups based upon people excluded from 'the people:' 'globalists/elites and Muslims/Islamic fundamentalists.'

Based on these findings the chapter argues that because the same forces have engendered the rise of Christianist secular populist radical right movements in the Netherlands and France, it is very likely that these forces are also behind the Christianism of other Western European populist radical right movements. Thus Western Europe's Christianist secularism can be understood as stemming primarily from the effects of Muslims immigrating into secular, post-Christian societies. Equally, it contends that Christianist secularism can be contrasted with another form of Christian identity: 'traditionalist Christianism.' Neither is a religious movement, but rather both are motivated by political and social concerns. The difference between the two Christianisms lies in their attitude towards the efficacy of secularism and liberalism. While Christianist secularists defend secularism and are ostensibly liberal, traditionalist Christianists are openly illiberal and view secular modernity as a threat to traditional 'Christian' values.

Finally, the chapter contends that Christianism – in its two primarily forms – is likely to remain an important element in European politics. The forces that gave rise to Christianism – Muslim immigration, globalisation in its cultural and economic forms, and the incoherence of mainstream centrist parties policies on immigration, multiculturalism, and economics, remain powerful throughout Europe. As long as this remains the case, populist radical right parties

will be able to exploit anger towards elites, fear of Islam, and a growing sense of a common European 'Christian' identity.

Thesis Contribution

Religion is important to populist radical right parties, yet its use is not often examined.[81] Political scientists have noted that religion appears to play a role in populists' ingroup and outgroup construction, but studies on how and why religion and religious identity have become so important to populist radical right parties are rare.[82] Yet an examination of the use of religion by populist radical right parties can offer important insight into the rise of populism in Europe. Political scientists studying the economic and social causes of the rise of populism would benefit from studies showing how and why religion is wielded as a tool to exclude and scapegoat certain groups – especially Muslims – from European society. These studies may also help political scientists understand the populist radical right's civilisationalism – a curious element in their otherwise nativist and nationalistic ideology – which is often based on notions of European nations' belonging to a wider and older 'Judeo-Christian' civilisation. Moreover, studies of populists' use of religion in their discourse can contribute to a wider understanding of the surprising persistence of religion as an influence of Western European identity and politics, despite decades of secularism privatising religious belief and practice.

Studies of the populist radical right's use of religion can also teach us about an important development occurring in Western Europe: Europeans' mixing of religion and secularism into a '(Judeo-)Christian tradition' which encompasses both Christianity and contemporary irreligious secularism. By studying the use of religion in discourse of the populist radical right, we can gain insight into how contemporary culture is merged with Christianity, and thus how (Judeo-)Christianity is secularised into 'culture,' and secularism sacralised. Moreover, we can begin to understand why this might be occurring, and what the merging of (Judeo-)Christianity and secularism into a single 'cultural' tradition and identity means for Western European politics.

This thesis contributes to the literature on religion and populism in four primary ways. First, it demonstrates the salience of Brubaker's categorisation of a cluster of Western European

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[81] See Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 296, 2007. See also DeHanas & Shterin, "Religion and the rise of populism, Religion," 177-185, 2018.

[82] In chapters one and two of this thesis I discuss the extant literature on this important topic in detail.

populist radical right parties as Christian identitarian parties, whose Christianism is ultimately secular and not religious in nature. This thesis shows how and why the Party for Freedom and National Front belong to this group, insofar as their discourse conforms to the categorisation set out by Brubaker. In placing the two parties within this broader category, my thesis contributes to greater understanding and knowledge of the Party for Freedom and National Front, particularly the two parties' respective use of religion in their discourse.

Second, the thesis confirms scholarly contention that the increasing visibility of Islam in Western Europe has altered Europeans' religious self-perception, and engendered a growing civilisational identity in Western Europe based upon religious heritage. The thesis confirms this by showing how populist radical right parties' adoption of secular Christian identitarianism has increasingly helped them achieve electoral success and political significance.

Third, the thesis further contributes to scholarly understanding of Christian identitarian populist radical right parties in Western Europe, by demonstrating that Christian identity is not wielded by populist radical right parties simply because they wish to 'other' Muslims. Rather, it is also deployed in order to exclude 'elites,' 'globalists,' and to defend national sovereignty and the nation-state.

Fourth, the thesis posits a connection between the failure and incoherence of centre-left and centre-right Western European politics and the rise of populist radical right Christian identity parties. The thesis finds that the populist radical right in Western Europe capitalises on the failure of the centre-left to balance its commitment to open borders and multiculturalism with its desire to increase workers' wages and protect the working classes from capitalist disruption. Equally, the populist radical right has been able to capitalise on the failure of the centre-right to balance its commitment to allowing the market to function uninhibited by government with its desire to maintain hierarchies and cultural norms. In place of these contradictory policies the Western European populist radical right offers an apparently coherent platform based upon opposition to all aspects of globalisation: economic and cultural. Having recognised that the neoliberal policies of the centre-right have not only disrupted economies, but has worked in tandem with the multiculturalist policies of the centre-left to bring about massive social change through mass immigration, the populist radical right seeks to diminish the power of business and markets by using state power to

defend the secular state and the secularised Christianity they call 'Christian' and/or 'Judeo-Christian' culture and identity.

Chapter One: The Populist Radical Right in Western Europe

This thesis seeks to understand why populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion as a tool to differentiate 'the people' from 'others' in their discourse.

In this chapter I begin my discussion of populist radical right discourse on religion. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section defines 'populism' and examines its characteristic elements. It discusses the most common definitions and methods of analysing populism, and explains my decision to define populism as what Mudde calls a "thin centred ideology" which divides society into "two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the 'pure' people and the 'corrupt elite.'"[83] The chapter further describes how populism's 'thin ideology' allows it to be grafted on to more substantive political ideologies to form left-wing and right-wing populism, as well as other forms which do not exactly correspond to the traditional left-right political dichotomy.

The second section defines 'populist radical right' ideology as the thin ideology of populism grafted onto a radical right programme. Drawing on Mudde's definition of populist radical right as having three core aspects – nativism, authoritarianism, and populism – it examines the history of the family of populist radical right parties, and charts their growth from the 1970s into the 2010s.[84]

The third section describes the place of religion in the discourse of Western European populist radical right parties, and demonstrates its unique importance among populist radical right parties. It examines populist radical right parties' discourse on religion, and locates a puzzle in their use of religion: Why is religion – in supposedly secular Western Europe – used as a method of differentiating 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right?

Defining Populism

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[83] Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 2004, pp. 542– 563, 543.
[84] Cas Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 2.

Populism is a troublesome concept which is sometimes used in a purely pejorative sense.[85] It is tempting to think, then, that populism is little more than a term of abuse, a word used to accuse one's opponents of engaging in the most base forms of politics; of making simplistic yet deceiving arguments, telling people what they want to hear rather than telling the truth, and casting blame for all society's ills upon a single group. Yet there is good reason to think that populism is a coherent concept and one which, though it contains no 'thick' ideology and is remarkably malleable, possesses features which make it identifiable among other political ideologies.

Before the 1950s populism was a term primarily used by historians to describe two agrarian 19th century political movements: the agrarian People's Party in the United States, and the Russian *Narodniks*.[86] Since the 1950s, however, political scientists and sociologists have used the term to describe a global phenomenon involving a diverse range of political regimes brought together either by a similar political ideology, strategy, or rhetorical style.[87] The large number of different politicians and parties described as populist has made the term somewhat problematic, and the concept has eluded a universally agreed upon definition.

Defining populism is made more difficult due to its frequent use as a pejorative rather than self-descriptive term. Equally, because groups and individuals described as populist are found on the left, right, and centre of the political spectrum, no 'thick' ideology of populism can be discerned.[88] In the United States historian John D. Hicks' 1931 book *The Populist Revolt,* which described populism in its 19th century American forms in favourable terms and as a progressive movement, largely defined the subject until well into the 1950s.[89] In the 1950s, and responding to the rise of authoritarianism in the preceding two decades, a group of sociologists and historians – including Edward Shils, Seymour M. Lipset, Talcott Parsons – began to challenge Hick's favourable view of populism.[90] This group of scholars viewed

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[85]Ben Stanley, "The thin ideology of populism," *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 13:1, pp. 95-110, 2008, 101.
[86] Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism : Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016, 12.
http://ezproxy.acu.edu.au.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1219467&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
[87] Ibid, 12-13.
[88] Michael Freeden, "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?" *Political Studies,* 46(4), 1998, 748-765.
[89] Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, "Populism – A Brief Introduction to a Baffling Notion," *American Studies in Scandinavia,* 18, 1986, 27-36, 28.
[90] Ibid.

populism as an element of authoritarianism, evident not only in mass movements such as Italian fascism and Nazism, but also in the McCarthyist hysteria present in 1950s America.[91]

Shils was among the first scholars to advocate the idea that populism was a "widespread phenomenon" existing "wherever there is an ideology of popular resentment against the order imposed on society by a long-established, differentiated ruling class which is believed to have a monopoly of power, property, breeding and culture".[92] According to Shils populism is an ideology which claims that "the will of the people as such is supreme over every other standard, over the standards of traditional institutions, over the autonomy of institutions and over the will of other strata. Populism identifies the will of the people with justice and morality."[93]

Scholars who accept the term 'populism' have thus most often subsequently agreed that appeals to the will of the people, resentment of 'elites,' and a belief in the desirability of a direct connection between 'the people' and their leaders, are essential elements of populism. However, there has been great disagreement over whether these elements can be said to form a coherent ideology, or whether they constitute a type of political strategy, style, or discourse.[94] By the end of the 1960s so problematic had populism become that one scholar remarked "to each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds."[95]

In the 1980s and 1990s Margaret Canovan, observing emerging populism in Europe, and described it as emerging out of a perceived democratic deficit within democratic societies, and therefore as a kind of shadow democratic self arising from within the contradictions of contemporary democratic ideology and practice.[96] This idea was echoed by Hayward, who noted how a perceived democratic deficit was driving support for populist parties within the

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[91] Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism : Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, 13.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Edward Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy: The Background and Consequences of American Security Policies,* Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1996, 98.

[94] For a discussion of the disagreements between scholars see Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *Weatherland Working Paper Series,* No. 13-0004, 2013. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/gidron_bonikowski_populismlitreview_2013.pdf, and Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism : Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.

[95] Peter Wiles, quoted in Ghita Ionescu, and Ernst Gellner, (eds*.) Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, New York: Macmillan, 1969, 166.

[96] Margeret Canovan, "Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy," *Political Studies,* XLVII, 1999, pp. 2-16.

European Union in the 1990s. [97] In the 2000s the ideological approach emerged as dominant, particularly among scholars addressing forms of right-wing populism in Europe.[98] The ideological approach claims that populism is a group of ideas – not merely a strategy or discourse – which together "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people."[99]

Borrowing from Michael Freeden's notion of 'thin' and 'thick' ideologies, this approach describes populism as a type of 'thin' ideology.[100] According this position, ideologies are less comprehensive than they may at first appear, but are "interpretive frameworks that emerge as a result of the practice of putting ideas to work in language as concepts."[101] A thin-centered ideology, then, is one which does "not provide answers to all the major socio-political questions, and could therefore be compatible with other, more extensively developed political belief systems, such as socialism or liberalism."[102] Mudde and Kaltwasser note that because "populism is a 'thin-centred ideology,' …it can be attached to other ideologies be they thick (e.g. liberalism, socialism) or thin (e.g. ecologism, nationalism)."[103] Thus we find that there are forms of populism compatible with left-wing and right-wing ideologies. Scholars who take this ideological approach most often analyse populist parties and leaders, and attempt to understand their nature often by examining the partisan literature they produce.[104]

This thesis defines populism as an ideology, and accepts Mudde and Kaltwasser's minimal definition of populism as a "thin centred ideology" which divides society into "two

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[97] Jack Hayward, "The Populist Challenge to Elitist Democracy in Europe," in *Elitism, Populism, and European Politics,* (ed. Jack Hayward*),* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp.10-33.

[98] See Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *Weatherland Working Paper Series,* No. 13-0004, 2013. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/gidron_bonikowski_populismlitreview_2013.pdf, and is also informed by Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism : Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, 2016. Moffitt has a different position from the three major categories, arguing for a definition of politics based upon a populist 'style.'

[99] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist,' 543.

[100] See Michael Freeden, "Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?" *Political Studies,* 46(4), 1998, 748-765.

[101] Ben Stanley, "The thin ideology of populism," *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 13:1, pp. 95-110, 98, 2008. See also Freeden on the application of his ideas to populism, Michael Freeden, "After the Brexit Referendum: revisiting populism as an ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 22(1), 1-11, 2017. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13569317.2016.1260813

[102] Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," *Weatherland Working Paper Series,* No. 13-0004, 2013, 6.

[103] Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy,* 9.

[104] Gidron and Bonikowski, "Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda," 17.

homogenous and antagonistic groups: the 'pure' people and the 'corrupt elite.'"[105] This position is not without its faults, most significant among them doubts that a coherent albeit 'thin' ideology of populism can be discerned.[106] However, the ideological approach is most suitable for this thesis. This thesis accepts that there are ideological similarities between a number of Western European populist radical right parties, and therefore requires a framework which allows for this type of analysis. The ideological approach provides a minimal definition of populism and allows for a comparison of the ideologies of two different populist parties, while not ignoring the importance of language and discourse. The other perspectives do not readily allow or encourage this kind of comparison of ideologies of two different populist parties, and may reject the notion that populist parties exist.

Understanding the Populist Radical Right

Many parties have been associated with the populist radical right, or with other terms given to this family of parties such as right-wing populist, extreme populist right, anti-immigrant parties, and radical right populist. But what brings the French National Front, Belgium's Vlaams Belaang, the Alternative for Germany, and the Danish People's Party together into a single group under the banner of the populist radical right? It certainly is not a self-applied name. None of these parties describes themselves as radical. Former National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen embraced, at times, the name 'populist,' but he preferred to style his party as nationalist and 'neither-left nor right.' How then should we understand the ideology common to the populist radical right which binds these groups together?

Viewed from within the ideological approach to populism, radical right-wing populism might be understood as the thin ideology of populism grafted onto a radical right-wing political programme. This definition, however, does not tell us much about the nature of populist radical right parties.[107] Right-wing politics is, generally speaking, based upon a desire to maintain existing hierarchies within a society, opposed to enforcing income and social

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[105] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 543.

[106] See Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism : Performance, Political Style, and Representation*, 19-20.

[107] Right-wing populist parties have elements which are drawn from left-wing, welfare state principles; see Gijs Schumacher and Kees van Kersbergen, "Do mainstream parties adapt to the welfare chauvinism of populist parties?," *Party Politics,* 22(3) 2016, pp.300-312; Laurenz Ennser-Jedenastik, "Welfare Chauvinism in Populist Radical Right Platforms: The Role of Redistributive Justice Principles," *Social Policy Administration,* 52(1), 2018, pp.293-314.

equality, and is therefore of a generally inegalitarian disposition.[108] However, many populist radical right parties promote loathing of the elite and attempt to speak on behalf of 'the people.' Is categorising populist radical right parties as right-wing then mistaken?

There is good reason for this broad characterisation. Despite the anti-elitist rhetoric espoused by populist radical rights politicians there is, as political scientist Anton Pelinka points out, little of the strong internationalist dimension one often sees among left wing movements.[109] Instead, populist radical right parties are focused on protecting the nations' 'people' from their 'elite' and foreign enemies.[110] This being so, "any kind of populism directed against an ethnically and/or nationally and/or religiously defined 'other' can be seen as 'right wing'."[111] Moreover, many right-wing populist parties have roots in fascist and other far-right movements; others were created by disillusioned members of centre-right parties.[112] Most importantly, while right-wing populists direct some animosity towards "economic élites and/or intellectuals …the most important populist energy today is directed against the enemy who is considered to be foreign – ethnically, culturally and religiously foreign."[113] However, it is important to recognise that radical right parties which embrace populism will often incorporate some progressive or left-wing economic (and occasionally social) policies into their platforms.

It is difficult to identify specifically and consistently populist radical right parties before the 1970s. In the first half of the 20th century, Fascist and Catholic integralist parties used populist language, and claimed to speak in the name of 'the people.' Supporters of these movements argued that the anti-democratic politics of fascism and Nazism "more efficiently and more truthfully" represented the will of the people than liberal democratic systems.[114]

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[108] Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction,* translated by Allan Cameron, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, 62-63.

[109] Anton Pelinka, "Right-wing populism: Concept and Typology," in *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, edited by Ruth Wodak, Majid KhosraviNik and Brigitte Mral, 3–22. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, 7.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid, 8.

[112] The French National Front and Freedom Party of Austria have roots in fascist movements. Geert Wilders Party for Freedom leader, broke away from a mainstream centre-right party, and has no early links with fascist movements in the Netherlands or elsewhere. See Olivier Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*" in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* Nadia Marzouki, Duncan McDonnell, Olivier Roy (eds) London: C. Hurst and Co, 2016; Reinhard Heinisch, "The Austrian Freedom Party: Organizational Development and Leadership Change," in *Understanding Populist Party Organisation: The Radical Right in Western Europe,* edited by Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, 20.

[113] Pelinka, "Right-wing populism: Concept and Typology," 8.

[114] Ibid.

However, the Nazis and Italian Fascists belong to the anti-democratic extreme right, and are in important ways different to the parties we today call 'right-wing populist,' even in cases where the contemporary right-wing populist party is directly descended from an earlier fascist movement. Rather, the right-wing populism that attained great popularity and political influence in the 2000s, and particularly after 2008, has its origins in 1970s Europe.

European fascist and far-right parties and movements of the first half of the 20th century made race a central platform of their politics, and moreover held that the 'white race' – however that term was defined – was superior to all other 'races.'[115] During the 1970s and 1980s several far-right parties transformed into populist radical right parties. This transformation involved embracing democracy, and replacing the belief in the superiority of the white race with a belief in the superiority of their respective national – and/or Western/European/Christian – culture.[116] This last change, as we shall see, was in many ways the most crucial element in the transformation of the far-right into the populist right. Indeed, the move from anti-democratic and racist politics, to populist ideology and anti-immigration policies based on cultural incompatibility, was instrumental in moving populist radical right parties from the fringe of European politics in the 1970s to the centre by mid 2010s.

The political trajectories of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the French National Front (FN) demonstrate the nature and significance of the transformation of the radical right into the populist radical right. The FN, for example, while it was founded in 1972, came out of a long French tradition of Catholic identity politics, fascism, and integralism. Party founder Jean-Marie Le Pen – leader from 1972 to 2011 – had originally been a supporter of *Action Francaise,* a far-right Catholic integralist and racist party which became discredited after the Second World War due to its association with Nazism and the Vichy regime.[117] Throughout its first five years, the FN shared much of *Action Francaise's* ideology; anti-communism, anti-Semitism and racism, Catholic identity, social conservatism.[118] Perhaps due to its close

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[115] For a discussion of the historical and contemporary importance of 'whiteness' to fascist and far-right parties and movements, see Jean Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, *Far-Right Politics in Europe,* translated by Jane Marie Todd, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017, 98-120.

[116] Roy notes the rise of the National Front began when the party, around 1980, ceased its exclusionary racist rhetoric and replaced it with 'culture' and sometimes 'ethnicity.' Rather than speak of the superiority of the 'white race,' the National Front spoke of there being merely different yet incompatible cultures. See Olivier Roy, "The French National Front" in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion*, London: Hurst & Co., 2016, 83.

[117] Ibid, 79-81.

[118] Ibid. Roy notes that in the beginning the National Front was not a populist party, but essentially neo-fascist.

relationship with the discredited *Action Francaise* and Vichy Regime, the FN failed to win a significant number of votes during elections in the early to mid-1970s.[119]

The FN's political orientation changed in the late 1970s when the party made opposition to immigration its central policy platform. Le Pen attacked immigration from North Africa not because Arabs and Africans were biologically inferior, but because people of such different cultures could apparently not live together in peace.[120] Immigration from mostly Muslim North Africa was, according to Le Pen, a threat to French culture and the Catholic religious faith which sustained France.[121] The National Front's characteristic blend of left-wing economics, social conservatism, anti-immigration policies, religious identity politics, and a populist appeal to 'the will of the people' appears to have brought the party increased popularity throughout the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in Le Pen's second place result at the 2002 Presidential elections.[122]

A similar political trajectory is evident in the Austrian Freedom Party, which also began its life as a radical right party with fascist links on the fringe of politics, but which oriented itself towards populism in the 1980s and subsequently enjoyed vastly increased power, electoral significance, and respectability. Indeed, like many other populist radical right parties in the 1980s, the FPÖ moved away from the politics of explicit racism and towards a "post-racist policy of ethnopluralism, which aims at the protection and preservation of one's own society, culture, and way of life, rather than the disparagement, subjugation and extension of other cultures."[123] The FPO was created in 1956 as the heir to a long tradition of pan-Germanism dating back to the revolutions of 1848.[124] Due to the discrediting of Nazism and extreme German nationalism – a result more than anything else of the Nazi defeat in the Second

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[119] Jean-Marie Le Pen won 0.76% of votes at the 1974 French Presidential elections. See Jonathan Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics: The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen,* New York: New York University Press, 1995, 52.

[120] Jean-Marie Le Pen once stated that he loved North Africans, "but their place is in the Maghreb." See Hans Georg-Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe,* Hampshire and London: MacMillan, 1994, 183.

[121] Le Pen described Muslim immigration in 2002 as "a grave phenomenon" which threatened France's Judeo-Christian culture with annihilation. See Adar Primor, "The Veil? It protects us from ugly women," *The Guardian,* April 25 2002. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/25/france.features11.

[122] For a detailed account of the 2002 French Presidential Election results, and a discussion of the rise of the National Front during the 1990s and early 2000s, see Collette Ysmal, "The Presidential and Legislative Elections of 2002: An Analysis of the Results," in *The French Presidential and Legislative Elections of 2002,* edited by John Gaffney, Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004, 57-83.

[123] Hans Georg-Betz, "The Growing Threat of the Radical Right," in *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century,* edited by Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003, 84.

[124] Reinhard Heinisch,"The Austrian Freedom Party: Organizational Development and Leadership Change," in *Understanding Populist Party Organisation: The Radical Right in Western Europe,* edited by Reinhard Heinisch and Oscar Mazzoleni, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, 20.

World War – the FPO existed on the fringe of Austrian politics throughout the first 15 years of its existence.[125] In the 1970s, however, the party began to move towards the centre and adopt a liberal ideology.[126] While this increased the FPO's popularity within the electorate, it was not a popular move with all party members.[127] Fractures within the FPO developed, and by the mid-80s the party found itself with a new leader – Jorg Haider – and a different ideology: populism.[128]

Haider appears to have married the nationalism of the 1950s FPO with the 1970s FPO reverence for democracy. To this he added the ideology of populism, and with it a nativism based upon anti-immigration and anti-multicultural policies based on alleged cultural and religious – not racial – difference. For example, Haider alleged that Islam was not compatible with Western culture, but was on the contrary opposed to Western concepts such as human rights, democracy, individualism, and equality between men and women, and opposed immigration to Austria by Muslims on these grounds.[129]

Under Haider, as one scholar notes, the "FPÖ became known for breaking new ground in campaigning and political communication. Haider was an effective debater on television, imported highly choreographed US-style public appearances, and introduced permanent campaigning in Austria. He was especially successful in appealing to segments of voters that had previously paid little attention to politics."[130] The combination of populist ideology and radical right nativism and authoritarianism under Haider introduced to the FPO appears to have been instrumental in increasing the party's power and electoral success.[131]

The FPÖ and National Front were part of a wave of populist radical right parties which came to prominence in Europe throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Yet the populist radical right has not remained ideologically stagnant since the 1980s. It is possible to identify important changes to right-wing populist ideology that have occurred in the 2000s and 2010s. One cannot draw a sharp line, of course, at a particular year. However, public disillusionment with mainstream political parties, the European Union, and perhaps representative democracy in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, brought right-wing populist parties greater notoriety and support than they had previously received. This newfound popularity helped to crystallise

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[125] Ibid, 20-21.

[126] Ibid, 21.

[127] Ibid, 22. Heinisch describes the growth of the FPO as the party moved towards the centre in a helpful graph.

[128] Ibid, 21.

[129] Betz, "The Growing Threat of the Radical Right," 83.

[130] Ibid, 21.

[131] Heinisch, "The Austrian Freedom Party: Organizational Development and Leadership Change," 2016.

the ideology with which right-wing populist parties have become synonymous. The post-2008 environment also helped to highlight important and increasing differences between right-wing populist movements in different parts of the world.

Populist radical right parties across Europe drew increased support from voters throughout the 2000s and 2010s, capitalising on post-economic 2008 financial crash anger and growing disillusionment towards governing parties.[132] Populist radical right parties in Europe have experienced a period of growth from the 1980s to the mid-2010s, increasing their percentage of votes in national and European parliamentary elections from on average 5.1% to an average of 13.2%, and increased their percentage of seats from an average of 3.8% to an average 12.8%.[133] Yet the period since 2008 has seen the greatest success for these parties, winning government in Poland,[134] Italy,[135] and Switzerland,[136] and increasing their share of the vote so as to enjoy second party status in France,[137] Denmark,[138] and the Netherlands.[139]

What exactly, then, are populist radical right parties, and do they share a common ideology? Is 'populist radical right' the correct term to use to describe this diverse group? This thesis follows Mudde's terminology, and uses the term 'populist radical right' to describe the parties examined herein. The reason for using Mudde's terminology is partly because it is an extension of the ideological approach with which he is associated and which this thesis adopts; Mudde groups these parties together and defines them according to their ideology. Equally, this thesis describes the discourse of radical right parties in Western Europe which

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[132] See Pippa Norris, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why." *The Washington Post,* March 11, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/11/its-not-just-trump-authoritarian-populism-is-rising-across-the-west-heres-why/?utm_term=.dbe9847566fa.

[133] Ronald F. Inglehard and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash, Paper for the roundtable on "Rage against the Machine: Populist Politics in the U.S., Europe and Latin America", 10.00-11.30 on Friday 2 September 2016, annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, 2. https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1401.

[134] "Rightwing Law and Justice Party wins overall majority in Polish election," *The Guardian,* 27 October, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/27/poland-law-justice-party-wins-235-seats-can-govern-alone

[135] "Italian Elections 2018 – Full Results," *The Guardian,* 6 March, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2018/mar/05/italian-elections-2018-full-results-renzi-berlusconi.

[136] "Anti-immigration party wins election in slide to the right," *The Telegraph,* 19 October, 2015. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/switzerland/11939953/Anti-immigration-party-wins-Swiss-election-in-slide-to-the-Right.html.

[137] Angelique Chrisafis, "Emmanuel Macron vows unity after winning French Presidential election," *The Guardian,* 8 May, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/07/emmanuel-macron-wins-french-presidency-marine-le-pen.

[138] "Danish Elections: Opposition Bloc Wins," *BBC,* 19 June, 2015. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33171549.

[139] John Henley, "Dutch PM Mark Rutte sees off election threat of Geert Wilders," *The Guardian,* 16 March 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/15/pm-mark-rutte-set-to-beat-geert-wilders-in-dutch-election.

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are also populist, or to put it another way, parties which might be described as the populist form of the radical right. As the examples of the National Front and Austrian Freedom Party show, some populist radical right parties began as radical right parties but later adopted the thin ideology of populism. The thesis thus does not analyse the discourse of left-wing or centre-right or radical right parties which use a similar discourse on religion. Therefore Mudde's terminology and ideological grouping is extremely useful for the purposes of this thesis, because it provides a coherent description of the party family herein analysed.

The parties Mudde describes as existing within the populist radical right family include the French National Front, the Austrian FPO, the Danish People's Party, the Belgian National Front, Vlaams Belang, Alternative for Germany, and the Dutch Party for Freedom, among others. Betz and Johnson find radicalism in the "aggressive discourse" used by these parties, "that directly aims at weakening and undermining the values and institutional arrangements and procedures central to liberal democracy and replacing them with a fundamentally different system."[140] They find that "radical right-wing parties are thus radical both with respect to the language they employ in confronting their political opponents and the political project they promote and defend."[141] Mudde, however, criticises this position as "too relativistic," and contends that these parties should be described as 'radical' insofar as they are opposed to important aspects of liberal democracy, especially "political pluralism and the constitutional protection of minorities."[142] Mudde's position is, however, in agreement with Betz and Cameron's observation that populist radical right parties have in common an ability to reconcile radical anti-liberal ideas with support for democracy.[143]

Populist radical right parties can be grouped together, Mudde argues, because they share a combination of three core ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism.[144] By nativism Muddle refers to the ideology which combines nationalism and xenophobia, and "holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ...and that non-native elements ...are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state." Nativism – as opposed to a less threatening form of nationalism which may merely assert the importance of inviolable national borders – is a common feature of the parties examined in

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[140] Hans Georg Betz & Carol Johnson, "Against the current—stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right," Journal of Political Ideologies, 9:3, 311-327, 2004, 312. DOI:10.1080/1356931042000263546 https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263546.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 25.

[143] Hans Georg Betz & Carol Johnson, 2004, 312-313.

[144] Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy,* 2.

this thesis, which often use religious identity to distinguish between 'the people' and 'others.'[145]

'Authoritarianism' Mudde describes in terms borrowed from Adorno as "a general disposition to glorify, to be subservient to and remain uncritical toward authoritative figures of the ingroup and to take an attitude of punishing outgroup figures in the name of some moral authority".[146] It is possible to see this authoritarianism even in the supposedly freedom loving Dutch Party for Freedom – in some respects one of the more 'liberal' members of the populist radical right family. Therefore despite having "freedom" in the name of the party, the Party for Freedom practices leader worship, demonising of the 'other,' and calls for an unquestioning acceptance of Judeo-Christian and Humanism as the leading-culture of the Netherlands. The party lauds freedom of expression, but demands that it be given only to 'the people,' but denied to the threatening Muslim 'other.' For the populist radical right, freedom is for 'us,' not 'them.'

The third ideological feature described by Mudde is populism, here "understood as a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonte generale (general will) of the people.[147] Moreover, populist ideology places the common sense of 'the people' above the ideas of the educated elite, above even "human rights or constitutional guarantees."[148]

Populism is obviously an important feature of the parties examined in this thesis. For example, the National Front and Party for Freedom – and in particular their respective leaders – can be identified as populist radical right parties. This grouping does not mean that populist radical right parties share identical social and economic policies. Importantly, populist radical right parties across Europe have made opposition to Islam a central element of their political platforms.[149] Yet while Eastern European populists portray themselves as defenders of conservative, Christian values and heritage against the Islamic threat, Western European

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[145] Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 19.
[146] Adorno et al quoted by Mudde in Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press**,** 2007, 22.
[147] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 543.
[148] Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 23.
[149] Hans-Georg Betz and Susi Meret, "Right-wing populist parties and the working class vote: what have you done for us lately?" in *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, Jens Rydgren (Ed.) London and New York: Routledge, 2013, 116.

populists right-wing parties do something different and intriguing.[150] They frame themselves as defenders of a Judeo-Christian and Humanist, or Christian and secular, tradition, and claim Islam is inimical to this tradition because it cannot secularise.[151] This framing has become an important element in their conception of 'the people,' as well as their conception of the outgroups they allege are threats to 'the people' and their nation-state. As a result, discourse is very important to populist radical right parties, insofar as they see politics "in terms of a 'metapolitical' contestation of the power to define concepts and shape discourse.[152]

In their discourse populist radical right politicians claim that the increasing presence of Islam in Europe is an existential threat to European culture.[153] Perhaps lurking behind this fear is Europe's demographic problem: non-Muslim Europeans have very few children, while Muslims have children at above the replacement rate. Thus the non-Muslim population of Europe will decline by the tens of millions by 2050, while the number of Muslims will increase by millions in the same timeframe.[154] Most interesting, however, is the manner in which many populist radical right politicians categorise European culture. Rather than simply describe their respective national cultures, and the wider European culture, as 'secular,' they describe it as simultaneously Christian and secular.[155] The use of this discourse is common to Western Europe but uncommon in the East. In Eastern Europe – for example in Hungry and Poland – one does not see a similar trend towards social liberalism or a conflation of

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[150] See for example the way in which Poland's governing Law and Justice Party describe themselves as defenders of conservative Catholicism against Islam and secularism; Ben Stanley, "Defenders of the Cross: Populist Politics and Religion in Post-Communist Poland," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 119–120. See also Anna Gwiazda, *Democracy in Poland: Representation, participation, competition, and accountability since 1989,* New York and London: Routledge, 2016, 63.

[151] See for example the following speeches by Geert Wilders and Marine Le Pen, in which their respective national cultures are described as secular and Christian, or Judeo-Christian and Humanist, while Islam is demonized as antithetical to this jointly secular and religious culture and intellectual tradition. See Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," *Geert Wilders Blog,* November 8, 2016. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/in-de-media-mainmenu-74/94-english/2015-wilders-plan-time-for-liberation.; Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, *Gates Institute Online*, February 5, 2017. https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9900/le-pen-speech. See also RFI, "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," *RFI*, January 28, 2011; Marine Le Pen, "Has Marine Le Pen Already Won the Battle for the Soul of France?" 2014.

[152] Hans Georg Betz & Carol Johnson (2004) Against the current—stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right, Journal of Political Ideologies, 9:3, 311-327, 324. DOI:10.1080/1356931042000263546 https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263546.

[153] Betz and Meret, "Right-wing populist parties and the working class vote: what have you done for us lately?" 116.

[154] Harriet Sherwood, "Muslims populism in some EU countries could triple, says report," *The Guardian,* 29 November, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/29/muslim-population-in-europe-could-more-than-double.

[155] For example See Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," *Geert Wilders Blog,* November 8, 2016. Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, *Gates Institute Online*, February 5, 2017.

Christianity with secularism among populist radical right parties. Rather, there is a complex conflation of ethno-nationalism conservative values, and Christian values and identity.[156]

This divergence was consolidated by the 2015 European immigration crisis, which saw more than one million people – mostly Muslim – leave their homes in the Middle East and Africa to seek asylum in Europe.[157] Right-wing populist parties across Europe portrayed the migrants as an existential threat to their respective national cultures, if not to European civilisation.[158] Yet, importantly, Western European right-wing populists were far more likely, than Eastern European right-wing populists, to present Muslim immigrants as a threat to secularism, women's rights, and the Judeo-Christian tradition.[159] This shift from ethnic and racial categorisation of the ingroup and outgroup, or 'the people' and 'others,' to a religio-cultural categorisation has not gone without notice by scholars. A number of scholars noticed the important role religion played in populist radical right parties' categorisation of people and the conception of who belongs within the nation-state. However, and perhaps due to perceptions of Western Europe as a particularly secularised region in which religion plays little meaningful role in public life, surprisingly little scholarship has been produced on the role of religion in the discourse of populist radical right parties in Western Europe.

The populist radical right and religion

In *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe,* Mudde calls attention to the scant scholarship on "the relationship between religion and populist radical right parties."[160] He further notes that

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[156] See Stanley, "Defenders of the Cross: Populist Politics and Religion in Post-Communist Poland, 109–128; Zoltán Ádámand Andras Bozóki, "'The God of Hungarians': Religion and Right-wing Populism in Hungary," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 129-148.

[157] Phillip Connor, "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015," *Pew Global*, August 2, 2016. http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/.

[158] See for example Marine Le Pen's comments to journalists in 2015 "Le Pen compares migrant influx to barbarian invasion of Rome," *RT,* September 15, 2015. https://www.rt.com/news/315466-le-pen-migrant-barbarian-invasion/; see Geert Wilders' similar remarks in Yoruk Bahceli, "Wilders tells Dutch parliament refugee crisis is 'Islamic invasion,'" *Reuters,* 10 September, 2015. https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-netherlands/wilders-tells-dutch-parliament-refugee-crisis-is-islamic-invasion-idUSKCN0RA0WY20150910.

[159] Compare polish and Hungarian right-wing populist parties response to Muslim immigration in the 2010s --- Stanley, "Defenders of the Cross: Populist Politics and Religion in Post-Communist Poland," 109–128; Ádám and Bozóki, "'The God of Hungarians': Religion and Right-wing Populism in Hungary," 129-148 – to western European right-wing populist responses: Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," *Time,* November 18, 2015. http://time.com/4117119/paris-attacks-marine-le-pen/#; Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," *Geert Wilders Weblog,* June 13, 2015. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/94-english/1937-speech-geert-wilders-bornholm-denmark-june-13-2015.

[160] Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 296.

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while religion has always been important for Eastern European populists, a greater emphasis has been placed – post 9/11 – on Christianity "within populist radical right parties in the West."[161] Since Mudde wrote these words there has been an increasing – though still relatively small – body of literature on religion and the populist radical right. A significant amount of this scholarship has focused on the use of religion by populist radical right parties in Europe.[162]

That Muslims have become a central outgroup in Western European populist radical right ideology is perhaps a commonplace observation of contemporary European politics.[163] Yet many populist radical right parties do not simply seek to suppress Islam, but in their discourse frequently define the 'in' culture as Christian or partly Christian-derived. This does not merely designate Muslims as the outgroup which must be excluded, but it defines 'the people' and the nation-state, and moreover their enemies, according to their religious identity and religion derived values. In other words, the type of nativism practiced by Western European populist radical rights parties has become increasingly based upon religious identification. Populist radical right parties often claim Western Civilisation and thus their respective national cultures to be based on Christian or Judeo-Christian values.[164] Muslims, on the other hand, are claimed to be uniquely unable to live within this Judeo-Christian environment, chiefly because they cannot perform the necessary divorcing of their religious faith from their behaviour in the public sphere.[165] Therefore Muslims' inability to separate religion from politics – a supposed hallmark of Judeo-Christian societies – is considered a direct threat to secular societies.

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[161] Ibid.

[162] For example, Nadia Marzouki, Duncan McDonnell, Olivier Roy (eds) *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* London: C. Hurst and Co, 2016; Olivier Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," *The International Spectator,* 48:1, 2011; Rogers Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationalism: the European populist movement in comparative perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40(8),* 1191-1226, 2017, 1198. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700.

[163] See for example Ruth Wodak's observation that "For most parties, the fear of migrants and asylum seekers has become a hegemonic agenda as well as a forceful argument for the necessity to protect the 'Christian Occident' as a constitutive part of European identity." Ruth Woday, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean,* London: Sage, 2015, 68l

[164] See for example Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016; Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, 2017; Duncan McDonnell, "The Lega Nord," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* O.Roy, N.Marzouki, D.McDonnell (eds.) London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 13.

[165] See for example "Islam not compatible with German Constitution says AfD party," *Reuters,* April 18, 2016. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-afd-islam-idUSKCN0XE0T0. See also the Danish People's Party 'party program,' which claims that Islam cannot separate the religious from the temporal: "The Party Program of the Danish People's Party." Danish People's Party Website, https://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/The_Party_Program_of_the_Danish_Peoples_Party.

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The notion that secularism is a product of Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage, and that Muslim immigration threatens secular differentiation of religion from politics due to the inherent inability of Islam to distinguish between the two, appears to have become significant first in the politics of the Netherlands. Dutch politicians' use of "Judeo-Christian" as a description of Western Civilisation can be dated back to Dutch Liberal Party leader Frits Bolkestein, who in 1991 stated that Dutch culture had been shaped by "Rationalism, humanism and Christianity."[166] These three values, for Bolkenstein, are intrinsic only to Western culture. Other cultures, particularly Islamic culture, do not possess these values. Therefore Muslims, according to Bolkenstein, cannot be easily integrated into open, liberal, tolerant Dutch society.[167] Indeed, it appears that for Bolkensten the only way for the Netherlands to remain tolerant, open, and liberal is for it to adopt a kind of muscular liberalism and exclude intolerant migrants from cultures which lack the humanist and rationalist values that came out of Christianity.

Bolkestein's protégé and leader of the influential populist radical right Party For Freedom, Geert Wilders, repeats many of Bolkestein's claims. Wilders, an agnostic[168] with liberal views on women's and gay rights,[169] has praised Christianity and Judaism as the foundation of Western humanistic civilisation.[170] Islam, on the other hand, he claims has not the ability to transform itself into a humanistic system, but is by nature a "totalitarian political ideology" which masquerades as a religion.[171] It is interesting to note that Wilders defines Islam as a political ideology rather than a religion.[172] Indeed, it appears that he sees Islam's allegedly political nature as a fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity, and uses this

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[166] Ibid, 53-54.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Wilders says "Zelf ben ik agnost," or 'I am myself agnostic', see Geert Wilders, "Moslims, bevrijd uzelf en u kunt alles," *NRC,* July 19, 2010. http://vorige.nrc.nl//opinie/article2584468.ece.
[169] Koen Vossen, "Populism in the Netherlands after Fortuyn: Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society,* 11(1) 2010,pp.22-38, 27.
[170] See Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders Melbourne, Australia, February 19 2013. http://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/in-english-mainmenu-98/in-the-press-mainmenu-101/77-in-the-press/in-the-press/1822-speech-geert-wilders-melbourne-australia-tuesday-february-19-2013.
[171] Geert Wilders, "Geert Wilders: Stopping of Islamic immigration is a matter of survival," *Breitbart,* February 9, 2016. https://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2016/02/09/stopping-islamic-immigration-is-a-matter-of-survival/.
[172] An idea echoed in Australian politics by populist right leader Pauline Hanson, who has called for a Royal Commission to determine whether Islam is a religion or a political movement. See "Islam" on the One Nation Party's Website: http://www.onenation.com.au/policies/islam.

supposed difference to justify his ban on possession of the Qu'ran[173] and wider opposition to Islam and Muslim migration to the Netherlands.

Wilders is hardly the only populist radical right politician making these claims, though he is perhaps the most prominent. Since becoming National Front leader in 2011, Marine Le Pen has echoed Wilders' anti-Islam and pro-Judeo-Christian rhetoric, claiming France to be a nation with a Christian past and a secular present, and home to a culture which reflects this heritage.[174] Islam, she says, may be incompatible with France's secular-Christian heritage, and thus Muslim migration to France ought to be curtailed.[175] Similarly, in Denmark, the right-wing populist Danish People's Party has described Islam as a dangerous force which opposes freedom, democracy, and the separation of the "temporal world and the world of faith," two ideals which they claim to be enshrined in Christianity.[176]

The broader idea of European identity being Christian or Judeo-Christian appears to play a powerful role in Western European attitudes towards Turkey, and especially the possibility of Turkish entry into the European Union. During a campaign which ultimately saw Britain vote to leave the EU, the 'Leave' campaign unveiled two controversial posters. One simply read, "TURKEY (population 76 million) IS JOINING THE EU."[177] Leader of the populist radical right UK Independence Party and prominent 'Leave' activist Nigel Farage himself unveiled an even more dramatic poster, this time showing untold numbers of Arab-Muslim refugees walking towards the viewer. The caption read "BREAKING POINT: The EU has failed us all."[178] The poster was described as racist, which it may well be; however, it is not so much the colour of the refugees skin that Farage and his supporters object to, but their religion. After all, Farage has called for non-white Christian refugees to be given asylum in Britain

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[173] Amanda Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Searching for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century," in *Is there a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective,* Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski (eds.), Berlin: Gruyter, 2016, 255.

[174] "These principles for which we are fighting are affirmed in our national motto 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' which itself proceeds from a secularization of principles stemming from our Christian heritage." Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, 2017. https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9900/le-pen-speech.

[175] RFI, "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," *RFI*, January 28, 2011. http://en.rfi.fr/france/20110128-le-pen-says-islam-not-compatible-secular-society.

[176] "The Party Program of the Danish People's Party." Danish People's Party Website. https://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/The_Party_Program_of_the_Danish_Peoples_Party.

[177] For poster image see Alistair Darling, "Brexit's big idea is a total Turkey says Alistair Darling," *Daily Mail,* May 22, 2016. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3602672/Brexit-s-big-idea-total-Turkey-says-former-chancellor-ALISTAIR-DARLING.html.

[178] For poster image see "Brexit: UKIP's 'unethical' anti-immigration poster," *Al Jazeera,* 28 June 2016. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/06/brexit-anti-immigration-ukip-poster-raises-questions-160621112722799.html.

ahead of Muslims.[179] Moreover, Farage's UK Independence Party published a "Christian manifesto" which outlined Christianity's historical and contemporary importance to Britain and British culture.[180]

The Austrian Freedom Party has similarly referenced Christianity and Judaism in their discourse, bringing the religions together with the Enlightenment to create a "cultural Christianity ...which is based on the separation of the church and the state."[181] Europe, according to the party, "was decisively shaped by Christianity, influenced by Judaism and other non-Christian religious communities, while humanism and the Enlightenment marked its continued fundamental development."[182] The FPÖ, however, argues that Islam is not among the influences on Austria's "cultural Christianity," but an alien culture which must be excluded to prevent Islamization.[183]

The demonization of Islam as anti-secular by nature, and the categorisation of secularism as a product of the West's Judeo-Christian heritage, became especially prominent during the 2015 immigration crisis. During this period more than one million mostly Muslim people from North Africa, the Middle East, and West Asia sought asylum in Europe.[184] Prominent populist radical right parties the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Alternative for Germany, and the French National Front campaigned against allowing Muslim immigration, often on the grounds that Islam was not compatible with Western culture.[185] Moreover, new populist radical right parties appeared. Alternative for Germany grew quickly from its founding in

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[179] Rowena Mason, "Nigel Farage rows back on call to grand asylum to Syrian refugees," 30 December, 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/dec/30/nigel-farage-asylum-syrian-refugees-christians.

[180] See "UKIP Policies for Christians: An Overview," *UK Independence Party Website,* 2015. http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf.

[181] Bernhard Weidinger Equal before God, and God Alone: Cultural Fundamentalism, (Anti-)Egalitarianism, and Christian Rhetoric in Nativist Discourse from Austria and the United States Journal of Austrian-American History, 1(1) 2017, pp. 40-68, 58-59 https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jaustamerhist.1.1.0040.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Leila Hadj-Abdou, "The Religious Conversion of the Austrian Freedom Party," in , in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* Marzouki, McDonnell, Roy (eds), London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 37-38.

[184] Rougly 890,000 refugees settled in Germany in 2015 alone. See "Refugee numbers in Germany dropped dramatically in 2017," *DW,* January 16, 2018. https://www.dw.com/en/refugee-numbers-in-germany-dropped-dramatically-in-2017/a-42162223.

[185] See for example Tina Bellon, "Anti-immigrant AfD says Muslims are not welcome in Gemany," *The Independent,* 2 May, 2016. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/alternative-for-germany-anti-immigrant-afd-says-muslims-are-not-welcome-in-germany-a7009531.html. See Geert Wilders' remarks about banning Muslim immigration in Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," *Geert Wilders Weblog,* June 13, 2015.   See also Marine Le pen's remarks about preventing further Muslim immigration to France in Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," *Time,* November 18, 2015.

2013, and received strong support in elections in 2016 and 2017 after opposing Muslim immigration and defending Christian heritage and also secularism.[186]

Populist radical right parties were not content with merely opposing Muslim immigration to Europe, but they sometimes voiced support for Christian and Jewish people outside of Europe. For example, France's National Front leader Marine Le Pen visited Lebanon shortly before French presidential elections in 2017, and called on France to protect Christianity in the country, suggesting it was France's special duty to protect Christians in the Middle East.[187] Equally, both Le Pen and Dutch Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders have demonstrated the same kind of philo-Semitism common to a number of populist radical right parties in Western Europe, declaring their support and admiration for the state of Israel.[188]

The newfound electoral success of the populist radical right is interesting for two reasons. First, because this success had been driven by a transformation of radical right politics; in the past, radical right politics has been driven by a concern with 'race' and ethnicity, and a commitment to preserving traditional national values. The contemporary populist radical right denounces racism, particularly anti-Semitism, and claims itself to be a protector of secular, liberal values.[189] In the place of the politics of 'race' and ethnicity, the populist radical right concerns itself with the alleged cultural and religious threat posed by immigrants to national cohesion and European Judeo-Christian civilisation.

The electoral success of the populist radical right is also particularly interesting because it suggests that religion may play a complex and in some ways unexpected role in contemporary European politics. In the 1960s and 1970s it was widely believed that the process of modernization – industrialization, urbanization, and scientific education – would precipitate secularisation,[190] the privatization of religion, and religion's separation from

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[186] The AfD emerged from the 2017 German federal elections as the third largest party. See Sean Clarke, "Germany Elections 2017: Full Results," *The Guardian,* 25 September, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/sep/24/german-elections-2017-latest-results-live-merkel-bundestag-afd.

[187] See Chloé Domat, "Marine Le Pen plays the Lebanon card in French presidential race," *Middle East Eye,* February 21, 2017. http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/french-presidential-election-marine-le-pen-plays-lebanese-card-431691057.

[188] Brubaker among others has noted the curious philo-semitism of the populist radical right. See Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationalism: the European populist movement in comparative perspective."

[189] For a full discussion of the transformation of the European far-right see Chetan Bhatt, "The New Xenologies of Europe: Civil Tensions and Mythic Pasts," *Journal of Civil Society,* 8:3, (September 2012) pp. 307-326.

[190] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *TheDesecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* Peter L. Berger (ed.) Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 3-5.

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politics and public life.[191] This set of assumptions, of course, were core aspects of the secularisation thesis. Yet by the 1980s it was becoming clear that the secularisation of the world had not come to pass.

One of the architects of secularisation theory, sociologist Peter Berger, subsequently amended the theory to show how modernisation need not entail secularisation, and that religion can thrive in a globalised modern world.[192] However, Berger argued as recently as 2014 that Western Europe has remained largely secularised and that religion has little influence over public life and political decision making in a Western European context,[193] a view shared by a number of other prominent sociologists.[194] Yet there is reason to suggest this may not be the case, and that secular Europe's encounter with Islam has revealed the continuing role that Christianity has upon European culture and public life despite secularization.

Populist radical right parties' preference for Christianity and Judaism over Islam may then indicate a rethinking of the relationship between secularism and Christianity, which has itself been engendered by Europe's encounter with Islam. German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas, as early as 2008, observed the encounter with Islam reshaping Europeans' conception of their own religious and secular identities. In "Notes on Post-secular society" Habermas observed that "the visibility and vibrancy of foreign religious communities also spur the attention to the familiar churches and congregations."[195] Having Muslims neighbours, he continued, "force the Christian citizens to face up to the practice of a rival faith. And they also give the secular citizens a keener consciousness of the phenomenon of the public presence of religion."[196] For Habermas, the new public presence of Islam in

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[191] See Peter L. Berger *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.* New York: Anchor Books, 1967, Bryan R. Wilson*, Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment,* London: Watts, 1966, and Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society,* New York: Macmillan, 1967, on the original secularisation thesis.

[192] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* Peter L. Berger (ed.) Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, 3-5.

[193] Peter L. Berger, "Peter Berger on Resurgence of Religion and Decline of Secularization Theory". YouTube. 2 March 2015.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHlDyR102G8.

[194] This view is not Berger's alone, but is echoed in Bryan Wilson, "The secularization thesis: criticisms and rebuttals," in *Secularization and Social Integration,* Laermans, Wilson, Billiet, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998 pp. 44-66; Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West,* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002; Steve Bruce, "The curious case of an unnecessary recantation: Peter Berger and Secularization," in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion,* Heelas, Martin, Woodhead (eds), London and New York: Routledge, 2011 pp. 87-100; Bryan S Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the state,* Cambridge:Cambridge University Publishing, 2011, 11.

[195] Jügen Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," *New Perspectives Quarterly,* 25:4, pp.17-29, 20, 2008.

[196] Ibid.

Europe has demonstrated to Europeans' the non-universality of their own secularism, and the failure of secularism to triumph over religion.[197]

This notion of the non-universality, but rather the very particular, nature of secularism, appears to be reflected in the discourse of populist radical right parties. For example, Geert Wilders has described Dutch culture – and its freedoms and democracy – as the unique product of its Judeo-Christian and Humanist heritage.[198] In a similar way, Marine Le Pen has claimed that French culture is based upon Christian principles secularized,[199] and attacked "globalists" for allowing Islam to take root in France and threaten its secular society.[200]

The popularity of populist radical right parties in Western Europe indicates that their discourse has significant power within certain Western European electorates. Yet elements of this discourse are puzzling. Why is religious identity – in presumably secular Western Europe – used as a method of differentiating 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right? Moreover, is there anything genuinely religious about the populist radical right, or are they secularist parties which co-opt religion in order to manipulate voters? In the following chapter these questions are explored through an examination of the literature on populists' use of religion, and the literature discussing the impact of Islam on European politics and society.

Chapter Two: Understanding populist radical right parties' use of religion

This chapter begins to answer the question, 'Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe?' To answer this question, the chapter examines the literature on populism – and especially populist radical right parties – and religion.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the use of religion by populist radical right parties in their discourse to ascertain, first, whether it is religious or secular in nature, and second, the relationship of this discourse with the increasing Muslim population of Europe and European reaction to the growth of Islam. The section compares the

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[197] Ibid.
[198] See Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[199] Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, *Gates Institute Online*, February 5, 2017. https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9900/le-pen-speech.
[200] Ibid.

discourse used by populist radical right parties on religion with the at least superficially similar discourse used by Christians and post-secularists who wish to de-secularise Europe in order to test the religiosity/post-secularity of populist radical right discourse. Drawing on the observations of Jürgen Habermas on the effects Muslim immigration has had on European self-identification and understanding of the place of religion in contemporary society, it contends that Europeans' encounter with Islam and Europe have produced two significant and different reactions among Europeans.[201] First, a desire to accommodate Islam and Christianity within the public sphere, so as to integrate Muslims into European society, and facilitate a dialogue of mutual learning between religious and non-religious Europeans. Second, a closer identification between Christianity and contemporary secular European culture, which perceives European culture and values as Christianity secularised, and perceives Muslims as a religious threat to secularised Christian culture.

The second section examines the literature on religion and populism, with a particular focus on the scholarship on religion and populist radical right parties in Western Europe. The section draws on the work of Olivier Roy and Rogers Brubaker in order to understand how secular political parties are able to use religion to exclude certain religious identity groups from European society.[202] In particular, it examines the idea that populist radical right parties in Western Europe are best described as 'Christian identitarians' who view European culture and politics through 'Christianist-secularism.' This section also queries Roy and Brubaker's categorisation of populist radical right parties' discourse on religion as wholly secular, and draws on scholarship which finds concepts of the sacred embedded within populism.[203]

The final section draws on my review of scholarship on religion and populist radical right parties, and forms a hypothesis in answer to my thesis question, 'Why is religion used as a method of differentiating 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in presumably secular Western Europe?' This section argues that populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in their discourse because they have embraced what Rogers Brubaker terms 'Christianist-secularism.'[204] 'Christianist secularism' has itself come about as a result of Muslim

[201] Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," 2008.

[202] See Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," 5-19, 2013; Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 2017.

[203] Daniel Nilsson DeHanas & Marat Shterin, "Religion and the rise of populism, Religion," *State & Society*, 46:3, 177-185, 2018. DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2018.1502911.

[204] See Rogers Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," *The Imminent Frame,* October 11, 2016. https://tif.ssrc.org/2016/10/11/a-new-christianist-secularism-in-europe/. The term 'Christianism' Brubaker has

immigration to Europe, which has made secular Europeans more aware of public religion, and cognizant of the particular – and especially Christian – nature of the their own secular culture. Furthermore, the chapter argues that the arrival of Muslims in great numbers in Europe appears to have highlighted to Europeans the manner in which Christianity has been secularised into culture, demonstrating cultural continuity between Europe's religious past and its secular present which may not have been as obvious before the arrival of Muslims.

Is there anything religious about the populist radical right in Western Europe?

While all populist parties share an antipathy toward 'elites,' who populists frequently charge with ignoring 'the 'will of the people,' populist radical right parties share a xenophobic nativism which casts certain 'outgroups' as enemies of 'the people.'[205] In contemporary Western Europe the 'outgroup' singled out by many populist radical right parties is Muslims, and particularly religious Muslim immigrants.[206] This is not entirely surprising. Muslims are a highly visible minority group who have arrived in large numbers in Europe only since the 1970s. Europe's Muslims are largely non-European people who may look different to Europeans, and who practice an alien religion.[207]

It is significant that it is 'Muslims' who constitute this outgroup, and not 'Arabs' or 'non-whites' or a group identified according to some ethnic or racial marker. There are conceivably two reasons for this. First, the taboo around racial and ethnic abuse. While some European nations have strict laws policing 'hate speech,' throughout Western Europe blatant racism is considered socially unacceptable.[208] A politician calling for people of a particular ethnic group to be excluded from a particular European state may face criminal

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adopted from British-American writer and intellectual Andrew Sullivan, who Brubaker notes used it to describe the ideology of the Christian right in the United States. See Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1214, 2017.

[205] Pelinka, "Right-wing populism: Concept and Typology," 7, 2013.

[206] Marine Le Pen, for example, differentiates 'good' secular Muslims from 'bad' religious Muslim immigrants who do not belong in France. See Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

[207] In *Orientalism,* Said famously argued that there are unexamined biases against Islam in European discourse, which have essentially constructed a false 'Islam.' See Edward Said, *Orientalism,* (6th edition) London: Penguin, 2003. See also Massad, who notes how liberalism constructs a version of Islam for itself; Joseph Andoni Massad, *Islam in Liberalism,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015, 12.

[208] See Erik Bleich (2011) The Rise of Hate Speech and Hate Crime Laws in Liberal Democracies, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 37:6, 917-934, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2011.576195.

prosecution.[209] Calling for Muslims to be denied entry to a particular European nation, however, cannot easily be described as a form of racism. Therefore religion and religious identity may be used by politicians as a proxy for racial exclusion.[210]

This explanation for the populist radical right's use of religion in their discourse is not entirely satisfactory. For example, Muslims themselves have increasingly identified according to their religious heritage, and not exclusively according to their ethnic, national, or racial heritage.[211] There are many reasons why this may have occurred, including as a product of the global Islamic revival, which has seen an overall increase in religiosity and self-identification as 'Muslims.' More simply, Muslims' increasing emphasis on their religious identity in Europe may also be a product of an intrinsic difference between the majority of Europeans and Muslim immigrants to Europe: Muslims' greater religiosity than their largely secular European counterparts. Identity is produced in part by who 'we' imagine ourselves to be, but also in part by who we consider ourselves not to be. Therefore a Muslim person may feel more Muslim in a mostly non-Muslim society than within the overwhelmingly Islamic Middle East and North Africa.

Therefore it is likely that populist radical right parties are not simply using religion as a proxy for race. Instead, they may in fact see 'Muslims' as a dangerous and foreign outgroup which threatens European culture, because 'Muslims' perceive themselves – to varying degrees depending on the individual and place – as 'Muslim.' Another reason behind the populist

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[209] Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders was successfully prosecuted for hate speech against Moroccans. See Sheena McKenzie, "Geert Wilders guilty of insulting a group' after hate speech trial," *CNN,* December 8, 2016. https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/09/europe/geert-wilders-hate-speech-trial-verdict/index.html.

[210] The notion that Muslims have become a racial group, or a racialised category, is explored in Nadia Fadil, "Taming the Muslim Woman," *The Immanent Frame,* May 24, 2018. https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/24/taming-the-muslim-woman/; Nadia Fadil, "Are we all Secular/ized yet?: reflections on David Goldberg's 'Are we all post-racial yet?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 2261-2268, 39 (13), 2016 https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1202424; Guhin, J. (2018). Colorblind Islam: The racial hinges of immigrant Muslims in the United States. Social Inclusion, 6(2), 87–97 DOI 10.17645/si.v6i2.1422. This thesis does not refute the ideas of Fadil and Guhin, but rather attempts to understand the role of religion the discourse of populist radical right parties, which typically make a distinction between race and religion, and do not blur the line between the two. In their discourse, discussed in the following chapters, the National Front and Party for Freedom rarely speak of 'race,' but attribute to culture and religion qualities which might once have been racialised. Thus the ideas of Fadil, for example, and the question of the complex intersection of religion and race, while important, are somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis which tries to show how fears of de-secularisation and the decline of European culture – as opposed to racial animosity – motivate much of the populist radical right's anti-Islam rhetoric.

[211] See for example the data collected by Aspinalla and Song on the growth of Muslim identity in Britain. Peter J.Aspinalla and Miri Song, "Is race a 'salient...' or 'dominant identity' in the early 21st century: The evidence of UK survey data on respondents' sense of who they are," *Social Science Research,* 42(2) 2013, Pages 547-561. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.10.007. See also Jodie T. Allen and Richard Wike, "How Europe and its Muslims populations see each other," in *Muslims in Western Politics,* Abdulkader H. Sinno (ed.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, 154.

right's antipathy towards Muslims might be related to the social problems Muslims suffer in many parts of Europe, and which have perhaps exacerbated some Europeans' negative attitudes towards the group. For example, Muslims in France are vastly more likely to be unemployed or imprisoned than the average British or French citizen.[212] In Germany, Muslim men have been accused of sexual harassment and molesting women in Cologne.[213]

The perception that Muslims are an undesirable group within Europe has no doubt been exacerbated by these social problems, which the populist radical right have seized upon as proof of the inherent impossibility of introducing Islam into the European environment.[214] In a similar way, the rise of Islamist terror groups have also undoubtedly contributed to Europeans' negative views of Muslims and Islam. Islamist attacks in Britain and France have encouraged some Europeans to view many or all Muslims as potential terrorists or terror supporters, perhaps lending weight to populist radical right claims that Muslims are a violent people inclined towards terrorism.[215]

The oppressive nature of the governments of many Islamic and Muslim majority countries appears to colour the views of some Europeans of Europe's Muslims. Dutch Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders contrasts the freedoms of the West with the authoritarianism of the Islamic world, and attributes this difference to the inherently secular and freedom loving nature of Judeo-Christian Western civilisation, and the inherently "totalitarian" nature of Islam.[216] Civil wars in Iraq, Syria, and Libya have plausibly further affected European perceptions of Islam and Europe's Muslims in a negative manner.

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[212] See No official figures are kept, but it is likely that at least 27% of all inmates in French prisons are Muslims, with a figure of 40-50% more likely, and probably no more than 60%. Whichever number is correct, it is clear that Muslims – who are 8-10% of the population – are overrepresented in the prison population. See Sam Bowman, "Are 70% of France's Prison Inmates Muslim?" *Adam Smith Institute,* March 29, 2017. https://www.adamsmith.org/blog/are-70-of-frances-prison-inmates-muslims. See also "Caged Fervour: Should jails segregate Jihadists?" *The Economist,* September 17, 2016. https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21707230-should-jails-segregate-jihadists-caged-fervour.

[213] Rick Noack, "Leaked document says 2,000 men allegedly assaulted 1,200 German women on New Year's Eve," 11 July, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/10/leaked-document-says-2000-men-allegedly-assaulted-1200-german-women-on-new-years-eve/?utm_term=.50e9f4c1c603.

[214] See for example the Alternative for Germany party's seizing on the Cologne incident, Spiegel Staff, "How New Year's Eve in Cologne has changed Germany," *Spiegel Online,* 8 January, 2016. http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/cologne-attacks-trigger-raw-debate-on-immigration-in-germany-a-1071175.html.

[215] See for example Marne Le Pen's comments on Islamist terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, See Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

[216] See Geert Wilders, "Geert Wilders: Stopping of Islamic immigration is a matter of survival," *Breitbart,* February 9, 2016. https://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2016/02/09/stopping-islamic-immigration-is-a-matter-of-survival/.

The singling out of Muslims as a dangerous 'outgroup' by populist radical right parties is, when considered against these factors, unsurprising. However, the nature of populist radical right parties' discourse remains curious insofar as it not only defines 'Muslims' as the 'outgroup,' but also defines the 'ingroup' or 'the people' according to their supposed religious identity as Christians or Judeo-Christians. Europeans are thus not defined in terms of their ethnic or racial origin, but according to their religious heritage. This in itself is understandable, insofar as European identity is produced in part by what it may be defined against (i.e. Muslims). On the other hand it is curious that the populist radical right not merely defines 'the people' themselves according to their religious identity, but also the 'values' of 'the people,' their "mores" and "culture" and indeed their secular worldview.[217] This is unexpected insofar as populist radical right parties and most of their supporters across Europe are secularists who practice no religion. Why, then, are they recasting Christianity in the role of progenitor of European culture, including its secularism?

At the heart of populist radical right parties' use of religion is their perception of Islam as a threat to European culture, and to Europe as a Christian or Judeo-Christian continent insofar as its 'people' are Judeo-Christian. Therefore there appears to be a direct connection between Muslim immigration and the populist radical right's particular use of religion in their discourse. The encounter with Islam appears to have had a powerful effect on European self-perception, and led to some Europeans placing greater emphasis – in the face of Muslim difference – on their (Judeo-)Christian roots. This phenomenon has been noted by German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who observed the manner in which Muslim immigrants to Europe have altered European self-perception, conception of the importance of religion, and the universality of the secular worldview.[218]

In a 2006 speech on the need for greater European integration, Habermas remarked that Muslim immigrants to Europe confront "Christian citizens with competing religious truths" and make "secular citizens conscious of the phenomenon of public religion."[219] Before the coming of Islam to Europe, it was possible for Europeans to perceive their own secularism as universal, neutral, and normal. Yet as Habermas notes, once Muslims arrived in Europe in large numbers and, rather than assimilate into secular society, continued to practice their

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[217] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: Why I am running for President of France," *Gates of Vienna Blog,* March 16, 2012. www.gatesofvienna.blogspot.com.au/2012/03/marine-le-pen-why-i-am-running-for.html.
[218] See Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," pp.17-29, 2008.
[219] Jürgen Habermas, "Opening up fortress Europe," *Sign and Sight,* November 16, 2006, http://www.signandsight.com/features/1048.html.

religion, it was no longer possible for Europeans to understand secularisation as inevitable, and their own secularism as a universal worldview and set of values.[220] Before the arrival of Muslims in great numbers, Western Europeans in nations such as France, the UK, and the Netherlands, had largely secularised their societies and privatised religious belief. Religion remained acceptable in public life if it was Christian and secularised as 'culture'.[221]

On the other hand, religion was not accepted inside the realm of politics, and was regarded as particularly dangerous when an influence on a nation's foreign relations.[222] Moreover secularisation appeared, to secular Western Europeans, to be the end point to which all societies were travelling.[223] Thus it would only be a matter of time before the entire world privatised religious belief. At any rate, it was assumed that, once inside the secular liberal Western European state the religious immigrant would see the benefits of the secular lifestyle and worldview, and privatise – if not give up entirely – their religious beliefs and practices.

After the arrival of Muslims, it was more difficult for Europeans to keep the public sphere free of religion without causing social harm. Muslim immigrants arriving after the 1970s – many of them 'guest-workers' who were supposed to return 'home' after a certain period of employment – largely did not entirely adopt Western secular beliefs and practices; they did not always privatise their religious beliefs.[224] One must guard, of course, against imagining that European Muslims have become a wholly insular community politically at odds with secular and Christian white European society. Muslims in Europe have rarely created their own 'Muslim,' let alone 'Islamist,' political parties.[225]

For Habermas, then, the growth in popularity of Islamic fundamentalism among some European Muslims is in part a response to the difficulty of Muslims' integration inside the European secular state.[226] It is not that most Europeans are wholly against immigration, Islam, a multi-ethnic society, or the presence of non-European, non-Christians inside the

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[220] Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," 20, 2008.

[221] See Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," 11-12, 2011.

[222] See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relation,* Princeton and Oxford*:* Princeton University Press, 2007, 1.

[223] For a description of secularization theory and its problems, see Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," pp.1-19, 1999.

[224] For a description of the behaviour of Muslims in Europe and the emergence of a European Islam, see Mark Sedgwick, *Introduction: Families, Governments, Schools, Alternative Spaces and the Making of European Muslims,* in *Making European Muslims*, Mark Sedgwick (ed.) New York: Routledge, 2015, 1-21.

[225] Muslim voting patterns in Europe are discussed in Jorgen Nielsen, *Muslim Political Participation in Europe,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. See especially Nielsen's introductory chapter, pp.1-17.

[226] Habermas regards Islamic fundamentalism as a largely modern phenomenon and a response to European colonialism and secularism nationalism and its failures in the Islamic world. See Habermas, "Faith and Knowledge," 2.

public sphere. Rather, as Habermas notes, the problem is that while secular and Christian Europeans largely want Muslims to integrate into their societies and play a role in public life, they demand that Muslims privatise their faith before their admittance into the public sphere.[227] Habermas is critical of secularists' efforts to secularise Muslim immigrants who, he writes, cannot be integrated into European society in defiance of their religion, but only with their religion intact.[228] Rejected from the public sphere, a small yet significant number of European Muslims – many of whom were in fact born in Europe – have responded to their exclusion by adopting an extreme form of Islam which at times violently opposes secularism and the European state.

Habermas' alternative to oppressive secularism is a post-secular society in which religion is – under certain circumstances – permitted in the public sphere, and a dialogue of mutual learning encouraged between secular and religious Europeans.[229] A large body of literature has explored these ideas and their ramifications.[230] Petito and Mavelli, for example, draw on Habermas' observations and show how the secular may not be the optimal site for peace, democracy, and equality. Rather, they argue, the exclusion of religion from the public sphere at times causes violence, inequality, and the oppression of religious groups and individuals.[231] Building on these notions Hurd shows how secularist notions of 'religious freedom' solidify

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[227] Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," 24-25, 2008.

[228] Ibid, 25.

[229] Ibid, 28.

[230] Examples include Luca Mavelli and Fabio Petito, "The Post-secular in International Relations: An Overview," *Review of International Studies,* 38, 05, 2012; Luca Mavelli and Erin K. Wilson, "Postsecularism and International Relations," in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics, Second Edition,* Jeffrey Haynes (ed.), New York: Routledge, 2016; Erin K. Wilson, *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics,* Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012; Mariano Barbato and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Towards a post-secular order?"*European Political Science Review,* 1(3) 2009, 317-340; Maeve Cooke, "A secular state for a postsecular society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion," *Constellations,*14(2), 2007, pp.224-238; Elizabeth Shakman Hurd has addressed post-secularism and international politics in Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "International politics after secularism," *Review of International Studies,*38(5), 2012, pp.943-961. Mariano Barbato, "Postsecular revolution: religion after the end of history," *Review of International Studies,* 38(5), 2012, pp.1079-1097; Tom Bailey and Michael D. Driessen, "Engaging Post-Secularism: Rethinking Catholic Politics in Italy," *Constellations,* 24, pp.232-244, 236; Joseph A. Camelleri, "Postsecularist discourse in an 'age of transition,'" *Review of International Studies,* 38(5), 2012, pp.1019-1039; Josef Bengston, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics,* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015, 103 – 15. For criticism of Habermas' post-secularism see also Veit Bader, "Post-secularism or Liberal Democratic Constitutionalism?" *Erasmus Law Review,* 5 (1), 2012; José Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities and European Integration," *Eurozine,* 2004, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-07-29-casanova-en.html; Ulrike Spohn, "A Difference in Kind? Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor on Post-secularism," *The European Legacy,* 20(2), pp.120-135, 2015.

[231] Luca Mavelli and Fabio Petito, "The postsecular in International Relations: An Overview," *Review of International Studies,* 38, 2012, 931-942, 931. https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/969C05E4AA228C4FE9A6CC92FA0EAF58/S026021051200040Xa.pdf/postsecular_in_international_relations_an_overview.pdf

religious divisions, and categorise in a manner which sometimes causes friction and violence between communities, thereby creating or exacerbating divisions between 'religious' groups.[232]

The discussion initiated by Habermas has grown far beyond his own writings. A number of scholars, indeed, find that Habermas' post-secularism does not do enough to address these problems inherent in secularism. Indeed, the most significant criticism of Habermas' post-secularism has come from scholars who have argued that it moves insufficiently far beyond the secular, and may even mark a continuation of secularisation. For example, Casanova, Fitzgerald, Spohn, and Pabst have criticised Habermas for failing to escape his own secularist differentiation, even as he attempts to transcend it.

These scholars attempt to either dissolve the (allegedly) false boundary between religion and the secular (Fitzgerald), or show how Habermas' post-secularism – which they argue continues to give the secular state supremacy – will fail to prevent the oppression of religious people and groups from occurring. These debates are no doubt likely to continue, because they are part of a wider discussion occurring over the place of religion in the public sphere, both in Western Europe and the United States, but also in Turkey, India, Australia, and Indonesia. In each of these nations religion – in different ways – challenges the secular state and secularisation, sometimes in ways which are perceived to be frightening or disrupting. Whether one wishes for secularism to remain dominant, or one wishes to see a post-secular re-arrangement of society, few doubt that religion's role in the political and social life of nations remains important.

One part of the literature on post-secularism which may help us understand populist radical right parties' use of religion describes the manner in which religion is wielded as a weapon in a post-secular age. In "Religious Globalisms in the Post-Secular Age," Wilson and Steger argue that the emergence of post-secularism – which they find occurring in parts of Europe, India, and the Middle East – is a product of "the crisis of secular rationalism, brought about in many ways by an overemphasis on economic rationalism and neoliberalism."[233] They "suggest that in a post-secular age, non-belief is no longer the default position and is itself

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[232] See Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
[233] Erin K. Wilson & Manfred B. Steger, "Religious Globalisms in the Post-Secular Age," *Globalizations*, 10(3), 2013, 481-495, 481. DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2013.787774

considered one option amongst many others. Religion is rehabilitated into the public sphere, becoming a legitimate option for challenging dominant political ideological paradigms."[234]

Among the reactions to emerging post-secular societies they find 'Neotraditional Religious Globalisms.' Wilson and Steger use this term to refer to a group of disparate political movements which "also reacts to neoliberal crisis by opposing the ideological imperatives of market globalism," though not in order to promote global justice (or at least not as global justice oriented religious groups would understand the notion.[235] Rather, neotraditionalist religious movements "oppose neoliberal globalisation" in a "reactionary" manner, espousing exclusivist notions of justice, culture, good and evil, and interpretations of scripture. [236] They observe that Anders Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist who murdered dozens of Labour party activists in a rampage inspired by opposition to Islam, could be understood as being part of a neotraditional religious globalist movement. "Breivik's thought," they note, "was heavily influenced by conservative, reactionary, Christian globalist ideology, seeing 'European Christendom' as under threat from Islam."[237]

Wilson and Steger note that the English Defence League, among numerous other European far-right groups, espouse similar views to those of Breivik, insofar as they oppose both elements of the secularist project, make Christianity identity a core element of their worldview, and oppose neoliberalism. Thus they identify such far-right European movements as the English Defence League as, in certain respects, religious, but moreover products of the post-secular transition Europe is experiencing. The post-secular age has helped create, then, not merely the justice seeking and pluralistic religion of the World Council of Churches, but the religion of Neotraditional Religious Globalisms such as al Qaeda and the Christianity identity movement which spawned Anders Breivik.

Populist radical right parties in Western Europe bear a resemblance to the Neotraditional Religious Globalisms described by Wilson and Steger. While parties such as the UK Independence Party, the French National Front, and Dutch Party for Freedom tend not to use terms such as 'Christendom' to describe Europe, they often appeal to a Europe's Christian or Judeo-Christian heritage and values in their efforts to defend Europe from Islam and the forces of neoliberal globalisation. Could the populist radical right, then, also be a product of

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[234] Ibid, 485.
[235] Ibid, 491.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid, 491

the emergence of the post-secular, and be welding religion as a weapon in much the same way as the Neotraditional Religious Globalisms?

The similarities between the post-secularists who are interested in returning religion to the public sphere, and the populist radical right, are somewhat instructive in certain respects. Both recognise the persistence and importance of public religion. Equally, both perceive in Europe's Christian or Judeo-Christian heritage something which may in various ways benefit – or even save – secular Europe from its worst impulses. For example, Pope Benedict XVI and Britain's Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks endorse the idea of the Judeo-Christian tradition.[238] For Benedict and Sacks, behind Europe's seemingly secular traditions of art, literature, music, politics, and economics lies the Judeo-Christian tradition, without which they could not exist. [239] In a similar way, in their book *The Politics of Virtue* Adrian Pabst and John Millbank argue that liberalism is in crisis throughout the West because it is "parasitic of the legacy of … the Judeo-Christian tradition," a tradition which it has in their view devoured and left hollowed out.[240] Interestingly, Pabst and Millbank do not argue for a theocratic state or for any kind of religious rule in Britain. Rather, they praise secular differentiation of church and state, which they suggest is an idea inherent in Judeo-Christianity, a positive aspect it has lent to contemporary secular culture.

For Pabst, not merely British culture, nor European, but the entire international political order reflects Europe's Christian heritage, and the survival of this order he links to the health of European Christian culture.[241] "Without embracing its Christian heritage," Pabst writes, "the future of Europe seems uncertain and bleak."[242] Pabst does not argue for the embracing of Christian belief itself, but only for the embracing of Europe's Christian heritage. Milbank, in an extraordinary outburst, condemned Irish singer and former nun Sinéad O'Connor's conversion to Islam, describing her as a "civilisational traitor."[243] Even Habermas has linked the ongoing health of European society to Christianity and Judaism, claiming that "egalitarian universalism, from which sprang the ideas of freedom and social solidarity, of an autonomous

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[238] Anya Topolski, "A Genealogy of the 'Judeo-Christian' Signifier: A Tale of Europe's Identity Crisis," In *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition?: A European Perspective*, edited by Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski, 267–284. Berlin: Gruyter, 2016, 278.

[239] Ibid.

[240] John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, 2.

[241] Adrian Pabst, "A Christian Commonwealth of Nations is Europe's Best Possible Future*," ABC Religion and Ethics,* 31 January, 2013. http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/01/31/3679912.htm

[242] Ibid.

[243] See H.A. Hellyer, "Muslims of the West: Civilisational traitors?" ABC Religion and Ethics, 29 October, 2018. https://www.abc.net.au/religion/muslims-of-the-west-civilisational-traitors/10443052

conduct of life and emancipation, of the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct heir of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love."[244]

The populist radical right uses a similar kind of civilisationist rhetoric. Wilders, Farage, and Marine Le Pen, for example, link positive aspects of their respective societies – and Western civilisation – to Christianity.[245] One can perhaps imagine Wilders' calling a convert to Islam a 'civilisational traitor.' Equally, the '(Judeo-)Christian' rhetoric of populist radical right parties is similar to the "Christendom" rhetoric of movements labelled Neotraditional Religious Globalisms by Wilson and Steger. There appears to be some connection between post-secular movements, then, and the populist radical right.

This connection, however, is limited to one aspect: a conception of Europe and/or the West as in some way Christian or Judeo-Christian. The difference between the post-secularists and populist radical right parties lies in the meaning behind their use of these terms. While post-secularists differ widely in their normative post-secularism, they share a determination to return religion – in some form and perhaps under certain conditions – to the public sphere. This they do because they see in Christianity and Judaism language and/or ideas which largely secularised Europe lost. Thus Habermas notes when 'sin' became 'guilt' some important meaning was lost, and from which secular Europe may yet benefit.[246] Christians such as Pope Benedict XVI and theologian John Millbank may also see the post-secular transition as an opportunity to re-Christianise Europe. Post-secularism is thus at heart critical of secular modernity, neoliberalism and consumerism.

Populist radical right parties, however, do not appear to be critical of modernity. In their discourse the French National Front and Dutch Party for Freedom express criticism of neoliberalism, but not on ethical grounds, but only insofar as neoliberal ideology advocates

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[244] See Matthew T. Eggemeier, "A Post-secular Modernity? Jurgen Habermas, Jospeh Ratzinger, and Johann Baptist Metz on Religion, Reason, and Politics,"*The Heythrop Journal,* 53(3), 2012, pp.453-466, 453. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2011.00693.x/full
[245] See Le Pen's claim that equality, fraternity, and liberty are secularized Christian values, Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, *Gates Institute Online*, February 5, 2017. https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9900/le-pen-speech.; "UKIP Policies for Christians: An Overview," *UK Independence Party Website,* 2015. http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf; Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," *Geert Wilders Blog,* November 8, 2016. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/in-de-media-mainmenu-74/94-english/2015-wilders-plan-time-for-liberation.
[246] Jürgen Habermas, "Peace Prize of the German Book Trade 2001 Acceptance Speech," 2001, 5. https://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/sixcms/media.php/1290/2001%20Acceptance%20Speech%20Juergen%20Habermas.pdf .

the easy movement of people across borders, and may even call for the erasing of borders.[247] While populist radical right parties in Eastern Europe call for a return to traditional Christian values, and express at times anti-secular sentiments, there appears to be little if any religious content in the ideology of the populist radical right in Western Europe.[248] Where the religious parties and post-secularists wish to return religion to the public sphere, the populist radical right mostly opposes the presence of religion in politics and public life. Curiously, this does not appear to stop them from embracing the term 'Judeo-Christian' as a description of Western Civilisation. It is therefore doubtful that populist radical right parties could be considered post-secular in any respect, despite their praise for the Judeo-Christian tradition, and apparent desire to 'save' Europe's Christian derived culture and heritage. Despite superficial similarities, populist radical right parties are neither trying to return Christianity to prominence, or encourage belief in the Jewish or Christian God, or worship of any deity. Nor do Western Europe's populist radical right parties appear to be attempting to resurrect traditional Christian values. In other words, there appears to be no actual religious content in their discourse, expect insofar as their use of the terms "Judeo-Christian" and "Christian heritage" might be understood as mixing religion and politics.[249]

If populist radical right parties in Western Europe are not religious in any meaningful sense, why then should they use religious heritage as a means of differentiating between 'the people' and 'others?' The answer must be connected with the coming of Muslims in large numbers to Western Europe, because the increasing references to Europe's Christian or Judeo-Christian roots have occurred only after Muslims established a visible presence in Europe as 'Muslims.' Moreover, the Christian or Judeo-Christian identity appears to have formed partly in opposition to Muslims' religious identity, and thus as a reaction to Europeans' encounter with Muslims in Europe.

Habermas' observation that Muslim immigrants have made their Christian neighbours feel more Christian, and their secular neighbours more cognizant of public religion and the non-

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[247] See for example Wilders' largely nationalist economic programme described in Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation,", 2016. See also Le Pen's attacks on "globalism" in Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, 2017.

[248] A point made most forcefully in Olivier Roy, "Beyond Populism: The conservative right, the courts, the churches, and the concept of a Christian Europe," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 197-199.

[249] Hemel remarks that in this respect alone there might be something post-secular about the populist radical right in Europe. See Ernst van den Hemel, "(Pro)Claiming Tradition: The 'Judeo-Christian' Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," in *Transformations of Religion and the Public Sphere,* London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, R.Braidotti, B. Blaagaard, ,T. Graauw, E. Midden, T.de Graauw (editors), pp.53-76, 53.

universality of European secularism, is an important insight which can help us understand the roots of populist radical right parties' use of religion in their discourse.[250] It points to the twin responses to large scale Muslim immigration to Europe. On the one hand post-secular thinkers have responded by finding secularism wanting, including insofar as it requires Muslims to privatise their religious beliefs and practices in order to 'integrate' into Europe's secular society, which Habermas and other scholars consider to be an unwelcome barrier preventing Muslims from becoming accepted by Europeans. The parties of the populist radical right in Western Europe, however, appear to have responded to Muslim immigration by emphasising the intrinsically secular and modern nature of Western civilisation and Europe, and contrasting against religious 'backward' Islamic civilisation. At the same time, however, these parties continue to define Western civilisation and their respective nations, and especially 'the people' they claim to speak for within them, in terms of their religious heritage. Why, then, if the populist radical right is not religious in a meaningful sense, but rather defends secularism, should they attach such importance to Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage?

Populist radical right parties and Christian identity

The importance of religion to the populist radical right has been noted by a number of scholars, but scholarly examination of populists' discourse on religion has occurred rarely, mostly in the post-2010 period and following the electoral success of a number of populist parties across Europe.[251] A significant portion of the scholarship on religion and populism focuses on the use of religion by populist radical right parties as a way of creating an identity for Europe which excludes Muslims. The work of Olivier Roy has perhaps been most influential in this regard. Roy notes the growing numbers of Western Europeans identifying their culture as 'Christian,' and calling for the exclusion of Muslims from Western society on the basis that Islam in incompatible with Europe's Christian values.[252] Roy is aware, of course, of the strangeness of secular Europeans choosing to identify as 'Christian' as a means of defending their secular culture against an alleged Muslim threat. Traditional Christian

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[250] Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," 20, 2008.

[251] See Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 296, 2007. See also DeHanas & Shterin, "Religion and the rise of populism, Religion," 177-185, 2018. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd noted in 2007 that "connections between secularism, religion, national and supranational identities, and international relations are rarely investigated." Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations,* 100, 2007.

[252] Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," 5-19, 2013. On the ability of Muslims to separate religion and politics see Irfan Ahmad, "Genealogy of the Islamic State: Reflections of Maududi's Political Thought and Islamism," *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute,* (NS) S245-S162, 2013. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2009.01547.x/abstract.

values do not much resemble the secular liberal values increasingly defended by the populist radical right in Western Europe, particularly on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, gender equality, and sexual freedom.[253] Moreover, traditional Christian teachings may be more closely aligned with the Islamic values adhered to by many Muslims within Europe. From this observation Roy surmises that "even if the identity of Europe is Christian, it is no longer a religious identity because the faith has left."[254] Rather, he argues, in contemporary Europe, precisely because Christianity has itself been secularised as 'culture,' "staunch secularists can now defend a Christian identity."[255] A similar argument is made by Christian Joppke, who argues that Western secularism incorporates and secularises Christianity and Christian symbols, transforming them into 'culture,' while rejecting other religions and their symbols as 'religious' and therefore an affront to secularism.[256] Therefore it is possible for Europeans' to defend "Christianity" while disavowing Christian teachings and affirming liberal secular values in their place.

In the edited volume *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* a number of contributors examine the use of religion and religious identity by populist parties across the world, but in particular populist radical right parties in Europe. They argue that despite populists' frequent invoking of the (Judeo-)Christian tradition, populist parties such as the Swiss People's Party, the Front National in France, and the Italian Northern League, are not genuinely religious.[257] The contributors to *Saving the People* demonstrate that the populist movements examined in their volume, most of which might be categorised as populist radical right parties, use religious identity to differentiate between 'the people' and the enemies of the people.[258] The volume's contributors do not argue that racial and ethnic identity markers have no meaning for populists; rather, they suggest that populists often blend existing ethno-

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[253]Ibid, 11.
[254]Ibid, 19.
[255] Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," 11-12, 2011.
[256] Christian Joppke, *The Secular State Under Siege: Religion and Politics I n Europe and America,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015, 4.
[257] See Oscar Mzzoleni, "Populism and Islam in Switzerland: The Role of the Swiss People's Party, in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* Marzouki, McDonnell, Roy (eds), London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 47-60; McDonnell, "The Lega Nord: The New Saviour of Northern Italy, 13-28, 2016; Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité,"* pp-79-94, 2016.
[258] Nadia Marzouki and Duncan McDonnell, "Populism and Religion," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* Marzouki, McDonnell, Roy (eds), London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 4-5.

nationalism with identification with a particular Christian denomination or with the larger (Judeo-)Christian tradition.[259]

In his chapter on the French National Front, Roy describes the importance the party has places upon religious identity. The National Front, Roy writes, has undergone a number of ideological changes throughout its history, developing from a group that defined French identity in racial terms, then in cultural terms, and finally in terms of religious identity.[260] Beginning as an anti-Semitic "neo-fascist" movement under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen, Roy writes, the National Front changed course under the leadership of his daughter, Marine Le Pen, who moved the party towards the political centre and populism after 2011.[261] Marine Le Pen downplayed, Roy writes, the Party's earlier history, especially its anti-Semitism, and began a new program based on populist anti-establishment feeling, Islamophobia, and hostility towards pan-Europeanism.[262]

According to Roy, the National Front has, at least since the late 1970s, practiced a kind of identity politics. The kind of identity the party describes as French, however, has changed over the decades. A common theme has been that of "the people" against foreigners.[263] Yet just as important has been Catholic identity. This sense of Catholic identity grew after Catholic fundamentalists began to join the party in large numbers in the 1980s.[264] Yet despite the entry of Catholic fundamentalists, Roy writes, the National Front never became a religious party.[265] This was, he suggests, partly because the fundamentalists never gained enough power inside the party, but also because they were more interested in pushing for a Catholic identity than for traditional Catholic values.[266] Indeed, the Church itself has made it clear, according to Roy, that the Front National's xenophobia precludes it from ever being a genuinely Christian party. On the other hand, Roy admits, some elements within the Church are sympathetic towards the party's promotion of Christian and Catholic identity in France.[267] Yet Roy notes that since becoming party leader Marine Le Pen has moved the party away

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[259] Ibid. A point also made in Jonas Lindberg, "The Uses of Christianity in Nordic Nationalist Parties' Opposition to Islam," Swedish Missiological Themes, 99, 2, 2011, http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:441918/FULLTEXT01.pdf.
[260] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," pp.79-87, 2016.
[261] Ibid, 79-81.
[262] Ibid, 79-80.
[263] Ibid, 83.
[264] Ibid, 84-86.
[265] Ibid, 80.
[266] Ibid, 84-85.
[267] Ibid, 80.

from Christianity and towards a strictly secular identity.[268] Moving further away from traditional Catholic values, Marine Le Pen has moderated the party's social conservatism, no longer campaigning for family values or against abortion.[269] The only vestiges of the party's early emphasis on Catholic heritage are in Marine Le Pen's declaration that France is at once Christian and *laïque*, and that this mixture of a secular present with a Christian past forms the basis of contemporary French identity.[270] Islam and Muslims are now the National Front's chosen enemy, Roy suggests, because they lack the core religious heritage and contemporary culture that are at the core of what the National Front believe to be French.[271]

Reflecting on the importance of Christian identity to the Front National, Roy worries there is an erosion in France of the proper boundaries between "religion, identities, nation, culture and values," and that identity is becoming the "key word with which to deal with any kind of differences (racial, religious, linguistic or ethnic)".[272] Yet he is quick to assure the reader that there is nothing genuinely religious about the National Front under Marine Le Pen, and that to mistake their use of Christian and *laïque* identity for true Christianity would be tantamount to allowing the party to hijack true religion.[273]

In a similar way, Stijn van Kessel observes that religious rhetoric is common among Dutch populist radical right parties, but that their use of religious language amounts to little more than an attempt to exclude by the use of faith.[274] Kessel notes that Geert Wilders has often referred to "the Christian/Jewish/Humanistic culture of the Netherlands" which Wilders argues "should remain dominant."[275] Kessel argues, however, that it is not the Christian religion that inspires Wilders or his populist predecessor Pim Fortuyn, who made similar remarks.[276] Rather, he argues that the Party for Freedom is a secular nationalist party, which objects to "cultural and moral relativism" and elites' alleged inability to differentiate between "superior and inferior cultures," an argument also made by Koen Vossen.[277] This inability to

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[268] Ibid, 90-92.
[269] Ibid, 90-91.
[270] Ibid, 91.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Ibid, 92-93.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Stijn van Kessel, "Using faith to exclude: The Role of religion in Dutch populism," in *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion,* London: C. Hurst & Co. 2016, 63
[275] Ibid, 66.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid, 67; Koen Vossen, "Classifying Wilders: The Ideological Development of Geert Wilders and His Party for Freedom," *Politics,* 31(3), 179-189, 187.

discriminate, according to Wilders, has left many westerners unable to perceive the threat coming from the 'inferior culture' of Islam.[278]

Sociologist Hans Vollard is in broad agreement with this perspective. In his short study of the growing importance of Christian identity in Dutch politics, he finds that though there remain conservative Christian political parties which advocate a return to traditional Christian values, these parties now represent only a minority of Dutch society, a group which, following Pope Benedict XVI, choose to see themselves as a "creative minority" protecting European heritage.[279] Centre-right and populist right Dutch parties, including The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and Geert Wilders Party for Freedom, while they identify themselves as 'Judeo-Christian,' he writes, differ in several important ways from the traditional Dutch Christian right. According to Vollard, 'Judeo-Christian' is a term used by Dutch right-wing parties as a kind of "sacred code word to denote a secular, liberal order distinct from Islam, reflecting the culturalization of Christian religion in Europe."[280] This "confusing mix of Christian and secular cultures," writes Vollard, "rather than a Christian faith has gained political significance in recent years."[281]

Roy and Kessel are certainly correct to assert that the National Front and Party for Freedom are not religious parties in the sense that they encourage their supporters to attend Church, worship God, or follow teachings of the Catholic church. But they are perhaps too quick to waive away the National Front's strange sacralising of nation, identity, and secular culture into a broader 'Christian' tradition, and of the power of this discourse in contemporary France and the Netherlands. Rather, it may point to a sacred element – as suggested by Vollard – in the populist radical right's merging of Christian identity, the will of the people, nation, and secularism.

Rogers Brubaker has observed this curious sacralising of secularism and secularising of religion in some populist radical right parties. He describes this as a "Christianist secularism" appearing in Europe, and notes that Christianist political figures in Europe appear to be changing their conception of secularism and national identity in the face of Muslim

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[278] Ibid.

[279] See Sandro Magister, "Interview with Pope Benedict: De-Christianized Europe. Church as 'Creative Minority,'" *Catholic Online,* 2009.

[280] Hans J.P. Vollard, "Re-emerging Christianity in West European Politics: The Case of the Netherlands," *Politics and Religion,* 6, 2013, 94.

[281] Ibid.

immigration.[282] "Just as Muslims' religiosity emerges from the matrix of Islam," he writes, "so 'our' secularity emerges from the matrix of Christianity (or the 'Judeo-Christian tradition')."[283] Furthermore he notes how the "definition of the constitutive other in religio-civilizational terms invites a characterization of the self in the same register." Therefore populist radical right parties' overarching concern "with Islam calls forth, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, a concern with Christianity."[284]

Brubaker argues that populist radical right parties in "Northern and Western Europe form a distinctive cluster" insofar as they construe "opposition between self and other not in narrowly national but in broader civilizational terms."[285] This "partial shift" he writes has occurred due to a perceived "civilizational" threat posed to Europe by Islam.[286] In turn, this perception has given rise to an "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech."[287] Brubaker observes this most strongly in the Netherlands. Dutch Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders, he notes, is the most prominent exponent of the civilisationalist position, and describes in his rhetoric a world in which Judeo-Christian and Humanist societies must battle retrograde and barbaric Islam.[288] This is not to say that Wilders is not a nativist. Rather, his nativism is couched within a larger civilisationalist frame, itself informed by his conceptions of religious identity and culture.

The presence of Islam appears to be the major driver of 'Christian identitarianism' in Western Europe. For example, in her article describing the reasons behind the electoral success of the Marine Le Pen led National Front, Nonna Mayer has noted the growing importance of Catholic identity in France and the role it plays in driving Catholics to support the National Front, despite the Church's condemnation of the party. This support occurs in part, she contends, due to "the greater visibility of Islam in the public space, with the development of

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[282] Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016.
[283] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1200, 2017.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Brubaker does not include the UK Independence Party among this group. However, there is evidence to suggest that UKIP may belong, as they have used similar civilisationalist and anti-Muslim rhetoric. See Rowena Mason, "Nigel Farage rows back on call to grand asylum to Syrian refugees," 30 December, 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/dec/30/nigel-farage-asylum-syrian-refugees-christians; See "UKIP Policies for Christians: An Overview," *UK Independence Party Website,* 2015. http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf.
[286] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid, 1197.

street prayers for instance, as well as in the political debate (about French identity and values, about wearing the headscarf and the burqa)."[289] The presence of Islam, when combined with the rational fear of Islamic terrorists, have according to Mayer brought "Catholics to assert more than before their own religious identity as different from Muslims', if not superior."[290] Therefore they turn to the National Front, which affirms their religious identity based nativism, even as the Church teaches them to overcome xenophobia.[291]

Christian identitarianism appears to be bound up tightly with the term 'Judeo-Christian.' What, then does this term mean to populist radical right parties? Amanda Kluveld has described the importance of the notion of a Judeo-Christian tradition to Dutch right-wing populists such as Wilders and Fortuyn.[292] She finds little genuine historical or religious content in the idea of a Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus she regards the use the term "Judeo-Christian" as primarily a descriptive term for Europe's secular culture, and empty of religious content.[293] Europe, she writes, has no "civil religion," is deeply secularised, and does not possess – and never has possessed – a Judeo-Christian culture or tradition.[294] The phrase, she argues, is part of a "toolbox" full of similar language, all of which is vague, changeable, and without any connection to religious faith or Christian ideals.[295]It is at best, she writes, a stand in for whatever politicians are claiming European culture to be: democratic, free, secular – or something else entirely should the need arise.[296]

This definition fits well with Brubaker's description of populist radical right parties' Christian identitarianism, which he describes as ultimately secular.[297] For Kluveld, Roy, and Brubaker, the populist radical right has created an imaginary Christian or Judeo-Christian past for the purposes of excluding Muslims from their societies. Brubaker puts it most succinctly when he describes how populist radical right parties have "emphazised Christianity as a cultural and civilization identity" only in response to the perceived

[289] Nonna Mayer, "From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right, *Parliamentary Affairs,* 66, 160-178, 2013, 175. doi:10.1093/pa/gss071.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Ibid, 174-175.
[292] Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century," 250, 2016.
[293]Ibid, 245.
[294] Ibid, 245.
[295] Ibid, 241.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1210, 2017.

"civilizational threat from Islam."[298] In the same way, as populist radical right parties "have become more concerned about the public visibility of Muslim symbols and practices, they have come to stress their secularism. As they have highlighted the threat posed by "Islamization" to Jews, women, gays, and free speech, they have emphasized their own philosemitism and their commitment to gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of expression."[299] Brubaker concludes that "the shift to a secularist and ostensibly liberal yet Christianist stance by national populists in Northern and Western Europe is partial and fragmentary" but also "strikingly contradictory." It is liberal yet deeply illiberal, and its identitarian Christianism is devoid of religious content.[300] These contradictions are the result, he writes, of the eclectic nature of populism which "instrumentalises and exploits" whatever issues are available.[301]

Daniel Nilsson DeHanas & Marat Shterin, while building on the work of Roy and Brubaker, shift the discussion by arguing that populism itself embraces the concept of the sacred.[302] They contend that while populists may not incorporate Christian ethics or theology into their policies, they can be understood as sacralising secular concepts such as 'the people' and 'the nation.'[303] Moreover, they argue that the rise of forms of populism which differentiate between the ingroup and outgroup according to religion is potentially very dangerous. "Religious forces" they write, "can be powerful drivers for democratic renewal and for speaking truth to power. But what happens when democratically-oriented public religions go awry? The multifaceted roles of religion in populism should prompt us to abandon any naïve assumptions that religion is merely an empowering force, or that when it does empower it will work for the social good."[304] DeHanas and Shterin thus draw attention to the sacred aspect of Christianism among populist radical right parties, which they compare to Islamism as another public religion or form of religious identity politics.

DeHanas and Shterin's observation of a sacred element in populism itself suggests that populists – while by no means religious parties – do in fact blend the sacred and secular together at times. One of the most interesting conceptualisations of the relationship between religion and the secular is Martin E. Marty's idea of the 'religio-secular' world. For Marty,

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[298] Ibid, 1193.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Ibid, 1210.
[301] Ibid.
[302] DeHanas & Shterin, "Religion and the rise of populism, Religion,"179-180, 2018.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid, 183.

the secularisation narrative has always mistakenly pitted the secular against the religious; the material against the spiritual; the immanent against the transcendent.[305] While such binaries are valid in certain contexts, he writes, they fail to adequate describe how people behave in everyday life. According to Marty, "people blur, mesh, meld, and muddle together elements of both the secular and the religious, the worldly and otherworldly."[306] In this way, people continuously "confound the categories of the social scientists, theologians, and philosophers"[307] by making do "with a syncretic and characteristically modern blend of attitudes – call it religio-secular."[308]

If we accept that there is already a sacred element in populist – that 'the people' and the nation-state are sacralised – it is perhaps possible to imagine that linking these concepts to religious traditions in Judaism and Christianity may help to further sacralise 'the people' and the nation-state. Moreover, it is possible to accept that populist radical right parties cannot easily be classified as wholly secular when they appear to be involved in sacralising secular concepts 'the people' and the nations-state, while also secularising Christianity into 'culture.'

The secularisation of Christianity into culture, which appears to have made possible populist radical right parties' embrace of (Judeo-)Christian identity, has been described by a number of scholars. Carl Schmitt, for example, the German political and legal theorist, asserted that all modern European concepts of the state (i.e. state sovereignty) are disguised Christian notions.[309] Anthropologist Talal Asad has shown how European secularism itself has not been investigated, but rather perceived as normal or natural, when it is in fact a particular product of European history.[310]

International Relations scholar Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, building on Asad's arguments, has shown the continuing influence of Christianity on European politics, not despite secularism, but rather through the culturalisation of Christianity in secularism. The European 'secular'

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[305] Martin E. Marty, "The religio-secular world," *Daedalus,* 132:3 (2003). pp. 42-48.

[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid.
[309] See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty,* (trans. George Schwab), Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985. For an alternative to Schmitt's concept see Irfan Ahmad, "Talal Asad interviewed by Irfan Ahmad," *Public Culture,* 27: 2, 2015, pp.259-279, and Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age,* Robert M Wallace (trans), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983.
[310] Talal Asad, "The Construction of religion as an anthropological category," in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 115-116. See also Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, 25.

conception of the distinction between religion and politics has come out of a Christian context, she writes, from which it cannot be entirely separated. [311] This idea is perhaps an echo of José Casanova's description of secularism as an attempt "to turn the particular Western Christian historical process of secularization into a universal teleological process of human development from belief to unbelief, from primitive irrational or metaphysical religion to modern rational postmetaphysical secular consciousness."[312] Of course, as sociologist Charles Taylor points out, the mere fact that secularisation has its roots in a specifically Western context need not mean that only in the West do we find a distinction between the sacred and secular.[313] Nonetheless, secularism as a worldview remains, as Hurd has noted, a peculiarly Western and Christian method of differentiating between things, people, and places, sacred and profane.[314]

Hurd observes the continuing importance of Christian identity in European politics in the European Union's decision to prevent Turkey – a majority Muslim yet constitutionally secular nation – from joining the Union. Turkey, she points out, could not have been refused membership on the grounds that it was too religious, because the country has been staunchly secularist since its founding.[315] She observes that despite its supposed commitment to neutrality on religious matters, the European Union remains a 'Christian club' – not because its member states have particularly religious citizens, but because they share historical Christian roots and a contemporary commitment to secularism. Turkey does not have Christian roots, and therefore was seen, Hurd argues, as incompatible with the European values of the European Union.[316]

The curiously Christian nature of French secularism is demonstrated by Mayanthi Fernando, who writes that despite France's self-identification as a secular nation which does not discriminate on religious grounds, its secularism privileges Christianity.[317] She observes that the secular state funds the upkeep of Churches built before 1905, and allows the funding of

[311] Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations,* 12-14, 2008.

[312] Jose Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms" in *Rethinking Secularism,* ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Johnathan Van Antwerpen, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 39.

[313] Charles Taylor, "Western Secularity" in *Rethinking Secularism,* ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Johnathan Van Antwerpen, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 33.

[314] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "Secularism and International Relations Theory," in *Religion and International Relations Theory*, (ed. Jack Snyder) New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, 60-90.

[315] See "The European Union and Turkey" in Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations,* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008, 84-101.

[316] Ibid, 97-98.

[317] Mayanthi Fernando, "The French Myth of Secularism," *The Conversation,* 15 January2015. http://theconversation.com/the-french-myth-of-secularism-36227

some Catholic schools, yet views any similar accommodation of Muslims as violating secular principles.[318] This is perhaps because Christianity and particularly Catholicism has been secularised into 'culture' in France, a process which allows elements of Christianity to exist within in public sphere. Islamic culture, which has not been secularised into French culture, might be viewed as 'religious' at all times, and is perhaps for this reason forbidden in public life. The secularisation of Christianity into culture is further demonstrated in the Italian legal case in which a citizen objected to crucifixes being placed in Italian state schools. After numerous court cases, it was found that the crucifix was a 'cultural' rather than 'religious' object, and should be allowed in schools.[319] This may be so, but it is difficult to imagine a menorah or Islamic crescent being viewed in a similar manner (i.e. as a cultural and not religious object) in Italy or elsewhere in Europe. Only Christianity has been so thoroughly secularised that its most sacred objects can be interpreted as cultural and not religious items.

It is perhaps this close connection between European secularism and Christianity that allows the populist radical right to maintain a Christian identity, even as they hold positions that traditional Christianity might abhor. Moreover, it shows how it is possible for populist radical right parties to invoke Christianity in a defense of secularism against a perceived Islamic threat. For the populist radical right in Western Europe, references to Christianity may in fact be references to the secularised culture of Europe which they wish to preserve. If so, they are not interested in actual Christian beliefs and practices, and may actually oppose traditional Christianity and Judaism's presence in the public sphere, and the re-introduction of traditional Christian teachings on sexuality.[320] It is perhaps instructive, then, to consider the difference between post-secularists who like the populist radical right perceive secularism to be a product of the Christian or Judeo-Christian tradition, and wish for Christianity to return to the public sphere, and the populist radical right. Both post-secularists and the populist right perceive the Christian influence on secular culture. Yet where the post-secularists see a role for actual Christian theology, belief, and practice in public life, populist radical right parties

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[318] Ibid.

[319] See Joan Squelch, "Banning religious dress and symbols in public schools: Implications for school policy makers," *International Journal of Law and Education,* 15 (2): pp. 7-27, 2010. For a similar example of Christian symbols secularized into culture in Austria, see Bernhard Weidinger, "Equal before God, and God Alone: Cultural Fundamentalism, (Anti-)Egalitarianism, and Christian Rhetoric in Nativist Discourse from Austria and the United States," *Journal of Austrian-American History*, 1(1), 2017, 40-68. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jaustamerhist.1.1.0040.

[320] This would explain why gay libertarian Pim Fortuyn could praise the Judeo-Christian roots of the Netherlands. See Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1196, 2017.

are uninterested in Christian beliefs and practices unless they have been secularised into culture.

Towards understanding the role of religion in populist radical right discourse

From this survey of the scholarship on religion and the populist radical right, it is possible to surmise that religion plays an important role in formation of identity in the discourse of many populist radical right parties in Western Europe. This identity is not merely religion-based but also civilisationalist, and almost Huntingtonian in its separating of peoples into categories based on religious heritage.[321] Importantly, this religious/civilisationalist discourse drawing Christianity and secularism into a single "Judeo-Christian" tradition is particular, as Brubaker observes, to Western Europe, and especially common to the region's populist radical right parties.[322]

Most importantly, the populist radical right in Western Europe uses religious identity to differentiate 'the people' from 'others.'[323] They do this by defining national and civilisational identity in religious terms, referring to 'Christian' or "Judeo-Christian' Europe in their discourse, and claiming that Western values are based on Christian principles.[324] Despite the references to religion in their discourse, it is not possible to describe populist radical right parties as religious. While the populist radical right uses language which is similar to that used by religious and post-secular scholars and thinkers (i.e. they claim to be attempting to 'save' Europe or the West by drawing on its Christian or Judeo-Christian heritage), the populists do not wish to move society beyond the secular, or return religion to the public sphere. Rather, the scholarship shows us that the populist radical right in Western Europe is broadly secularist, and appears to use the terms "Judeo-Christian" and "Christian" to refer to the secular culture of contemporary Western Europe.

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[321] Samuel P Huntingon's Clash of Civilisations thesis argued that civilisational identity would replace political ideology as the primary driver of international politics after the end of the Cold War. It is difficult to deny that Huntington was not is certain respects prescient. See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs,* 72(3) (Summer, 1993), pp. 22-49.

[322] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1211, 2017. Similar rhetoric is used by populist radical right politician Pauline Hanson in Australia. See Nicholas Morieson, "By framing secular society as a Christian creation, Hanson's revival goes beyond simple racism,"*The Conversation,* 8 December, 2016. https://theconversation.com/by-framing-secular-society-as-a-christian-creation-hansons-revival-goes-beyond-simple-racism-67707.

[323] Marzouki and McDonnell, "Populism and Religion, 4-5, 2016.

[324] Ibid.

Perhaps what the post-secularists and populists have in common is that they are each responding to the increasing presence of Islam in Europe, and the effect Muslim immigrants have upon Europeans' self-identification. The presence of Islam in Europe appears to have made some Europeans feel more 'Christian.' The content of this Christian identity, however, appears to differ widely. Populist radical right politicians – and perhaps their supporters – appear to perceive Christianity to be more or less synonymous with contemporary secularism, and thus when they identify as Christian they are ultimately identifying themselves as secularists. The increasing number of Muslims in Europe, and some European Muslims' self-identification as Muslim and resistance to secularisation, thus appears to have precipitated the populist radical right's association of Christianity or Judeo-Christianity with secularism.

Post-secularists have similarly responded to the arrival of large numbers of Muslims in Europe by reflecting on the non-universality of European secularism. Habermas for example, finds inadequacies in the secular worldview, in particular its exclusion of religion from the public sphere, which he argues not only deprives secular Europeans of ideas associated with religion but – more dangerously – excludes Muslims from participating in European public life.[325] Habermas also sees a close link between European culture and Christianity, and argues that Europeans need to re-discover elements of their Christian heritage in order to improve their societies.[326] Moreover, post-secularists may see in the coming of Islam, and perhaps in the ability of European Muslims to resist secularisation, a possibility for Christians to de-secularise and perhaps to a degree re-Christianise Europe.[327]

This associating of Christianity with European secularism is not entirely erroneous. French secularism – as Fernando has demonstrated – incorporates elements of Christianity within it and frequently privileges Christianity as a result.[328] On the other hand, Marine Le Pen's claim that Equality, Fraternity, and Liberty are Christian principles secularised is problematic, due to these principles being the motto of the French Revolution, which sought to replace Christianity with the cult of Reason. Understanding populist radical right parties' perception of the link between secularism, and Europe's secular culture, and Christianity is important,

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[325] See Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," pp.17-29, 2008.
[326] According to Habermas," "egalitarian universalism, from which sprang the ideas of freedom and social solidarity, of an autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, of the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct heir of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love." See Habermas quoted in Eggemeier, "A Post-secular Modernity? Jurgen Habermas, Jospeh Ratzinger, and Johann Baptist Metz on Religion, Reason, and Politics," 453, 2012
[327] Luca Mavelli, *Europe's Encounter with Islam,* London and New York: Routledge, 2012, 10-11.
[328] Mayanthi Fernando, "The French Myth of Secularism," 2015.

then, if we are to understand why populist radical right parties in Western Europe differentiate between the ingoup and outgroup based on religious identity. For populists it appears that Muslims represent a religious 'other' which threatens the secularised Christianity they wish to preserve and protect. Populist radical right parties thus attempt to keep the public sphere free from Islam in order to preserve the secularised Christianity they see as the basis of contemporary Western culture and values.

Brubaker's term "Christianist-secularism" therefore appears the most apt description of populist radical right parties' use of religion in their discourse, insofar as the populist radical right may be understood as combining Christian identity with a secularist worldview, and identifying secular European culture in part as Christianity secularised.[329] At the same time, it would be wrong to assume that there is no sacred dimension to the parties of the populist radical right. As DeHanas and Shterin observe, populism itself has a sacred dimension, insofar as it perceives 'the people' and the nation-state as sacred objects. Moreover, when combined with Christianist-secularism, populists' sacralising of 'the people' may become more potent. The addition of a religious identity element may allow for increased sacralisation of 'the people' and the nation-state through their linking with an ancient religious tradition, a Europe united by a common religious heritage and culture, and with the historical antagonism between Christians and Muslims. Thus while the discourse of populist radical right parties is best described as secular, it may also be described as 'religio-secular' in the sense that it sacralises 'the people' and the nation-state, even as it secularises Christianity into 'culture.'

From this survey of the literature on religion and populist radical right parties, it is possible to identify the following features in the discourse of populist radical right parties in Western Europe. Populist radical right parties in Western Europe instrumentalise religion as part of an effort to exclude Muslims from European society. They do this primarily at a discursive level, partly due to their frequent lack of legislative power in most Western European states, but perhaps also because they may see their essential task as revising ideas about national and civilisational identity so as to exclude Muslims (a task which is difficult to legislate upon without first through altering discourse). Their discourse is best described as 'Christianist-secularism' insofar as they perceive European culture as Christianity secularised, and express a desire to protect Christian-secular 'Western civilisation' from Islam. The power of this

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[329] Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016.

discourse appears to be related to changes occurring in European society caused by the large-scale migration of Muslims to Europe since the 1970s, and in relation to the specific Muslim identity adopted by/given to European Muslims since the 1980s. Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe thus appears to have (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the privileged place Christianity enjoys within European secular culture, due to Christianity's secularisation into 'culture.' Recognition of this appears to have allowed populist radical right parties to categorise secular European culture as '(Judeo-)Christian,' and to therefore declare Islam to be inimical to this culture.

Remaining unclear is the place of Judaism within populist radical right discourse. Populist radical right politicians may sometimes speak of the West belonging to a Judeo-Christian tradition, and may even praise Israel or claim to be acting as protectors of Europe's Jews, but it remains uncertain the degree to which they welcome Judaism and Jewish culture within the public sphere. Moreover, the radical right was once highly anti-Semitic, and even today radical right politicians – especially when agitating against 'globalism' – repeat anti-Semitic tropes and conspiracy theories.[330] Also remaining unclear is the existence and importance of 'the sacred' in populist radical right discourse. For example, does the linking of 'the people' with (Judeo-)Christianity help to further sacralise 'the people' and 'the state?' The existing literature cannot answer this question.

The existing scholarship on religion and populist radical right in Western Europe is strong when explaining how populists instrumentalise religion, but not as strong in explaining why this discourse remains powerful in a secularised region such as Western Europe. Contemporary scholarship tends to focus on religion being co-opted or 'hijacked' by populists. However, it does not often adequately investigate why religion is so easily hijacked. Equally, the scholarship does not focus enough on the role of Islam in re-shaping European identity, and altering European understanding of secularism, and the relationship between secularism and Christianity. Importantly, Brubaker's theory of populist radical right parties in Western/Northern Europe being Christian Identitarian movements with a particular Christian-secularist ideological orientation, has not yet been substantially tested. Nor has the proposition that populist radical right discourse itself has a sacred aspect. Equally, it is not entirely clear which populist radical right parties should be included in the 'Christianist-

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[330] See in particular Hungarian populist Viktor Orban's attacks on George Soros. See Erna Paris, "Viktor Orban's War on George Soros and Hungary's Jews," *The Globe and Mail,* 1 June, 2018. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-viktor-orbans-war-on-george-soros-and-hungarys-jews/.

secular' group, or how indeed they should be grouped if not according to their geography i.e. as belonging to Western Europe.

It is possible, based on this survey of literature, to form a hypothesis in answer to the question: Why is religion – in presumably secular Western Europe – used as a method of differentiating 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right?' My hypothesis builds on Brubaker's description of the populist radical right in Western/Northern Europe's use of religion in their discourse as a form of 'Christianist-secularism,' incorporates Roy and Joppke's observation that the Christian faith is largely absent in Europe, but Christianity's remains have been secularised into 'culture,'[331] and also incorporates DeHanas and Shterin's claim that populism itself makes a sacred object of 'the people' and the nation-state.[332] To these ideas it adds Habermas' crucial observations that (1) the presence of Islam in Europe confronts "Christian citizens with competing religious truths" and makes "secular citizens conscious of the phenomenon of public religion,"[333] and (2) before the coming of Islam to Europe, it was possible for Europeans to perceive their own secularism as universal, neutral, and normal.[334] My hypothesis furthermore draws upon the work of Kluveld, and her description of "Judeo-Christianity" as an ultimately empty term with extremely flexible meaning, significant only insofar as it can be used to exclude people who do not fit into the category it attempts to define.[335]

My hypothesis, then, is that populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in their discourse because they have embraced 'Christianist-secularism.' Christianist-secularism has itself come about as a result of Muslim immigration to Europe, which has made secular Europeans more aware of public religion, and cognizant of the particular – and especially Christian – nature of their own secular culture. The arrival of Muslims in great numbers in Europe highlighted the manner in which Christianity has been secularised into culture, demonstrating cultural continuity between

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[331] Olivier Roy, "Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament," *The International Spectator,* 48:1, 2011, 11-12; Christian Joppke, *The Secular State Under Siege: Religion and Politics I n Europe and America,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015, 4

[332] Daniel Nilsson DeHanas & Marat Shterin, "Religion and the rise of populism, Religion," *State & Society*, 46:3, 177-185, 179-180, 2018. DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2018.1502911.

[333] Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society." *New Perspectives Quarterly.* 25 (4), 2008 pp.17-29, http://www.signandsight.com/features/1048.html.

[334] Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society." *New Perspectives Quarterly.* 25 (4) 2008, pp.17-29, 20.

[335] Amanda Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century," in *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition?A European Perspective*, Emmanuel Nathan and Anya Topolski (editors) Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016, 245and 250.

Europe's religious past and its secular present which may not have been as obvious before the arrival of Muslims. The resulting recognition of the Christianity embedded in secular European culture has allowed the populist radical right to wield Christian identity – a civilisation-based identity which can be incorporated within the populist radical right's nativism – as a weapon against the minority Muslim populism. In the following chapter I describe my methods for testing this hypothesis.

Chapter Three: Methods

This chapter (1) describes my thesis question and hypothesis, (2) defines the key terms and geographical boundaries of my thesis, (3) describes the methods through which I analyse populist radical right parties' use of religion in their discourse, and (4) justifies my rationale for using these particular methods. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first outlines my thesis question, hypothesis, and defines the key terms and concepts used in the thesis. The second justifies my choice of case studies: the French National Front and Dutch Party for Freedom. In short, I select these parties because they are two prominent and successful populist radical right parties in Western Europe which appear to belong to the Christianist-secular group; because France and the Netherlands held elections in the same years of 2012 and 2017, allowing for a comparison of their discourse at near identical points in time, and because both France and the Netherlands were impacted by the 'immigration crisis' of 2015-2016, making it possible to compare the reaction of the two parties to the unprecedented movement of people from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. The third section describes and justifies my choice of methods: the application of Fairclough's method of Critical Discourse Analysis to three texts published by Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders and National Front leader Marine Le Pen respectively. The Critical Discourse Analysis is combined with a series of questions which I use to test my hypothesis: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist-secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?" (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society?

Thesis Question and Hypothesis

This thesis asks why populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion in their discourse to differentiate 'the people' from 'others.' My hypothesis is that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' Recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed secular Europeans to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian. It has thus created Christianist secularism, a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' A number of populist radical right parties in Western Europe have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define their respective national identities in religio-civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.'

I borrow the term Christian secularism from Brubaker, who used it in an essay for *Imminent Frame* to describe the features of the Christian identitarianism practiced by a number of Western/Northern European populist radical right parties.[336] Brubaker groups these parties according to "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech."[337] Christianist secularism is devoid, however, of religious content. Though it mimics the language of the religious and, especially, post-secular thinkers who wish to (to varying degrees and in various ways) de-secularise Europe, Christianist secularism does not seek to move beyond the secular frame. Rather, it is deeply secularist and wedded to liberal enlightenment separation of religion from other spheres of existence. It is therefore Christian only insofar as it perceives Western civilisation to be culturally (Judeo-)Christian, and this being so, 'the people' to themselves be (Judeo-)Christian..

Brubaker describes Christianist secular populist radical right parties as inhabiting Western and Northern Europe. I do not object to Brubaker's classification, but I have simplified the

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[336] Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016. Brubaker does not use the term 'Chrstianist secularism in quite the way I do, preferring to name the populist parties as Christian identitarian. However, I think his term is a more useful categorisation, as there are many types of Christian identity movements, but what is so particular about the type Brubaker identifies is its wholly secular nature.
[337] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

term to 'Western Europe,' which I use in a less geographical and more cultural sense to describe the historically Latin Christian world which underwent secularisation in the post-war period. It might be objected that Poland and Hungary would be included as 'Western' under this classification, whereas I describe those two countries as belonging to Eastern Europe. I do not include Poland and Hungary in my study, however, because their post-communist trajectory has been complex, and appears to involve some de-secularisation. Christian identitarianism might be an appropriate term to use for the government of Hungary's use of religion to exclude Muslims from society, but Hungary's Christian identity appears to lack the reverence for the secular, the liberal social stance on gay rights, and the philo-semitism of the 'Christianist secular' group.[338]

Classification is difficult without extensive study of potentially Christianist secular populist radical right parties. Brubaker, significantly, does not include the UK Independence Party, because the party "has been much less rhetorically preoccupied with Islam than Continental national populists, and the Brexit campaign turned fundamentally on other issues as well."[339] This may be true, however, the party has been rhetorically concerned with Islam at times, has used imagery to present Muslims as a threat during the Brexit campaign, and contended that Britain is a secular nation with values and culture based on Christianity.[340] Brubaker excludes the Alternative for Germany on the basis that it is anti-Semitic.[341] This is not entirely true. Rather, the party is strongly pro-Israel, even though some of its members deny the Holocaust in whole or party.[342] This is similar to the National Front in France, which claims to support Israel but sometimes tries to minimise French collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Holocaust. Therefore I include both UKIP and AfD in the Christianist-secularism category. I

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[338] See Church Attendance and Religious Belief in Postcommunist Societies Mary L. Gautier Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion Vol. 36, No. 2 (Jun., 1997), pp. 289-296.

[339] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

[340] See "Brexit: UKIP's 'unethical' anti-immigration poster," *Al Jazeera,* 28 June 2016. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/06/brexit-anti-immigration-ukip-poster-raises-questions-160621112722799.html; see also "UKIP Policies for Christians: An Overview," *UK Independence Party Website,* 2015. http://www.election2015.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/UKIPChristian_Manifesto-1.pdf

[341] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

[342] See Raphael Ahren, "Loathed by Jews, Germany's far right AfD loves the Jewish State," *The Times of Israel,* 24 September, 2017. https://www.timesofisrael.com/loathed-by-jews-germanys-far-right-afd-loves-the-jewish-state/.

do not include the Austrian Freedom Party among the Christian-secular parties solely due to its traditionalist stance on homosexuality.[343]

A study of the various populist radical right parties I have mentioned will demonstrate important differences. Perhaps the only party which satisfies Brubaker's definition of Christianist secularism is the Dutch Party for Freedom. This is not to say that the other parties do not share some or all of these features. However, they share them to different degrees. The French National Front has been perceived, since the party presidency of Marine Le Pen, to have moved away from its social conservatism and towards a moderate position on abortion and gay rights.[344] However, it could not easily be described as socially liberal, and still contains highly conservative Catholic members.[345] It would be wrong, however, to classify only the Party for Freedom, and moreover the Dutch populist tradition, as Christianist secular. While the National Front is less liberal, and less philo-Semitic than the Party for Freedom, both share the same core Christianist secular features – though admittedly not to the same degree – and ought to be categorised as such, while remembering that no categorisation can be perfect.

Rationale for case studies

A range of methods are used to test my hypothesis. The primary method is case studies of two populist radical right parties in Western in the 2012-2017 period. I choose the 2012-2017 period because the period coincides with the largest (so far) growth in the electoral success of right-wing populist parties in Europe.[346] This period is ideal for examination, then, due to its

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[343] The Austrian Freedom Party would otherwise qualify in this category. For example, the party uses Christian symbolism and language but denies they have any religious content: see Bernhard Weidinger, "Equal before God, and God Alone: Cultural Fundamentalism, (Anti-)Egalitarianism, and Christian Rhetoric in Nativist Discourse from Austria and the United States," *Journal of Austrian-American History*, 1(1), 2017, 40-68, 57-58. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jaustamerhist.1.1.0040. See also Niels Spierings, Marcel Lubbers & Andrej Zaslove, 'Sexually modern nativist voters': do they exist and do they vote for the populist radical right?, 220, 2017.

[344] See Steve Cannane, "Marine Le Pen's de-demonising of the National Front puts her within striking distance of the Presidency," *ABC News,* 8 May, 2017. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-06/french-election-marine-le-pen-de-demonises-national-front/8503110.

[345] See comments by Marine Le Pen's politically active niece, then a National Front candidate, in John Lichfield, "Why we should be scared of Marine Le Pen's Front National" *The Independent,* December 8, 2015. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/why-we-should-be-scared-of-marine-le-pens-front-national-a6765751.html

[346] See Pippa Norris, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why." *The Washington Post,* March 11, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/11/its-not-just-trump-authoritarian-populism-is-rising-across-the-west-heres-why/?utm_term=.dbe9847566fa; Ronald F. Inglehard and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash, Paper for the roundtable on "Rage against the Machine: Populist Politics in the U.S., Europe and

significance to the two parties I study and because the period is itself historically significant for the populist radical right movement in Europe.

My two case studies analyse the National Front of France and the Party for Freedom of the Netherlands. The National Front and Party for Freedom, while in certain ways the products of unique social forces, are representative of wider Western European populist radical right Christianist-secular parties. Both parties display in their discourse, to varying degrees, "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech."[347]Moreover, both speak of the values of their respective societies, and of their collective civilisation, as a secularised form of (Judeo-)Christianity.

At the same time, the two parties differ in important respects – particular in their histories and ideological trajectories – allowing for a useful comparison between them. The National Front, while in many respects unique, is an example of a neo-fascist and conservative Catholic party which has transitioned to become a populist radical right Christianist-secular party.[348] Other examples of this type include the Italian League (*Lega* – formerly *Lega Nord)*[349] and Austrian Freedom Party. [350] Studying the National Front may help us understand those parties as well, and indeed other right-wing populist parties with roots in fascism, neo-fascism, and Catholic integralism. The National Front was founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in the early 1970s, and grew out of links to earlier French neo-fascist and Catholic integralist movements.[351] Throughout most of its history it was an anti-Semitic, far-right, socially conservative and sometimes traditionalist Catholic movement, which opposed communism and mass immigration from France's colonies.[352] After 2011, however, and under the new leadership of Marine Le Pen, the National Front turned against explicit racism and anti-Semitism, and towards populism. As a populist radical right party the National Front began to abandon its old ultra-conservative rhetoric, and instead support the secularising principles of *laïcité*, which the party had previously opposed.[353]

Latin America", 10.00-11.30 on Friday 2 September 2016, annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, 2. https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1401.
[347] Ibid.
[348] See Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," 79-87, 2016.
[349] Duncan McDonnell, "The Lega Nord," 2016.
[350] Betz, "The Growing Threat of the Radical Right," 84, 2003.
[351] See Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," 79-87, 2016.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid.

At the same time, the National Front under Marine Le Pen did not abandon the party's pro-Christian policies and rhetoric. Indeed, after 2011 Christianity remained an important part of the party's identity. In this period the National Front began to alter its rhetoric on religion. Rather than oppose secularism, the National Front merged Christian identity politics with support for *laïcité,* claiming French culture to be Christianity secularised. Islam was then identified as being alien to French 'civilisation,' and considered antithetical to France's Christian-secular political tradition.[354]

In a similar way, and due in particular to party leader Geert Wilders' vast commentary on politics and religion in 2012-2017, it is readily possible to test my hypothesis against the discourse of the Dutch Party for Freedom in 2012-2017. Wilders published and wrote prolifically in English on his personal blog, made speeches across the world, and presented himself as an international figure enjoined in the struggle for civilisation against the totalitarian "political ideology" of Islam.[355] Wilders and the Party for Freedom also published manifestos which explain the party's policies towards religion, secularism, and in particular Islam.[356] Like Le Pen, he has spoken and written at length – indeed in far greater detail than his counterpart in the National Front – about the need to protect the West's "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" values from Islam and what he calls "cultural relativism."[357]

I also choose to examine the Party for Freedom because it contrasts in many respects with the National Front, and provides an example of a party with an entirely different history, in a nation with a vastly different religious, cultural, and political history and contemporary climate, to that of the National Front and France. For example, the Netherlands is a monarchy with a history of religious toleration made necessary due to the religiously mixed – Catholic and Protestant – nature of Dutch society. Moreover, while religious toleration was generally practiced by the Dutch within their nation after the devastating wars of religion, Catholics and Protestants inhabited different economic, religious, and social spheres called 'pillars.'[358] This is in contrast with France, where the Catholic Monarchy had famously been violently

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[354] See Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, 2017.

[355] Teun Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, 114.

[356] See for example Geert Wilders, "Preliminary Election Program PVV 2017-2021," *Geert Wilders Weblog,* 26 August, 2016. https://www.geertwilders.nl/94-english/2007-preliminary-election-program-pvv-2017-2021.

[357] See for example Geert Wilders, "Resisting threat of fanatical Islam," *Geert Wilders Weblog,* May 5, 2012. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/in-english-mainmenu-98/in-the-press-mainmenu-101/77-in-the-press/1786-wilders-resisting-threat-of-fanatical-islam.

[358] See See Paul Dekker and Peter Ester, "Depillarization, Deconfessionalization, and De-Ideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society 1958-1992," *Review of Religious Research,* 37:4, 1996, pp.325-341. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3512012. Accessed: 19-06-2017 02:13 UTC.

uprooted, the population overwhelmingly Catholic, and a separation of Church and state insisted upon by the secularising principles of *laïcité*.[359]

Moreover, the Party for Freedom is a much younger party than the National Front, and lacks its deep links to fascist and integralist movements. Rather, its founder, Geert Wilders, broke away from the ruling liberal-conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and formed his own populist movement, modelled in part on the personal style and ideology of slain anti-Islam populist politician Pim Fortuyn and the religion based identity politics of former People's Party for Freedom and Democracy leader Frits Bolkestein.[360] Despite these differences, the National Front and Party for Freedom retain many similarities, not merely in terms of ideology but also in their rhetorical style and reliance on charismatic leadership.

2012-2017 is an especially useful period to study when trying to understand the rise radical right populism in Western Europe, partly because populist radical right parties broke through from the fringes and into mainstream politics in a number of European nations during this period, but also because the 'immigration crisis' – which saw more than one million (mostly Muslim) refugees enter Europe – occurred during this period. The National Front and Party for Freedom are especially comparable in the 2012-2017 period. Both faced elections in 2012, both rejected mainstream Dutch and French approaches to the 2015 immigration crisis and opposed allowing Muslim refugees to settle in Europe, and both enjoyed increased popularity 2016-2017, culminating in electoral success in 2017. In these ways the two parties' political trajectories are strikingly similar, though there are also a number of important differences.

In 2012 National Front policy retained the party's traditional conservative opposition to immigration, abortion, and gay marriage.[361] However, the party departed from its traditional opposition to *laïcité.* The 2012 National Front political programme, for example, lauds *laïcité* as an integral element of the French Republic.[362] Significantly, it also describes Christianity as being the religion of the majority of French people for more than a millennium, and argues

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[359] See Hurd's remarks on the special nature of laïcité, and its differences from other forms of secularism. Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations,* 31, 2008.
[360] For details of Bolkestein's relationship with Wilders see Willem Mass, "The Netherlands," In James Hollifield, Philip Martin, Pia Orrenius, *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective, Third Edition,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 271.
[361] Ibid, 10.
[362] "Notre Projet, Programme Politique du Front National," *Front National website.* https://www.frontnational.com/pdf/Programme.pdf, 2011, 105.

that France's national culture and traditions are Christian in nature.[363] Immigrants, according to the manifesto, should not flout these Christian traditions which are an integral part of French identity.[364] In this way, the National Front meshed *laïcité* and Christianity into a single French tradition, which by its own nature excludes and 'others' Muslims.

The 2012 French Presidential elections were the first test for Marine Le Pen's National Front and its new policies and rhetoric emphasising France's dual secular and Christian identity. Though Le Pen failed to make the second round of voting, she played an important role in ensuring Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy's defeat, and increased her party's vote to a 17.90% of all votes, a more than 7% increase over the party's 2007 result.[365]

In the highly significant year of 2015, in which hundreds of thousands of refugees left war-torn Syria and Iraq, Afghanistan and Eritrea, and migrated to Europe, the National Front Freedom opposed mainstream French party's policies towards settling refuges in Europe, and demanded that Muslim migrants be forbidden from entering France and the Netherlands respectively. The 2015 immigration 'crisis' coincided with --- and was plausibly in part responsible for – an increase in the Nation Front's popularity with the French electorate. In 2015 regional elections the party received the most support of any contesting party, winning 27.73% of the vote; just over 1% more than the Nicolas Sarkozy led The Republicans.[366]

By 2017 the National Front had broken into mainstream French politics. Their 2017 election campaign focused on combating what they conceived to be the twin threats facing France: Islam and economic globalisation. The National Front policy in 2017 demanded that *laïcité* be strengthened to combat Islamic fundamentalism, and women's rights protected from Islamism.[367] Yet intriguingly, in her campaign launch speech Marine Le Pen mixed the religious and secular – Christianity and *laïcité* – together and remarked that France's core values, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' proceed "from a secularization of principles stemming from our Christian heritage."[368]

The 2017 French elections, the first round of which were held on April 23 and the second on May 7, marked an electoral breakthrough for the National Front. In the first round of voting

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[363] Ibid, 105.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid, 174-175.
[366] *Les Républicains;* essentially a rebranded UMP.
[367] Ibid, commitment 9.
[368] Ibid.

Marine Le Pen came second, winning 21.30% of the vote.[369] Her right-wing rival from The Republicans, Francois Fillon, attracted just over 20% of the vote. The winner was *En Marche!* candidate Emmanuel Macron, who won 24.01% of the vote. Le Pen faced Macron in the second round. This time Macron trounced Le Pen, winning 66.10% percent of the vote to Le Pen's 33.90%.[370]

In the Netherlands during the same period the Party for Freedom followed a similar trajectory, winning support during the immigration crisis – perhaps due to their anti-immigration policies – but faltering upon becoming the most popular party, and ultimately coming second at the 2017 elections. The Party for Freedom took a set of policies to the 2012 elections which demanded Dutch sovereignty be restored, Dutch membership of the European Union be put to a vote, and which called for Dutch identity, culture, and values to be protected from Islam and Islamisation. Party for Freedom policy in 2012 was to no longer permit Dutch citizens to possess dual nationalities, ensure migrant communities integrate by forcing them to take classes to learn to become Dutch,[371] to forbid the construction of Mosques, cease funding of Islamic schools, and ban Muslim attire such as the hijab in all government buildings.[372] The 2012 elections, however, proved to be a major setback for the party, which lost nine seats and received just 10% of the overall vote.

2015 was a particularly significant year for the Party for Freedom, which saw its vote rebound from 2012 lows amid a record number of people seeking asylum in Europe from the Middle East and North Africa. Geert Wilders opposed accepting any Muslim asylum seekers, and criticised mainstream and left-wing Dutch and European politicians who advocated allowing refugees to settle in Europe. The Party for Freedom performed poorly in senate and provincial elections held in March 2015, receiving a slightly smaller share of the vote than in the previous elections held in 2011.[373] The party's fortunes changed in August 2015, a time during which the scale of the immigration 'crisis' had become apparent, and public opinion appears to have started to turn against people seeking asylum and the politicians who

[369] "French presidential election: first round results in charts and maps," *The Guardian,* April 23, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/apr/23/french-presidential-election-results-2017-latest.

[370] "French Presidential Election May 2017 full second round results and analysis," *The Guardian,* May 26, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/may/07/french-presidential-election-results-latest.

[371] Ibid, 37.

[372] Ibid.

[373]"Dutch political landscape never more divided, election results show," *Dutch News,* March 19, 2015. http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/03/dutch-political-landscape-never-more-divided-election-results-show/

supported them.[374] Significantly, polling suggests that between September 2015 and February 2017 the Party for Freedom was either the most widely supported party in the Netherlands, or the second most supported party.

The Party for Freedom entered the 2017 election campaign as one of the two most widely supported parties in the Netherlands, and with a political programme centered upon "de-Islamising" the Netherlands and restoring Dutch culture and identity to its "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" origins. The party's Preliminary Election Program promised to "de-Islamize the Netherlands" by banning all asylum seekers and immigrants from Islamic countries, "withdraw all asylum residence permits," banning the construction of Mosques, banning Islamic headscarves from "public functions," detaining radical Muslims who appear to threaten the country in some way, and expelling dual citizens who commit crimes.[375] The 2017 Dutch election resulted in the VVD winning 33 seats, the Party for Freedom coming second with 20 seats and 13.1% of all votes, and the CDA third with 19 seats.

In the 2012-2017 period, then, both the National Front and Party for Freedom experienced – like many other right-wing populist parties in Western Europe – unprecedented popularity and influence, particularly after the 2015 immigration 'crisis.' The two parties used similar, yet not identical, political and religious rhetoric. Both argued that Islam threatened their respective national identities and cultures, and was antithetical to their nation's – and civilisisation's – Jewish and Christian heritage, and therefore that Muslim immigration must be curtailed or ceased altogether.

These similarities in policy, rhetoric, and election results occurred despite the different political and religious contexts of the Netherlands and France, suggesting similar phenomena occurring across both nations, and perhaps beyond them. By examining the National Front and Party for Freedom, then, it is possible to test my hypothesis in different cultural and political conditions in Western Europe, thereby improving the accuracy of my analysis and conclusions. Furthermore, it is important to study the language the parties use about Islam, first because Islam and Muslim immigrants are often casts as antagonists for the battle for Western Civilisation. Islam is unusually prominent throughout their respective discourses.

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[374] The Peil poll graphic illuminates the sharp rise in the Party for Freedom's electoral fortunes in the second half of 2015, which – despite peaks and troughs – continued until the 2017 elections. See the graphical illustration of Peil polls archived at https://home.noties.nl/peil/politieke-voorkeur. A clearer image of the party's rise in the second half of 2017, using Peil and other polling services, can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_Dutch_general_election,_2017.
[375] Geert Wilders, "Preliminary Election Program PVV 2017-2021," 2016.

This is perhaps because Islam has attained a uniquely prominent place in Western Europe as the ultimate 'other' – a foreign religion which seems to threaten both Christianity and the secular state.[376] The rhetoric of the two parties, then, appears to reflect the threat perceived to be posed by Islam. To understand the reasons for this perception, then, it is useful to carefully study the manner in which Islam and Muslims are described in the discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom.

Methods

The case studies of the National Front and Party for Freedom each comprise two chapters. The first chapter of each case study provides the context for the discourse analysis which forms of majority of the second chapter, but also tests part of my hypothesis: that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture:' two factors which have in turned made it possible for non-religious Europeans to identify as 'Christian,' and thus allowed populist radical right parties to claim a Christian identity and exclude Muslims from 'Christian' Europe. In order to understand the historical context in which the two parties operate I draw upon scholarship examining the history of religion, and indeed of secularism, in France and the Netherlands respectively.[377] Therefore, these two chapters address not only the parties themselves, their antecedents and ideological foundations, the changes they have undergone, and their recent growth and success, but also describe the political and religious context out of which the Party for Freedom and Front National have come.

To test my hypothesis, then, I examine the historical French and Dutch attitudes towards religion and secularism, and the changing nature of their respective national identities during the second half of the 20th century. In particular, I examine whether the arrival of large numbers of Muslims in France and the Netherlands altered Dutch and French national identity, and moreover increased Christian identity within the two countries. To do this, I examine literature addressing this issue, but mostly importantly I examine the discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom respectively to determine whether the increase in the visibility of Islam in Europe coincides with an increase in anti-Muslim rhetoric and

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[376] Joppke? Roy?

[377] See for example Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, 2007*;* Koen Vossen *The Power of Populism: Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands,* New York: Routledge, 2016; James Shields, *The Extreme Right in France: From Pétain to Le Pen,* New York: Routledge, 2007; Peter J. Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse, and Power,* London:Routledge, 1999.

Christian identitarianism. I thus examine the rhetoric, policies, and election results of the National Front and Party for Freedom from their inception to 2017 in order to determine whether the growth in popularity of the parties reflects a growing Christianist-secularism within France and the Netherlands, itself the result of Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe.

Chapter four, which provides context for the discourse analysis of the Party for Freedom, begins with historical study of Dutch attitudes towards religion. It describes how denominationally mixed Dutch society formed 'pillars' in order to deal with religious difference. It describes the post-war collapse of pillarisation, the secularisation of Dutch society and identity which followed, the effects of the arrival of Islam in the 1970s, and the subsequent rise of Christian identitarianism on the Dutch centre-right and populist right.

Chapter six provides context for the discourse analysis of the National Front. It describes French attitudes towards religion and secularism during the 20th century, and describes the National Front's rise from an anti-secular neo-fascist and Catholic integralist party in the 1970s, to a Christianist secular party under Marine Le Pen. It demonstrates how the secularisation of post-war France and large-scale Muslim immigration contributed to the rise of Christian identitarianism in France, and allowed for its exploitation by the National Front under both – though in different ways – Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen.

The Critical Discourse Analysis chapters (chapters five and seven) draw on the contextual chapters and attempt to understand the use of religion in the discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom in the 2012-2017 period. The two case study chapters follow an identical structure in order to provide direct comparison and improve data quality. Three key events are isolated: The respective French and Dutch elections in 2012, the 2015 immigration 'crisis,' and the respective French and Dutch elections in 2017. The two parties' use of religion in the discourse surrounding each event is analysed in order to test my hypothesis that (1) Europeans' recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed for non-practicing Christian Europeans to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian, and that this effect has created Christianist secularism.' (2) The Party for Freedom and National Front are among a number of populist radical right parties in Western Europe that have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define their respective national identities in civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. They use this discourse to exclude Muslims

from their society on the grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.'

The study of populist radical right discourse is important, then, because the parties often perceive politics "in terms of a 'metapolitical' contestation of the power to define concepts and shape discourse.[378] That is, the populist radical right's primary goal is to re-shape discourse on national identity, introducing religious and civilisational conceptions of national identity, and in doing so exclude groups they perceive to be outside of the boundaries of their concept of national identity: particularly Muslims and 'elites.' The centrality of discourse – and in particular shaping national discourse on identity and national belonging – to populist radical right parties in Western Europe makes analysing their discursive use of religion is the best way of understanding their conception of national identity, and the role religion plays in shaping this conception of identity. Analysis of the National Front and Party for Freedom's discursive use of religion, when combined with analysis of wider cultural and political developments in France and the Netherlands respectively, can thus reveal important information about the reasons behind populist radical right parties in Western Europe use of religion.

To test my hypothesis, then, I select three examples of National Front and Party for Freedom discourse to closely analyse – three texts – in each case study chapter. I analyse the discourse of the respective party leader, using one representative example of discourse used by Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders respectively.[379] I use material in English given this is my native language. This decision impacts my study in obvious ways, limiting the material I may use. However, it has a far greater impact on my National Front case study. While English is for a variety of historical reasons widely understood and used in the Netherlands, it is less widely used and understood in France. Equally, Party for Freedom leader Wilders is much happier to speak English than Marine Le Pen, not merely for cultural reasons particular to the Netherlands, but perhaps because he appears to wish to portray himself as an international figure, and not merely a nationalist. Therefore there is an abundance of English language

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[378] Hans Georg Betz & Carol Johnson (2004) Against the current—stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right, Journal of Political Ideologies, 9:3, 311-327, 324. DOI:10.1080/1356931042000263546 https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263546.
[379] To determine how representative the texts are I have read an and searched for keywords in texts published by Wilders on his personal website, in news reports on Wilders and Marine Le Pen in *The Guardian* newspaper discussing speeches and interviews they have given respectively, and also consulting the literature on the policies and discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom. This literature I discuss in detail in chapters 4 and 6.

material produced by Wilders and his party, but very little produced by Le Pen and the National Front. However, supporters of Marine Le Pen have produced English translations of her most important speeches, such as her campaign launches in 2012 and 2017, which I rely upon in this thesis. Wilders, on the other hand, often speaks and writes in English, and has much of his work translated into English on his personal website. Therefore I select, from material posted by Wilders on his website, examples of his rhetoric which demonstrate best his views on religion, secularism, Islam, and the importance of the Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition. It is rare to find entire speeches by Marine Le Pen translated into English. The only sources available are provided by American far-right and alt-right organisations and blogs. [380] Marine Le Pen has, however, written articles for English speaking publications.[381]

Texts are selected for analysis therefore on the basis that they are in English, produced during the 2012 and 2017 election campaigns, and during the 2015 immigration crisis. Selection is based on two other factors: that the speeches are politically significant and contain information about the respective parties' conception of national identity, and the role of religion and secular within their respective nations. It would serve no purpose to analyse a speech which did not at least in part address religious and identity issues.

To test my hypothesis I perform a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the six selected texts. CDA has been used to analyse populist radical right discourse, most significantly in the work of Ruth Wodak, in particular in *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing populist discourses mean* and her co-edited volume *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*.[382] However, CDA does not appear to have been used to comprehend the specific role religion plays in the discourse of populist radical right parties in Western Europe. CDA is suitable for this task because populist radical right Christianist-secular parties aim primarily to change the concepts of national identity and belonging, tasks that must occur at a discursive level before they may occur in legislation. Moreover, because the Party for

[380] See for example Anonymous, "Marine Lepen (sic) speech on why she is running for President of France," *Media Research Centre TV*, 16 March, 2012. https://www.mrctv.org/videos/marine-lepen-speech-why-she-running-president-france; Marine Le Pen, quoted in "Marine Le Pen: Why I am running for President of France," 2012.

[381] Marine Le Pen, "To Call This Threat by Its Name," *The New York Times,* 18 January, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/19/opinion/marine-le-pen-france-was-attacked-by-islamic-fundamentalism.html

[382] See Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing populist discourses mean,* London: Sage, 2015; Wodak, KhosraviNik, and Mral, (Eds.). *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544940. See also the Stanford University project, "Decoding Marine Le Pen's Rhetoric," which critically analyses Le Pen's political rhetoric https://decodingmarinelepen.stanford.edu/.

Freedom and National Front are not in government and therefore have little legislative power in the Netherlands and France respectively, their primary source of power is their rhetoric. Their power lies, in particular, in their ability to influence public opinion and pressure centrist parties into adopting populist radical right positions.

The purpose of my CDA is to test my hypothesis. To do this I seek answers in the selected texts to the following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist-secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[383] (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society? By asking these questions of the selected texts I am able to ascertain whether the Party for Freedom and National Front can be classified as Christianist-secular, the parties' conception of Islam and the perceived danger it poses to the West's (Judeo-)Christian civilisation, and the manner in which Christianist-secularism is wielded to exclude Islam and Muslims from the France and the Netherlands respectively – key claims made in my hypothesis. Equally, by studying the potentially changing nature of the discourse, I am able to understand how the immigration crisis of 2015 may have altered the parties' use of religion in the discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis approaches language as something more than symbolic: as social practice, and thus socially (and politically) consequential. Indeed, language practices "may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people."[384] For "language and other social practices are always in unity," making certain that language influences and expresses the social power of groups and individuals.[385]

Marine Le Pen's and Wilders' discourse, and particularly their rhetoric on religion and religious identity, appears to have had a powerful effect on French and Dutch politics respectively. Their language, such as their use of terms such as 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' and 'Christian heritage' to describe contemporary European culture, defines European identity in a religious way which excludes Muslims from any possibility of

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[383] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.
[384] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis,* London:Sage 2009, 6.
[385]Ibid, 10.

belonging to Europe. Such language has an effect beyond the simple act of speech, but is influenced by – and in turn influences – political ideology and other social practices. The popularity of Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders is testament to the power of their language, and demonstrates the importance of analysing their rhetoric on religion. Their religious rhetoric both helps define French and Dutch identity, yet must also reflect French and Dutch peoples' ideas of their own respective identities, and the role religion plays in defining these identities. Equally, their rhetoric provides evidence of the effects emerging post-secularism may be having upon European society.

Following CDA techniques developed by Norman Fairclough I examine the discourse on religion of the Party for Freedom and National Front, not only as statements of their own beliefs, but as they are related to broader French and Dutch social practice and politics.[386] Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis involves analysing both the text itself, the methods by and for which the text was produced, and the relationship between the text and wider society. Therefore I analyse both the language of the texts produced by the two parties and their respective leaders, but consider the reasons the texts were produced and their relationship to French and Dutch politics respectively.

According to Fairclough, CDA is a type of "discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony."[387] Fairclough provides a "three dimensional framework for the analysis of text and discourse:" which involves "1) the linguistic description of the formal properties of the text; 2) the interpretation of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, where text is the end product of a process of text production and as a resource in

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[386] See Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992. See also See Norman Fairlough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis" in T.A. Van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction,* vol. 2, London: Sage, 1997.

[387] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language, Second Edition,* Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013, 93.

the process of text interpretation and lastly, 3) the explanation of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality."[388]

The case study chapters use this framework and type of analysis, and are structured to include, first, a summary of the text being examined, in which the major themes and structure of the text is described.

Second, and building on the summary of the text, is an analysis of the language used in the text. This section asks whether key elements of Christianist-secularism present in the text, how 'Islam' is constructed within the text, and whether/how Christianist-secularism is used to define national identity and therefore exclude Muslims from Dutch and French society respectively. This section notes the frequency of terms used by Wilders and Le Pen, in particular references to religion, and analyses the manner in which they are used to separate 'the people' from 'others'.

Third, and building on the summary and language analysis, is the ideological analysis. The purpose of this is to uncover the meaning of text, and to situate the text within a wider political/social discourse which it may reproduce or help to produce. This segment attempts to understand and/or uncover the link between the discourse evident in the selected texts and the wider populist radical right discourse around religion and politics. It thus draws on the context provided in earlier chapters on religion and populist radical right parties, and tests whether Christianist-secular politics has been made possible by Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe, which has made explicit the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture,' and therefore allowed Christian identity to be used to define 'the people' exclude Muslims from (Judeo-)Christian Western civilisation.

My method, as a four step process, is as follows:

(1) Select three texts produced by Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders respectively, and at three points: during the 2012 election campaign, during the 2015 immigration crisis, and during the 2017 election campaign. Texts are selected according to certain criteria. They must be in English, have content related to national identity, and be broadly representative of the political positions of the leader and their respective party. Texts produced by Wilders are sourced from his personal website; texts produced by Marine Le Pen sourced from *Time*

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[388] Forough Rahimi and Mohammad Javad Riasati, "Critical Discourse Analysis: Scrutinizing Ideologically-Driven Discourses", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 1(16),2011, 109. http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_1_No_16_November_2011/13.pdf.

Magazine, and translations of Le Pen's speeches on the *Gates of Vienna* weblog and *Media Research Centre TV*.[389]

(2) Subject each text to Fairclough's process of Critical Discourse Analysis. First, analyse the language of the text to comprehend how Marine Le Pen and Geert Widlers construct national and civilisation identity, and the manner in which religion is or is not invoked as part of this construction. Second, interpret the text as a product of party ideology and discourse. Third, interpret the text within a wider National and Western European political and social context. To do this the text is compared with and contrasted against data from other sources (party manifestos, other statements by party members and the leader, other politicians, and most of all the information gathered in the preceding chapter) to build a picture of what is being communicated in the texts, and its wider political and social significance.

(3) Following these steps, determine whether the data produced supports my hypothesis by asking of it following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[390] (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society?

(4) In a separate chapter, compare and contrast the data produced in the case studies, and consider what it means in a wider European political and social context. Was the hypothesis correct? In what ways was it correct and incorrect? What was missing? Most importantly, answer the thesis question: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe?

One problematic issue this thesis must address is the question of deciphering the difference between the two parties' instrumental use of religion and their 'genuine' religious motivations (assuming they have any). Because we cannot know what is in a politicians head or heart, so to speak, and equally because elements of Christianity are so embedded in European culture, it is perhaps impossible to completely separate instrumental use of religion from 'genuine' religious feeling. If a non-religious politician encourages citizens to partake in

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[389] I have cross checked these translations by comparing them to their sources and found them to be accurate translations, based upon my own reading of the French language sources and of *Google Translate's* translation, and where possible compared them to quotations and descriptions in English language media.

[390] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

religious activities because she or he believes this practice will be beneficial to society, is this an instrumental use of religion or somehow 'genuine?' Obviously, this action cannot be 'genuinely' religious because it does not stem from actual religious belief and practice. However, it also seems more than simply instrumental. Just as it is possible, then, for a religious politician to use religion 'instrumentally' it may be possible for a non-religious, secularist politician – perceiving something beneficial in religious belief and practice – to encourage religious practice among their countrymen in a way which is not linked to a cynical attempt to win votes or achieve some simple political goal.

This thesis, then, does not argue that it is possible to always distinguish between the instrumental use of religion in discourse and 'genuine' religious expression. When this thesis identifies 'instrumental' use of religion, it is narrowly referring to language which is devoid of a serious connection to Christian theology, traditional Christian morality, and does not form an attempt to return French or Dutch society respectively to its Christian religious roots. Rather, an instrumental use of religion is understood in this thesis in the sense that religion may be used as an *instrument* to establish or propagate an identity based in part or whole on religion. An instrumental use of religion is thus a type of secular language which may imitate religious language, or may simply imply a religious impulse, but in reality serves to maintain secular differentiation of religion from other spheres of human activity. Equally, the thesis – while it refers to Islam and Christianity as 'religions' – does not seek to homogenise these two very different traditions into a single category. As I discussed in my introduction, it is not possible to establish a single category of 'religion,' into which we can always place certain practices and ideas. However, the purpose of the thesis is not to discuss these issues at length, but rather to comprehend what contemporary Western European populist radical right parties mean when they discuss religion and religious identity. Therefore when the thesis discusses religions, it uses the term in the context of understand how – for example – Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders understand Christianity and Islam, and their respective relationships with secularism and the secular state. In particular, and because Islam is described by a number of populist radical right figures as a unique threat to secularism and Judeo-Christian European culture, the thesis seeks to understand whether it is Islam's supposedly 'religious' nature (i.e. that Islamic cultures and Muslims are more religious than Christian cultures and Christians,

and therefore less amenable to secularisation) which makes it a particular threat to 'the West.'[391]

Chapter 4: The Party for Freedom and Religion

Over the next two chapters I test my hypothesis by examining the Dutch populist radical right Party for Freedom's use of religion in their discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to test part of my hypothesis: that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' By testing this it is possible to establish whether recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed for non-practicing Christian Dutch – such as Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders and many of his supporters – to identify themselves as Christian or Judeo-Christian. The chapter will also provide the historical and political context for the discourse analysis chapter that follows.

I test this part of my hypothesis by examining national identity in the Netherlands before and after secularisation, the impact of Muslim immigration Dutch identity, and most importantly populist right-wing and radical right politicians and parties response to Muslim immigration to the Netherlands. Party for Freedom discourse during the 2012 – 2017 period must be understood both within the context of the party's history and Geert Wilders' personal history and political development, but also within the context of the historical relationship between religion and politics in the Netherlands. Therefore this chapter examines the Dutch manner of managing religious difference since the period of secularization in the 1960s, the subsequent effects of Muslim immigration on Dutch national (and civilisational) identity, and the manner in which Geert Wilders' life experiences contributed to the formation of his political ideology.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first examines the role of religion in post-war Dutch society and politics. It contends that the entrance of Muslim immigrants into the

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[391] Secularist populists in the Netherlands, for example, have spoken of the unique threat of Islam to Humanism and Christianity since the 1990s. See Teun Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, 117; Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 53, 2014.

heavily secularized post-war Netherlands, which no longer divided people into 'pillars' based upon religious identification but sought to solidify a single secular-nationalist identity, played a vital role in creating the conditions required for Christianist secularism to emerge.

The second section presents an example of the political effects engendered by the emergence of Christianist secularism in the Netherlands, itself a product of the entrance of Muslims into a secularised and de-pillarised Dutch society. This section thus examines the formation and development of the Party for Freedom, and considers the reasons behind the party's rapid rise which began with its breakthrough success at the 2010 Dutch general elections, and perhaps culminated in its second place finish in at the 2017 general election. This section contends that the Party for Freedom's use of religion in its discourse can be situated within a particular Christianist secular Dutch discourse on religion, which emerged in the 1990s and is associated with murdered populist politician Pim Fortuyn, and Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders' political mentor Frits Bolkestein.

The final section attempts to explain the 'return' of religion to Dutch politics in the 1990s and 2000s. It examines the rise of the Party for Freedom, and explores the reasons it has experienced electoral success while using religion to separate 'the people' from 'others,' thereby linking contemporary secular Dutch culture with Judaism and Christianity, and demonizing Islam as incompatible with Dutch culture. In this section I examine whether the party's Christianist secular discourse is the product of Muslim immigration (and Muslim difference) demonstrating to Europeans the secularised Christianity embedded in their culture.

Religion and Politics in the Netherlands

The rise of the populist radical right in the Netherlands – as in other parts of Europe – has been connected with the decline of industry and the increasing number of immigrants.[392] This being so, the rise of the populist right in Western Europe is sometimes explained as the result of working class and lower middle class anger at stagnating wages and the turn away from

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[392] Inglehart and Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash,"2, 2016.

manufacturing.[393] It could be argued that the declining number of jobs for white working class Dutch, combined with the increased competition from visibly different migrants, has produced a rise in the vote for the populist radical right Party for Freedom. In this way, right-wing populism might be understood as a working class male revolt against globalism and neoliberalism, which due to the political centre-left's support for mass immigration and the neoliberalism of the EU, must take the form of a right-wing or conservative movement.

The economic argument, while strong, may be incomplete. In this thesis, while not disregarding the economic aspects of the rise of populism, I also engage with the 'cultural explanation'[394] for the popularity of populist radical right parties; that the rise of populism is also an expression of some Dutch people's fears that their culture will be overwhelmed or significantly changed by Muslim immigrants. In this section, I argue that Islam's increasing presence in the Netherlands has changed Dutch culture and identity, and that the presence of Islam has made some Dutch more aware of the importance of religious identity and more cognizant of the Christian (albeit heavily secularised) elements of their own culture. It is this new consciousness of the importance of religion – as Habermas has described it – and cognisance of religion's influence on Europe's past and present, which appears to have influenced populist radical right discourse, particularly in the case of Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom. [395]

The visibility of Muslims, and the controversial nature of Islam, in Europe, has many causes and is complex in nature. Roy, for example, helpfully shifts the discussion away from a 'clash of civilisations' causing Islam to become controversial, noting that "It is a mistake to think that the phenomena of religious radicalism (Salafism) and political radicalism (Al Qaeda) are mere imports of the cultures and conflicts of the Middle East. It is above all a consequence of the globalization and Westernization of Islam. Today's religious revival is first and foremost marked by the uncoupling of culture and religion, whatever the religion may be. This explains the affinities between American Protestant fundamentalism and Islamic Salafism: both reject culture, philosophy, and even theology in favour of a scriptural reading of the sacred texts and an immediate understanding of

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[393] Ibid.

[394] Inglehart and Norris point out that it is not only economically depressed regions and communities which favour populist radical right parties; rather, communities and regions enjoying economic prosperity are increasingly voting for populist radical right parties for what appear to be broadly cultural reasons: i.e. fear of immigrants, or a desire to end 'political correctness.' See Ibid, 2-3.

[395] Habermas, "Notes on Post-Secular Society," 20-21, 2008.

truth through individual faith, to the detriment of educational and religious institutions."[396]

Roy argues that Muslim immigration to Europe has "created a divide between religion and society, between religion and culture, to the extent that religious belief is lost sight of. Suddenly, a Muslim living in Europe has somehow to reinvent, to rediscover or, to be more precise, to define what, to his thinking, belongs to the religious world. Therefore, for a Muslim, being in a minority, or being an immigrant, compels him to ultimately think about the basic nature of Islam. He is forced to objectify Islam, to try to define the essence of Islam as objectively as possible."[397] This is important, because it shows how the visibility of Islam is not merely the result of European xenophobia – though this is a factor – but also due to the growth of religious identity among Muslims immigrants to Europe, itself a product of the immigrant experience.

It is important to bear this in mind when considering the visibility of Islam in the Netherlands, a country with a complex religious history, and which has become deeply secularised since the 1960s. In such an environment – secularised, but with a Christian past – Islam is bound to be especially visible, and Muslims are understandably likely to re-interpret their identities and religiosities in response to the culture around them. The Netherlands has, since the Reformation, existed as a religiously mixed society in the sense that it had large populations of both Catholic and Protestant citizens, along with small but significant Orthodox and Jewish minorities. Until the mid-20th century, each religious group existed in a relatively isolated environment, with no one group able to entirely dominate all others politically or numerically. While Protestantism became the official religion of the Netherlands, the country remained religiously mixed, a situation which "resulted in a fragile balance of power which guaranteed minority rights to the various denominations."[398]

In the 19th century, the Dutch developed a way of dealing with religious difference which became known as pillarisation, or the pillar system. Pillarisation meant dividing society into

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[396] Olivier Roy, "Islam in Europe: Clash of religions or convergence of religiosities?: *Eurozine*, May 3, 2007. https://www.eurozine.com/islam-in-europe/. See also Roy's comments on the roots of growing Muslim identity in the West among Muslim immigrants in Olivier Roy, "They love death as we love life: jihad and the roots of terror," *Qantara,* July 19, 2018. https://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-french-extremism-researcher-olivier-roy-they-love-death-as-we-love-life-jihad.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Paul Dekker and Peter Ester, "Depillarization, Deconfessionalization, and De-Ideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society 1958-1992*," Review of Religious Research,* 37(4), 1996, pp. 325-341, 327.

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segments based upon different religious and political ideologies.[399] The Dutch, therefore, did not divide people on the basis of class, language, or ethnicity. Rather, pillars reflected the differing moral and religious worldviews of the Dutch population. Pillars began to be established in the late nineteenth century, first by Protestants and Catholics, followed later by socialists and liberals.[400] The 19th and 20th centuries thus saw the emergence of "the Calvinist," the "Dutch Reformed pillar, the Roman Catholic pillar, (and) the socialist pillar," in the Netherlands.[401] Life in the Netherlands became structured around pillars, which "created their own organizations" and heavily influenced the life of those who lived within them.[402] For example, each pillar had it own set of organisations, including political parties, schools, youth movements, hospitals, and newspapers.[403]

 This somewhat unique arrangement proved successful in managing religious difference in the Netherlands, perhaps because it allowed for different groups to maintain a degree of autonomy from one another, while integrating all into a larger nation-state and national 'Dutch' identity.[404] Or as Speicker and Steutel put it, "pillarization enabled social groups with incompatible moral-religious doctrines to create their own strongly organized worlds, while at the same time peaceful cooperation was ensured among the pillars." Indeed, with perhaps the exception of the period of Nazi rule, during which Jewish people were deported – often due to collaboration between non-Jewish Dutch and Germany authorities – the pillar system allowed religiously different Dutch peoples to live together cooperatively and in peace until well into the 1960s.[405] While different to one another and based on different ideological positions, the pillars did have in common a belief system which was influenced by Christianity, Humanism, or a combination of the two. Thus even though there were important differences between each pillar, cooperation was often made easy due to the ultimately Christian-Humanist based ideologies upon which each pillar was based.

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[399] Ben Spiecker and Jan Steutel, "Multiculturalism, pillarization and liberal civic education in the Netherlands," *International Journal of Educational Research,* 35, 2001, 293–304, 294.

[400] Dekker and Ester, "Depillarization, Deconfessionalization, and De-Ideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society 1958-1992*," Review*, 328, 1996.

[401] Spiecker and Steutel, "Multiculturalism, pillarization and liberal civic education in the Netherlands," 294, 2001.

[402] Ibid.

[403] Ibid, 294-295.

[404] Ibid, 295.

[405] Ibid.

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In the 1960s and 1970s pillisation collapsed. The reasons for this are complex, but can be explained as in part the result of the secularisation of Dutch society, and the creation and enlargement of the welfare state in post-war Netherlands.[406] This second factor may have also contributed to secularisation, insofar as it took away the welfare duties which once fell upon churches. The collapse of religious observance, in particular, in the 1960s and 1970s must have contributed to the weakening of the mostly religion based pillar system, which relied upon not merely religious observance but religious identification. As the Dutch ceased to identify as belonging to a religion based pillar, the entire system began to crumble. Pillar based political parties, grounded upon particular religious denominations, began to lose suppose and ultimately coalesce, drawing together Catholics and Protestants in a manner hitherto unimaginable.[407] The coalescing of the Catholic and Protestant parties into a single "Christian" party indicates a blurring of the differences between Catholics and Protestants, who perhaps saw – in the face of a secularising society – more commonalities between the two denominations than differences.

The end of pillarisation did not cause immediate harm to the Dutch nation, insofar as it did not destroy Dutch identity. Rather, the end of the pillar system contributed to a sweeping change in Dutch society, which moved from being based upon collective religious identities, to a society in which "political beliefs are increasingly based on personal choice and less on tradition."[408] Yet the end of pillarisation appears to have ultimately proved somewhat problematic for the Netherlands. The migration of several hundred thousand Muslims into a rapidly secularising – and thus de-confessionalising and de-pillarising – Netherlands presented a number of difficulties for both Muslim and non-Muslim Dutch. These problems led to the question of the compatibility of Islam with Dutch culture, and indeed with the Christian-Humanist heritage of Dutch culture, becoming widely debated during the 1990s and 2000s, as disquiet about the influence of Islam increased. Eventually, political parties would emerge in the Netherlands based, to a significant degree, around ending Muslim immigration and curtailing the influence of Islam. Some conservative and, especially, populist radical right politicians would begin to assert the need to make "Judeo-Christianity and Humanism" the leading culture of the Netherlands, in an effort to combat the so-called Islamisation and

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[406] Dekker and Ester, "Depillarization, Deconfessionalization, and De-Ideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society 1958-1992*," Review*, 330, 1996
[407] Ben Spiecker and Jan Steutel, "Multiculturalism, pillarization and liberal civic education in the Netherlands,", 295, 2001.
[408] Dekker and Ester, "Depillarization, Deconfessionalization, and De-Ideologization: Empirical Trends in Dutch Society 1958-1992*," Review*, 399, 1996.

"moral relativism" undermining Dutch culture.[409] These developments can only be understood in relation to the effects on Dutch identity caused by the entry of Muslims into a depillarised and heavily secularised Netherlands, and the subsequent emergence of a Christianist secular Dutch identity, which emphasised the peculiarly Christian nature of the Netherlands' secular culture.

The Netherlands, like most other Western European nations, began to encourage large-scale scale immigration from peoples of Muslim majority nations in the 1960s and 1970s. By 2008 the number of Muslims in the Netherlands had reached around 900,000, or 6% of the total population.[410] People with a Turkish or Moroccan background make up the vast majority of the Dutch Muslim population, with smaller numbers coming from Suriname, Iraq, and Indonesia.[411] It is interesting to note that few Dutch Muslims come from the Netherlands' former colonies Suriname and Indonesia. Instead, Muslim migrants came to the Netherlands as 'guest-workers' whose religion appears to have been barely noted by Dutch authorities.[412] Indeed, the growth of Islam in the Netherlands appears to have been unexpected. Turkish and Moroccan 'guest-workers' were assumed to either be a temporary phenomenon which would disappear as soon as their employment ended, or it was imagined that those who stayed would assimilate into Dutch society and secularise in the manner that the Dutch themselves had in the post-war period.[413] Yet after 1974, when the foreign labour recruitment officially ended, many 'guest-workers' chose to remain in the Netherlands. Equally, other Muslim migrants came as family members of a 'guest-worker', or as refugees, to the Netherlands.[414] Muslims thus neither 'went home' to Turkey, Morocco, or another Muslims majority nation, nor did they assimilate into Dutch culture by privatising their faith and ceasing to practice Islamic rituals.

As the Muslim population of the Netherlands increased, so did the visible presence of Islam. When Muslim 'guest-workers' began arriving in the early 1970s, there were very few places

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[409] Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 53, 2014.

[410] Thijl Sunier, "Islam in the Netherlands," in *Religious Newcomers and the Nation-State: Political Culture and Organised Religion in France and the Netherlands*, Erik Sengers and Thijl Sunier (eds), Delft: Eburon, 2010, 114

[411] Ibid.

[412] Ibid, 114- 115.

[413] Ibid.

[414] Jeremy Mandin and Sonia Gsir, "Turkish and Chinese Immigration to the Netherlands: Corridor Report," *Interact Research Report, 2015/16, http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/36061/INTERACT-RR-2015%20-%2016_Netherlands.pdf?sequence=1,* 2016, 9.

of worship available. By 2010 there were 450 Mosques operating throughout the Netherlands and more than 30 Islamic schools.[415] How significant, then, is the Muslim presence in the Netherlands? Roughly 6% of Dutch identify as Muslims.[416] At the same time, so visible are Muslims that their numbers are vastly overestimated by the Dutch, who on average imagine that 19% of their fellow citizens are Muslim, a number they expect to increase to 26% by 2020. The number of Muslims in the Netherlands is expected to grow to just 6.9% by 2020.[417] Of course, it is possible that Muslims will grow as an overall percentage of the Dutch population well into the future, due to continued high levels of immigration.

Perhaps for a certain number of Dutch, particularly middle-class professionals who may see themselves as 'European' rather than narrowly Dutch, or even see themselves as citizens of the world, demographic change occurring in the Netherlands is of little interest or importance. But it is clear that not everyone in the country feels this way. Populist radical right parties and their supporters are aware of these demographic changes, and see nothing positive in the decline of the 'white' European and Dutch population and the growth of Islam across the continent.[418]

The growth of right-wing populism in the Netherlands, which occurred primarily during the 2000s and 2010s, thus appears to be closely connected with the increasing visibility of, and growing controversy related to, Islam throughout the country. It is perhaps best not to simply call every politician who identifies Dutch culture as "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" and claims Islam is antithetical to the Judeo-Christian tradition as part of the populist radical right. Indeed, perhaps the first Dutch politician to use this language was centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) leader Frits Bolkestein, who in the early 1990s began to use Christianst language when claiming that Muslims threatened the Netherlands' Judeo-Christian values. Moreover, while several other European nations have populist radical right parties with deep roots in fascist movements, and which have been active since the 1970s, the right-wing populism in the Netherlands emerged out of the centre-right, and

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[415] Thijl Sunier, "Islam in the Netherlands," in *Religious Newcomers and the Nation-State: Political Culture and Organised Religion in France and the Netherlands*, Erik Sengers and Thijl Sunier (eds), Delft: Eburon, 2010, 116.

[416] "Perils of Perception" *Ipsos Poll, 2016. https://www.slideshare.net/IpsosMORI/the-perils-of-perception-in-2016-ipsos-mori/1*.

[417] "Dutch overestimate size of the Netherlands' Muslim population," *Dutch News,* 14 December, 2016. http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/12/dutch-greatly-overestimate-size-of-muslim-population/

[418] See Geert Wilders, "Wilders: The Bell Tolls for Europe as Europeans are in danger of being replaced," June 2, 2017. http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/06/02/wilders-europeans-danger-replaced/.

indeed out of a pro-Enlightenment liberal tradition. Neither of the two best known Dutch populist radical right and anti-Muslim politicians, Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders, had affiliations with any far-right or fascist movements. Indeed, both were defenders of secularism and social liberalism against religious fundamentalism. However, both Fortuyn and Wilders shared a perhaps surprising admiration for what they called Judeo-Christianity, and believed that Jewish and Christian values and ideals underpinned the contemporary secular values of the Netherlands.

This curious element of this use of religion is that it is coming from secularists who might ordinarily be expected to dismiss religion – all religion – as a retrograde worldview. Neither Wilders nor the late Fortuyn could be considered religious. Both were supporters of a broadly progressive social agenda, including support for gay rights.[419] Why, then, should they have expressed admiration for Judaism and Christianity, religions which secularists had previously considered irrelevant at best, and retrograde conservative elements at worst? The answer may lie in the manner in which Muslim immigration has helped change Dutch perceptions of the relationship between religion and politics, and moreover the relationship between Christianity and secularism. Furthermore, it may lie in the way in which Muslim immigration has contributed to the emergence of Christianist secularism in the Netherlands.

Muslims are a very visible minority in the Netherlands. This is not merely due to their appearance and forms of religious practice, though these certainly mark Muslims out as being different. It is also due to the particular religious and political situation in the Netherlands, where due to secularisation religion is often viewed as a private matter, yet in which Christianity suffuses the culture in a manner so ubiquitous it is almost never remarked upon. In such an environment Muslims, who do not always secularise and privatise their faith, and may not take part in the Christian rituals of Dutch society (Christmas, Easter, etc…) must stand out from others who accept the privatization of religion and the precedence given to Christianity as the only allowable (if largely secularized and turned into 'culture') public faith. Despite the Christian nature of Dutch public culture, it is Islam which is singled out by populist radical right parties as a "political" faith.[420] Yet Dutch Muslims have not until recently formed or voted for Muslim identity political parties. Moreover, one cannot

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[419] Koen Vossen, Classifying Wilders: The Ideological Development of Geert Wilders and His Party for Freedom, *Politics,* 31(3), 179-189, 2011, 186-187.
[420] Teun Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* Abingdon: Routledge*, 2014, 117.*

reasonably accuse Dutch Muslims of trying to turn the Netherlands into an Islamic state. Even the small Dutch 'Denk' (the word means 'think' in Dutch) party, which might be considered a Muslim party or a Dutch-Turkish Party, advocates a broadly left-wing agenda which might be described as, multiculturalist, anti-Israel, and pro-Turkey.[421]

The combination of the high visibility of Muslims within the Netherlands, and a perception among some Dutch that Islam is incompatible with Dutch culture and values, has perhaps contributed to the many social problems experienced by Dutch Muslims. There are, for example, an extraordinarily high number of Muslims in Dutch prisons, a problem also reported in a number of other Western European countries with large Muslims populations.[422] One can speculate that Muslims' relatively weak socio-economic position, the hostility they face from Europeans who may fear or despise them, and simple cultural differences have undoubtedly all played a role in creating this problem. Indeed, the cultural differences between the ethnic Dutch majority and Muslim immigrants should not be ignored, though they should at the same time not be exaggerated. An important difference between the two populations is the issue of blasphemy and free speech, which has caused enormous friction on more than one occasion.[423] These issues have undoubtedly played a role in making anti-immigrant and in particular anti-Muslim populist politicians popular. Conversely, a sense among supporters of populist radical right parties that Islam is incompatible with Dutch Judeo-Christian and Humanist values is likely to have contributed to bad relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Netherlands, and to have further marginalised Muslims.

The perception held by some Dutch that Muslims are not and cannot become good Dutch citizens because they belong to a religion which cannot secularise, and the concomitant redefining of Dutch culture and secularism as a product of (Judeo-)Christianity, appears to have led to a situation in the Netherlands in which the persistence and continued influence of religion has become increasingly recognised. It is possible, then, to draw a line between the

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[421] After the 2017 Dutch elections, Denk held three seats on the Dutch House of Representatives, see "Dutch Election Results," *The Economist*, March 16, 2017. https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/03/16/dutch-election-results.

[422] According to a report in the Washington Post, "Research by the Open Society Institute, an advocacy organization, shows that in the Netherlands 20 percent of adult prisoners and 26 percent of all juvenile offenders are Muslim; the country is about 5.5 percent Muslim." Molly Moore, "In France, prisons filled with Muslims," *Washington Post, April 29, 2008. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/28/AR2008042802560.html*

[423] I am thinking here of the Danish cartoon saga, the screening of Geert Wilders' film *Fitna* and Theo van Gogh's film *Submission*, the death threats against Ayaan Hirsi Ali due to her criticism of Islam.

secularisation of the Netherlands and subsequent end of pillarisation and the emergence of anti-Muslim political parties which allege Islam is incompatible with Dutch 'Judeo-Christian' society. Where pillarisation allowed for a variety of different notions of Dutch identity, the end of the pillar system left the country with a cohesive but far narrower sense of identity. Equally, it left the secularised Dutch impatient with collectivised notions of identity based upon a single religious denomination. The presence of Muslims thus demonstrates the Christianity embedded within secular Dutch culture, and the privilege given to Christianity over other religions in Dutch society. The Netherlands may claim to be a secular country which privileges no one religion over another, yet it makes public holidays of important Christian holidays, and recognises no Islamic holidays or religious occasions despite a growing Muslim population. Having a growing Muslim population makes this embedded Christianity more visible, and this visibility makes it possible for non-religious Dutch to claim their culture is Christian and secular humanist, and provides the basis for populist radical right parties to use this identification of Dutch culture as Christian to exclude Muslims from society. In other words, the presence of Muslims has provided the impetus for populist radical right figures such as Wilders and Fortuyn to use Christianist secular rhetoric which defines Dutch society as Judeo-Christian and Humanist, and therefore excludes Muslims on the dual grounds that Islam is alien to the Netherlands, and because unlike Christianity it does not differentiate between religion and politics.

The Rise of Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom

One of the most prominent and widely supported users of Christianist secular rhetoric in the Netherlands is Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders. Reviled by many in his own country and abroad, yet seen by his supporters as perhaps the only politician willing to be honest about the challenge of Islam, Wilders has made a career out of framing Islam as a hostile force bent on conquering the Netherlands' Judeo-Christian and Humanist culture.

Who then is Geert Wilders, where did he come from, and what led him to lead a populist radical right movement in the Netherlands? Wilders was born in 1963 in Venlo, in the far south-east of the Netherlands, close to the German border. Born to a Dutch father and to a mother with dual Dutch and Indonesian heritage, Wilders was raised a Roman Catholic but left the church in his late teens. Being perhaps something of a searcher for meaning and

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identity his youth – unsurprising given his mixed heritage – Wilders travelled extensively across the Middle East and North Africa. During a stay in Israel, where he volunteered at a *Moshav*, he discovered an especial affinity with Israelis and sympathized with Zionism.[424] Further travels throughout the Arab world seem to have solidified his opinion that the more Western oriented Israelis possessed a culture superior to that of their Arab neighbours, whose religion he blamed for their nations' authoritarianism and poverty.[425] Conversely, Wilders saw in Israel proof of the virtues of Judaism, and came to believe that Israelis provide a model of cultural strength the West ought to emulate.[426] He also became convinced that Jerusalem, the "cradle of the Judeo-Christian tradition," ought to be defended from Muslims.[427]

Returning to the Netherlands, Wilders studied Social and Medical insurance in Amsterdam, and later received some legal certifications from the Open University of the Netherlands. After four years working in social security – during which he appears to have acquired a distaste for the Netherlands' bureaucratized welfare system, and a belief in the superiority of neoliberal market based solutions to healthcare problems[428] – Wilders began working as a speechwriter for the centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). His time working for and representing the VVD can be divided into three broad periods: 1990 – 1997, during which he worked on policy; 1997 – 1998, when he represented the VVD in the Utrecht council; and 1998 – 2005, as a Member of Parliament representing the VVD.[429] Intellectually, Wilders' time in the VVD is split between the 1990 – 2001 period, in which he took a strong stand against Muslim immigration but supported neo-liberal policies, and the

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[424] Cnaan Liphshiz, "Is the Honeymoon over for Geert Wilders and Dutch Jews?" *Times of Israel,* May 2, 2014. http://www.timesofisrael.com/is-the-honeymoon-over-for-geert-wilders-and-dutch-jews/.

[425] See David J. Wetheim, "Geert Wilders and the Nationalist-Populist turn Towards the Jews in Europe" in *The Jew as Legitimation: Gentile-Jewish Relations beyond Antisemitism and Philosemitism,* David J. Wertheim (editor), Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017, 280-281.

[426] Cnaan Liphshiz, "Is the Honeymoon over for Geert Wilders and Dutch Jews?" *Times of Israel,* May 2, 2014.

[427] David J. Wetheim, "Geert Wilders and the Nationalist-Populist turn Towards the Jews in Europe" in *The Jew as Legitimation: Gentile-Jewish Relations beyond Antisemitism and Philosemitism,* David J. Wertheim (editor), Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017, 281.

[428] Teun Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* 117, 2014.

[429] A Reuters article profiling Wilders notes the following: "When he entered politics in 1990 without a university degree after a stint working for a health insurer, it was as a social policy specialist, advising the liberals on ways to cut back on the Netherlands' then very generous out-of-work allowances. Colleagues remember a driven expert with a skilled politician's command of his technical brief, with little time for socializing. His party started in that technocratic tradition, advocating pro-business, Atlanticist neoconservatism." See Thomas Escritt, "The Globetrotter Confined: The Hardening of Geert Wilders," *Reuters,* February 28, 2017. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-election-wilders-idUSKBN1671JB.

post-2001 period in which his views on Islam became radical and extremely hostile, and he began to embrace American style neoconservatism.[430]

Why did Wilders join a centrist party when he already had radical views about Islam and the religious basis of culture and civilization? There are three plausible explanations. In certain respects it is not surprising, given how early on Wilders began thinking in a civilisational and religious manner, that he was not attracted to the far-right parties of his day, which were anti-Semitic and racialist. Wilders, as we have seen, was from his late teens sympathetic towards Israel and saw the world through the prism of religion based civilizations, not simply through a racial lens. It is difficult to imagine Wilders' philo-Semitism and preference for religion based civilisational identity of racial identity being welcome inside the European far-right of the 1980s. Equally, Wilders was in the 1980s and 1990s a supporter of the neoliberal, pro-free trade and anti-welfare policies espoused by the VVD. Yet another important reason for Wilders' decision to join and remain part of the VVD was the presence within the party of Frits Bolkestein.

Bolkestein was an important figure in Dutch politics. A onetime VVD leader (1990 – 1998), he was a man who appears to have been at times something of an outlier within his own party, especially on issues such as Muslim immigration and the importance of preserving Dutch culture from growing Islamic influence. In hindsight, and when his influence on populists Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders is taken into consideration, he looms as an even more important figure in Dutch politics than he may have appeared in the 1990s.

In 1991 Bolkestein made a series of remarks which anticipate the worldview of many of Europe's populist radical right movements. Discussing the difficulties integrating Muslims into Dutch society, he painted a picture of two clashing cultures; a Dutch culture one based on "Rationalism, humanism and Christianity" and an Islamic culture which was antithetical to these things.[431] In a perceptive passage discussing these remarks, Ernst van den Hemel comments that Bolkestein appears to be arguing that only Christianity – or perhaps cultures

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[430] Teun Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2014, 117.

[431] Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 53, 2014.

derived from Christianity – possess humanist and rationalist values.[432] Therefore it can be surmised from this argument that, according to Bolkestein, the more Muslims enter Dutch society the less humanist and rational it is likely to become. Bolkestein had as early as 1991 spoken of the Netherlands' Christian heritage. By 1994, he was warning that the Netherlands' economic and legal orders lacked a firm moral underpinning.[433] This was unsatisfactory and possibly dangerous; Christianity and humanism, he argued, would "offer the moral guidelines and unity for a political community facing a growing influx of migrants."[434] Equally, Bolkestein disdained cultural relativism "because it denied the superiority of Western values."[435] Fearing that cultural relativism and the lack of a single religiously underpinned identity and set of ethics would weaken cohesion, Bokestein wished to change the VVD's political program to include references to Christian culture and identity.[436]

While Bolkestein was not able to convince the VVD to return references to Christianity to the VVD's program, according to Vollaard the debate he began within the party about the relationship between Christianity and contemporary secular Dutch culture moved into the public sphere.[437] The degree to which the notion that Dutch culture was rooted in a religious tradition gained traction is evident in the parliamentary record. The term "Judeo-Christian" was virtually unheard in Dutch parliament before the year 2000, having been used just 33 times between 1814 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2011, however, the word was used on 143 occasions.[438] The context of the term's use also changed. Before 2000 it was mostly used in an explicitly religious context, and by Christian parties. After 2000 it was mostly secular politicians using the term, usually during speeches describing the impossibility or difficulty of integrating Muslims into Dutch "Judeo-Christian" society.[439]

Bolkestien's remarks are significant for a number of reasons. They demonstrate a shift away from race based arguments about immigration, and towards culture and religion based arguments for excluding certain groups from residency and citizenship. (Of course, by this I do not mean that racism has disappeared from the Netherlands; the insensitive appearance of

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[432] Ibid, 54-55.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid, 90.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid, 89.
[438] Ibid, 91.
[439] Ibid, 89-90.

"Swarte Piet" at Christmastime shows racist attitudes have not completely abated.[440] Furthermore, the sight of Party for Freedom supporters chanting "less Moroccans" at a rally suggests much the same.)[441] They also demonstrate the use of religious language in Dutch politics in a relatively new way – in the service of secularism. As Hemel notes, Bolkestein's remarks show a superficially post-secular style mixing of religion and politics. Yet there is no religious content within them, and no attempt to encourage the Dutch to return to Church or even believe in God.

Significant though they were, Bolkestein's ideas do not appear to have influenced VVD immigration policy, which continued to welcome tens of thousands of Muslims immigrants – mostly from Morocco and Turkey – into the Netherlands. But they struck a chord with Geert Wilders, who had already formulated opinions similar to those Bolkestein expressed during his time in Israel, and who was adopted by the older politicians as something akin to a protégé.[442] Wilders, then, was for many years in certain respects a conventional member of the VVD, yet in his views on the danger posed by Islam and the importance of Judeo-Christian and Humanist values he was – like his mentor Bolkestein – something of an outlier. Despite his unconventional views on Islam and whatever disagreements he had with VVD policy, Wilders remained in the party for almost fifteen years, and served in VVD led coalition governments.

It has been observed of Wilders that after 2001 – and no doubt motivated by al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on the United States and the George W. Bush administration's embrace of Neoconservatism in their wake – he moved sharply in a neoconservative direction. According to Teun Pauwels, he embraced the particular tenets of this doctrine: "market liberalism, traditional values and aggressive democratic interventionism against chosen adversaries."[443] Wilders travelled to "Israel and the United States to familiarize himself with the ideas and

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[440] The black slaves or 'helpers' of *Sinterklaaus* made an appearance at the Dutch embassy in Canberra, Australia, embarrassing and astonishing the Australian government. Alexandra Beech and Tegan Osborne, "Embassy Hosts Traditional Dutch Sinterklaas event in ACT with characters dressed in black face," *ABC News,* December 8, 2015. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-07/embassy-hosts-dutch-sinterklaas-event-with-black-face-costumes/7008374.

[441] See Nina Siegal, "Geert Wilders, Dutch Far-Right Leader, Is Convicted Of Inciting Discrimination," *The New York Times,* December 9, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/world/europe/geert-wilders-netherlands-trial.html.

[442] Willem Mass, "The Netherlands," In James Hollifield, Philip Martin, Pia Orrenius, *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective, Third Edition,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 271.

[443] Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* 117, 2014.

methods of neoconservative think tanks."[444] He gave vocal support for the War on Terror, the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, and advocated for regime change across the Middle East.[445] At the same time, Wilders also began calling for the arrest and detention of anyone considered to pose a threat to Dutch security. He became critical of the political establishment, and sought to capitalize on anti-establishment feeling. And, perhaps most importantly, he began to categorise Islam as a totalitarian ideology, and not a true religion, wholly at odds with the West's Judeo-Christian values.[446]

In 2004 Wilders resigned from the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy. The decision was perhaps some time in the making. In 1998 Wilders' mentor Bolkestein left the VVD for a position in the European Parliament. In the years following his absence, Wilders appears to have gradually grown unhappy under the more liberal direction of Bolkestein's successor Hans Dijkstal.[447] The VVD maintained a moderate and centrist political orientation – despite the tumultuous character of the period, including the September 11 attacks, invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the politica l assassinations of Pim Fortuyn and Theo Van Gogh – throughout the first half of the 2000s. Wilders, as we have seen, had grown more radical in his views during this time. Matters came to a head in 2004 when Wilders wrote a ten point programme for the Limburg branch of the VVD which advocated, among other things, a "ban on radical mosques and the repatriation of radical Muslims." When the VVD leadership demanded that he "distance himself" from his own plan, Wilders chose instead to resign from the party.[448] For a year he sat in Parliament as 'Group Wilders' before founding the Party for Freedom, where he was to be leader and sole member, in February 2006.

Frustration with the VVD on the Muslim immigration issues was perhaps not the only reason Wilders had for forming a new political party. Another key reason was perhaps the success of a populist in Dutch politics: Pim Fortuyn. A gay man with very liberal views on cultural issues, he enjoyed a sudden and extraordinary rise to prominence in the early 2000s. Fortuyn was the author of a curious manifesto complaining of the Netherlands' cultural and economic malaise. Muslims were a particular target of his ire in his manifesto, for they represented to Fortuyn a retrograde element in the Netherlands. Significantly, Fortuyn described the

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[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid.
[446] Ibid.
[447] Ibid, 114
[448] Ibid, 114

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Netherlands as belonging to a wider European Judeo-Christian and Humanist culture under threat from Islam and Muslim immigrants.[449] As a liberal and a gay man Muslims' religiosity and conservative views on sexual matters troubled him, and he was not – like most left-wing politicians – sympathetic towards their plight as a minority group. Rather, Fortuyn treated Muslims as he would a conservative Christian group – or worse, because he believed that Christianity was a direct forerunner of Humanism. Islam, Fortuyn suggested, was inherently conservative and hostile towards Dutch liberal values.[450] Thus Islam was not only a reminder of the religious conservatism which had been overcome or transformed into secular liberalism, but something far more insidious: a religious tradition which could not overcome itself and secularise.

The 2002 murder of Fortuyn and the earlier departure of Bolkestein from Dutch politics opened up a space within the Netherlands for a new right-wing movement. Fortuyn had already shown that there was a great appetite in the Netherlands for a party which took a liberal approach to sexual morality and gender issues, but which defined Dutch identity as 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist,' and in doing so excluded Muslims (and indeed other religious conservatives) from being considered truly Dutch.

Wilders' increasingly radical views were no doubt solidified by the death threats he has received during his time in Dutch public life. Having become notorious for his views on Islam and Muslim immigration, Wilders received serious threats to his life from Muslim extremists shortly after his departure from the VVD. The gravity of the threat was demonstrated when filmmaker Theo van Gogh, director of the Ayaan Hirsi Ali written anti-Islam film *Submission*, was murdered by a Dutch-Moroccan Islamist. The killer, having shot van Gogh, cut his victim's throat almost to the point of decapitating him, and using a small knife pinned to his chest a 'hit list' of names. Among those listed was Geert Wilders.

It is possible that Wilders' physical isolation after the murders of Fotruyn and Van Gogh and the subsequent threats to his own life changed his politics. Wilders' politics did indeed

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[449] Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century, 250, 2016.

[450] According to Fortuyn, "In Holland, homosexuality is treated the same way as heterosexuality: in what Islamic country does that happen?" Fortuyn also remaked about Islam, "How can you respect a culture if the woman has to walk several steps behind her man, has to stay in the kitchen and keep her mouth shut?" See Elizabeth Kolbert, "Beyond Tolerance," *The New Yorker,* September 9, 2002. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/09/09/beyond-tolerance.

change in a significant way in the mid-2000s. After founding the Party for Freedom, Wilders gradually abandoned his position in favour of free trade and welfare cuts, embracing the trade protectionism and pension increases which appealed to his core supporters in the disaffected working class. Yet most importantly, by founding his own party Wilders was able to concentrate on the issues he believed most significant: restricting Muslim immigration and regaining Dutch sovereignty from the European Union. Thus through the creation of the Party for Freedom he was able to disassociate himself from the somewhat unpopular – especially among working class people – economic liberalism of the VVD, while at the same time making a simple, direct appeal to anti-Muslim sentiment across the political spectrum.

The Party for Freedom entered the 2006 election campaign with a populist-nationalist political platform based on restricting Muslim immigration, restoring Dutch sovereignty, stopping Turkey gaining EU membership, and preventing the EU from increasing their power over the Netherlands through new constitutional measures.[451] Despite having been founded only nine months earlier, the party received 6% of the vote at the 2006 elections, winning nine seats and allowing Wilders to remain in Dutch Parliament.[452] Wilders was now the leader of the fifth largest party in the Netherlands, and had attracted a core group of supporters – mostly from non-religious and disaffected working class men – who appreciated his anti-Muslim views and Euro-skepticism.[453] The election result gave Wilders a new prominence and importance in Dutch public life. He used his new profile to attack Muslim immigrants, Islam, left-wing political movements in the Netherlands, and the European Union.

After 2006 Wilders developed a new line of attack against the political left, arguing that it was working hand in hand – whether leftists knew it or not – with Muslims to Islamise the country. By introducing the idea that all cultures were equal, and advocating multiculturalism and mass immigration, Wilders argued, the left was encouraging Muslims to refrain from assimilating into Dutch culture. Furthermore, because they did not recognize in Islam an existential threat to the Netherlands or Europe, Wilders branded the CDA led Dutch

[451] Pauwels, *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands*, 115, 2014.
[452] Ibid.
[453] Ibid, 120-122.

government cowards, and demanded that they stand up to Islam, cease further immigration from Muslims, and make Judeo-Christianity the country's leading culture.[454]

Furthermore, after 2006 Wilders and the Party for Freedom drifted further away from the centrist neoliberalism of the VVD, and towards populist nationalism. He began accusing Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian immigrations of stealing jobs rightfully belonging to the Dutch.[455] He campaigned for better care for the elderly.[456] Reversing his earlier support for neoconservatism and military intervention, he called for Dutch troops to be recalled from Afghanistan, and ceased calling for the promotion of democracy in the Muslim world.[457] The Dutch people, he argued, were not sufficiently patriotic. Schoolchildren must be taught to be true patriots in school, and told why Dutch Judeo-Christian and Humanist values were superior to all others – especially Muslim values.[458]

Wilders' new populist-nativist orientation affected his attitude towards Muslims. Where once he had argued that Muslims could become secular democrats, and indeed that the West ought to forcibly spread liberal democracy to the Middle East, he now argued the Netherlands should cease participation in International Peacekeeping in places such as Afghanistan.[459] He produced a film in 2009, *Fitna*, in which his new attitude to Islam was elaborated upon. In the film, Islam is presented as wholly antithetical to Dutch culture, and based upon hatred, intolerance and the will to dominate non-Muslim societies and – if possible – transform them into Muslims. *Fitna* caused enormous controversy. Yet Wilders did not cease attacking Islam, but continued his criticisms in the face of continued death threats, a ban on his entering the UK, and the condemnation of many other Dutch politicians.

Leaving behind his increasingly unpopular neoliberal and neoconservatives positions, like populists elsewhere in the world Wilders constructed a reality around him in which 'the people' of his nation were being oppressed by an anti-democratic minority, in this case a

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[454] According to Wilders in 2008, "Our Prime Minister is a big coward. The government is weak." See Ian Traynor, "'I don't hate Muslims, I hate Islam' says Holland's rising political star," *The Guardian,* February 17, 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/17/netherlands.islam.

[455] Vossen, Classifying Wilders: The Ideological Development of Geert Wilders and His Party for Freedom, 185, 2011.

[456] Ibid.

[457] Ibid.

[458] Ibid.

[459] Ibid.

coalition of leftists, Muslims and centre-right neoliberal politicians.[460] At the same time, as Koen Vossen notes, Wilders was no simple right-wing politician. He took liberal positions on gay rights, abortion, euthanasia, and women's emancipation, and claimed to be defending these positions against an inherently conservative and intolerant Islam.[461] Such positions are entirely consistent with populism, which is an inherently thin ideology and can come in left-wing, centrist, and right-wing forms, or even in forms which cannot be readily identified on the political spectrum.[462]

In 2010 the CDA led government collapsed, triggering a new general election. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, disillusionment with the EU, and continued fears over Muslim integration and mass immigration, the environment suited anti-establishment politics. Yet in the months leading up to the election the Party for Freedom had not polled especially well, and did not appear poised to take full advantage of national anger towards mainstream politicians. On election night, however, it quickly became clear that Geert Wilders had become one of the most powerful people in the Netherlands. The party won 15.4% of the vote and 24 seats, making it the third largest party in the Netherlands. The defeated CDA had slumped to being the forth most popular party, winning a mere 13% of the vote and just 21 seats – 20 fewer than it held before the election.

The VVD won the largest share of the vote in 2010, finishing with 20.5% and 31 seats. Yet their left-wing rivals, the PvdA, came such a close second (winning one fewer seat) that it took a further 127 for a new government to be formed. Almost five months after the election, the VVD formed a coalition government. The Party for Freedom, while not forming part of that coalition, agreed to support the government in parliament – a decision which would lead to the downfall of the VVD led coalition and a major political setback for Wilders and his party.

In the two years that followed the 2010 elections the VVD struggled to govern, a task made more difficult by the demands made by Wilders in exchange for his support in Parliament. The centre-right VVD simply could not acquiesce to Wilders' insistence that Muslims' rights

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[460] Koen Vossen, "Populism in the Netherlands after Fortuyn: Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders Compared," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society,* 11:1, 22-38, 26-28. DOI: 10.1080/15705850903553521.
[461] Vossen, Classifying Wilders: The Ideological Development of Geert Wilders and His Party for Freedom, 187, 2011.
[462] See Stanley, "The thin ideology of populism," 2008.

be curtailed, that no new mosques be built, and that the Netherlands renegotiate its agreement with the EU on the issue of immigration controls. By the middle of 2012, Wilders had decided he would no longer cooperate with the VVD led coalition, and ended their formal agreement to provide support in parliament. Thus the government collapsed and new elections were called. Curiously, Wilders revoked support at a time hardly advantageous to his party, who had been falling in popularity due to their intransigence and inability to compromise with centrist parties.

In 2012 the Party for Freedom proposed a vote on Dutch membership of the European Union, and called for Dutch identity, culture, and values to be protected from Islam. Party for Freedom policy in 2012 was to no longer permit Dutch citizens to possess dual nationalities, to ensure migrant communities integrate by forcing them to take classes to learn to become Dutch,[463] to forbid the construction of Mosques, cease funding of Islamic schools, and ban Muslim attire such as the hijab in all government buildings.[464] This programme was not met with approval by Dutch voters, and the 2012 elections proved to be a setback for the party, which lost nine seats and received only 10% of the overall vote.

In 2014 the party's popularity began to recover, but it was not until late 2015 that Wilders' began to enjoy a level of popularity his party had hitherto not received. 2015 was a particularly significant year for the party which saw its vote rebound from 2012 lows amid a record number of people seeking asylum in Europe from the Middle East and North Africa. While the Dutch centrist parties indicated they would accept a number of asylum seekers, Wilders opposed accepting Muslim refugees. This stance was not initially popular. The Party for Freedom performed poorly in senate and provincial elections held in March 2015, receiving a slightly smaller share of the vote than in the previous elections held in 2011.[465] Their fortunes changed in August 2015, a time during which the scale of the immigration 'crisis' had become apparent, and public opinion appears to have started to turn against people seeking asylum and the politicians who supported them.[466] Polling suggests that

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[463] Ibid, 37.
[464] Ibid.
[465]"Dutch political landscape never more divided, election results show," *Dutch News,* March 19, 2015. http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/03/dutch-political-landscape-never-more-divided-election-results-show/
[466] The Peil poll graphic illuminates the sharp rise in the Party for Freedom's electoral fortunes in the second half of 2015, which – despite peaks and troughs – continued until the 2017 elections. See the graphical illustration of Peil polls archived at https://home.noties.nl/peil/politieke-voorkeur. A clearer image of the party's rise in the second half of 2017, using Peil and other polling services, can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_Dutch_general_election,_2017.

between September 2015 and February 2017 the Party for Freedom was either the most widely supported party in the Netherlands, or the second most supported party, a result which demonstrates the popularity Wilders' anti-Muslim discourse in the Netherlands.

The Party for Freedom entered the 2017 election campaign as one of the two most widely supported parties in the Netherlands. The party's Preliminary Election Program promised to "de-Islamize the Netherlands" by banning all asylum seekers and immigrants from Islamic countries, "withdraw all asylum residence permits," banning the construction of Mosques, banning Islamic headscarves from "public functions," detaining radical Muslims who appear to threaten the country in some way, and expelling dual citizens who commit crimes.[467] The 2017 Dutch election resulted in the VVD winning 33 seats, the Party for Freedom coming second with 20 seats and 13.1% of all votes, and the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) third with 19 seats.

Despite coming second, the power of Wilders' populist and Christianist secular rhetoric had a profound impact on the Dutch centre-right during the 2017 election campaign. VVD leader Mark Rutte and CDA leader Sybrand Buma adopted an aggressive, nationalistic style similar to that of Wilders, and emphasised the need to protect Dutch culture from immigrants. Rutte began his campaign for re-election by telling pro-Erdogan Dutch-Turkish protesters in Rotterdam to return to Turkey if they weren't willing to embrace Dutch values. Immigrants, he later wrote in an open letter, must "act normal or go away."[468] His nativist politics, in which he complained of unspecified "immigrants" who are causing trouble and ought to "go away," was almost certainly an attempt to show Party for Freedom voters that the VVD sympathised with their anti-Muslim feelings.[469]

The centre-right CDA also adopted Wilders' nationalistic tone. Party leader Sybrand Buma called for compulsory singing of the national anthem[470] in schools each morning, described Islam as providing no cultural "enrichment" for the Dutch nation, and called for a

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[467] Wilders, "Preliminary Election Program PVV 2017-2021," 2016.

[468] Janene Pieters, "Turkey Upset over PM Rutte telling Turkish-Dutch to leave," *NLTimes,* September 7, 2017. http://nltimes.nl/2016/09/07/turkey-upset-pm-rutte-telling-turkish-dutch-leave

[469] Adam Taylor, "Dutch PM tells immigrants 'act normal or go away,'" *Washington Post,* January 23, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/23/dutch-pm-tells-immigrants-act-normal-or-go-away/?utm_term=.c7e544d30b81

[470] Toby Sterling, "Christian Democrat Buma could be unexpected winner of Dutch vote," March 15, 2017. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-election-buma-idUSKBN16L1OX.

new approach to immigration.[471] While they did not explicitly attack Muslims, Rutte and Buma made it clear that they intended to defend Dutch culture from immigrants who refused to conform. This rhetoric appears to have had its desired effect; as the campaign continued the PVV consistently lost votes to the VVD and CDA. By the time of the election in March, the VVD was again the most popular party, winning 33 seats in the election. The Party for Freedom ran second with 20 seats and 13.1% of all votes, and the CDA third with 19 seats.[472]

Significantly, a new right-wing populist party, Forum for Democracy (FvD), emerged following the 2017 Dutch elections, where it won two seats. FvD leader Thierry Baudet styles himself as a defender of the West's Judeo-Christian heritage.[473] He is listed as a "friend" of the International Centre for Western Values, an organisation which has the following message written on its donations page: "Our commitment to Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage, and our unwavering support for the State of Israel, complicates our fundraising efforts on a highly secularized European continent that denies its spiritual roots and increasingly questions Israel's right to exist."[474]. This suggests that if Wilders and the Party for Freedom should disappear from Dutch politics, the tradition to which they belong, which began with Bolkestein – who appears to have popularised the idea of a Judeo-Christian tradition in the Netherlands – will continue through Baudet and likely beyond him.

Despite his party's difficulties in 2012, the period 2004-2017 must be regarded as a time of remarkable success for Wilders, who transformed himself from a relatively unimportant VVD parliamentarian into the most recognizable Dutch politician in the world. At the same time, he took the Party for Freedom from nothing in 2005 into the third largest party in the Netherlands by 2010, and by 2017 into the second largest party.

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[471] Peter Teffer, "Dutch election: Christian Democrat would bin Ukraine treaty" *EU Observer,* February 27, 2017. https://euobserver.com/beyond-brussels/137036.
[472] "Daily Chart: Dutch Election Results," *The Economist,* March 16, 2017. https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/03/16/dutch-election-results.
[473] Journalist Sebastian Faber, profiling Baudet in an American magazine, describes him as "predictably" invoking the "Judeo-Christian" tradition and linking it to Dutch culture. Sebastian Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?" *The Nation,* April 5, 2018. https://www.thenation.com/article/is-dutch-bad-boy-thierry-baudet-the-new-face-of-the-european-alt-right/. See also Baudet speaking of the West needing Christian values, despite he himself not believing in the Christian God. Paul van der Bas, "Thierry Baudet: Westerse wereld zit in identiteitcrisis, we hebben christelijke warden nodig," *De Dageliijske Standard,* February 15 2017. http://www.dagelijksestandaard.nl/2017/02/thierry-baudet-westerse-wereld-zit-in-identiteitscrisis-we-hebben-christelijke-waarden-nodig/.
[474] International Centre for Western Values, Donations Page. http://www.icwv.org/donate.html.

Islam and Christianism in the Netherlands

Christianist politics is not new in the Netherlands, and can be traced back at least as far as the early 1990s in the rhetoric of Bolkestein.[475] It was prominent in the rhetoric of Pim Fortuyn, but reached greater significance in the late 2000s during the rise of Wilders' Party for Freedom, and plays an important role in the rhetoric of Thierry Baudet.[476] In other words, Christianism is a part of anti-Muslim politics in the Netherlands, and plays an especially important role in populist radical right discourse. The variety of Christianism most prominent in the Netherlands can be described as Christianist secularism – a secularist posture combined with Christian identity.[477] The Party for Freedom is the paradigm of a Christianist secular populist radical right party, though Fortuyn's and Baudet's respective parties' may be similarly categorised. All were or are secularist, ostensibly liberal, pro-gay and pro-women's rights, supportive of freedom of expression, yet also hostile towards Islam, and wedded to the idea of the West being a Christian or Judeo-Christian civilisation.[478] The popularity of the Party for Freedom alone demonstrates that a significant portion of the electorate – at least 10% -- either approve or do not significantly disapprove of Christianist secular rhetoric.[479] This may appear to be a small number, but in the multi-party Dutch political system it is large enough to give a party winning this level of support significant parliamentary representation.[480]

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[475] See Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 2014.

[476] See Sebastian Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?" 2018. See also Baudet speaking of the West needing Christian values, despite he himself not believing in the Christian God. Paul van der Bas, "Thierry Baudet: Westerse wereld zit in identiteitcrisis, we hebben christelijke warden nodig," 2017.

[477] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

[478] 'Ostensibly' is the important term here. Populist radical right parties most often support restrictions on religious expression, particularly on Muslim's free expression of their faith. Despite their commitment to freedom, these parties are illiberal. See Rogers Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40:8, 1191-1226, 1210, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700.

[479] The Party for Freedom won 10.08% of the vote at the 2012 elections, its worst performance to date. See Bengü Hosch-Dayican, Chintan Amrit, Kees Aarts, and Adrie Dassen, "How Do Online Citizens Persuade Fellow Voters? Using Twitter During the 2012 Dutch Parliamentary Election Campaign," 34(2), 135-152, 140, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439314558200; it won 13.

[480] For an explanation of the volatility of Dutch politics in the depillarised era, and of the difficulty any party faces getting more then 40% of the overall vote, see Ruth Dassonneville, Michael S. Lewis-Beck, and Philippe Mongrain, "Forecasting Dutch elections: An initial model from the March 2017 legislative contests," *Research and Politics,* 4(3), 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168017720023.

Christianist secular rhetoric, then, has a powerful place in Dutch politics. While it may have its origins in the early 1990s, the events of September 11 2001, solidified the importance of Christianist secular rhetoric in Dutch political life, encouraging politicians to increasingly describe their own society as Christian or Judeo-Christian and contrast it with the Islam of the 9/11 hijackers.[481] The rise of Christianist secularism can thus be understood as a response to the increasing visibility of Islam in the Netherlands, and to post-9/11 perceptions of Islam as a threat to Dutch freedoms. It did not exist before large scale Muslim immigration to the Netherlands, and did not have a powerful place within the country before 2001. The 2015 immigration crisis, in particular, appears to have increased the popularity of the Christianist secular Party for Freedom, further suggesting that the linking of secularism to (Judeo-)Christianity is related to the visibility of Islam within the Netherlands.

In the second half of the 20th century the Dutch largely cast aside their religious beliefs as they dismantled the increasingly irrelevant pillar system. In its place came a new identity based around secular liberal principles of tolerance and individualism. Secularism –the privatisation of religious belief and the differentiation of religion from other spheres of human activity – thus became an important element of Dutch culture. More than this, secularism was presumed to be a condition of modernity, and the end point of a process of modernisation that begins with an irrational and dangerous religious worldview and ends with a rational secular worldview.[482] Christianity remained embedded in Dutch culture, but was safely secularised and de-sacrilised, and perhaps went almost unnoticed due to the post-Holocaust lack of another major religious tradition within the Netherlands.[483]

The arrival of Muslim immigrants into secularised, de-pillarised Dutch society, however, appears to have challenged the secularisation narrative and made some Dutch more cognizant of the persistence of religion. Muslims have been perceived as refusing to become Dutch, and

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[481] The Term "Judeo-Christian" was used just 33 times between 1814 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2011, however, the word was used on 143 occasions. See Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 91, 2014.

[482] Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview, 3-5, 1999.

[483] Of the 156,000 Dutch Jews alive in 1941, only 50,000 survived the Holocaust and remained in the Netherlands in 1945. See Evert Van Imhoff, Hannah Van Solinge, Bert Jan Flim, "A reconstruction of the size and composition of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in the Netherlands, 1945," *Population Research and Policy Review,* 20, 457-481,478-479, 2001. https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/41865072/A_reconstruction_of_the_size_and_composi201 60201-25936-zcf6k2.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1542693251&Signature=4HrpHYtZ 2lB75EOKFhJetYg9RdM%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DA_reconstruction_of_the_size_and_composi.pdf.

belonging to a "totalitarian" religion threatening the secular state and liberal Dutch society.[484] Practicing Muslims, then, could not easily fit into Dutch culture, which was secular, liberal, and often suspicious of public religion.

In the early 1990s right-wing Dutch politicians reacted to increasing Muslim immigration by identifying the Netherlands as a Christian and secular society, incompatible with Islam.[485] This was done perhaps in part because by identifying the Netherlands in this way it was possible to exclude 'threatening' non-white Muslims from Dutch society. But there is reason to believe it was not merely a cynical co-opting of religion for political purposes, though even if this were the case it would still indicate that religion retained a surprising power in the Netherlands despite secularisation. Muslim difference has made, as Habermas points out, secular European more aware of public religion.[486] For the secular Dutch right, the arrival of large numbers of Muslims in the Netherlands is considered as a threat to rational secular society precisely because public religion is perceived as dangerous. Equally, Muslim immigration appears threatening because it demonstrates the non-universality of Dutch secularism, and the possibility that it is possible to live within a modernised society without privatising religion. Muslim immigrants may have appeared easily secularised when secularism was assumed to be an irresistible force privatising religion. When Muslims did not privatise their beliefs – or were perceived to resist secularism – secularism began to appear weak, and moreover a special feature of (Judeo-)Christian societies.

The presence of Muslims also demonstrated the hitherto unexamined Christianity embedded in Dutch culture. Muslim difference, for example, increases awareness of the Christian elements existing within secular Dutch culture, including the presence of Christian holidays, the familiar presence of Churches in Dutch cities, and Christian schooling. Islamic schools, holidays, and places of worship, on the other hand, are never secularised into Dutch culture, but instead perceived as religion intruding into the secular sphere.[487] The result is a growing

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[484] See Wilders' attacks on Islam for being a "totalitarian political ideology" hostile towards Dutch freedoms in Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015. See also Mark Rutte's remarks in 2017 demanding "immigrants" either act "Dutch" or "go home" in Janene Pieters, "Turkey Upset over PM Rutte telling Turkish-Dutch to leave," *NLTimes,* September 7, 2017. http://nltimes.nl/2016/09/07/turkey-upset-pm-rutte-telling-turkish-dutch-leave

[485] Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 53, 2014.

[486] Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," 20, 2008.

[487] Hence Wilders' and Baudet's demand that only Islamic clothing be banned in public. See Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?" 2018. The Party for Freedom calls for the banning

perception that secularism is not a break from Christianity, but rather a continuation of Christianity. This perception is reflected in the discourse of the Dutch populist radical right. The Dutch right began to describe Muslims as a threat to 'Christian' yet 'humanist' civilisation in the early 1990s, though apart from Bolkestein and VVD-era Wilders, centre-right politicians have not explicitly attacked Muslims or described them as inherently incompatible with Dutch (Judeo-)Christian culture.[488] In the post 9/11 period, however, the populist radical right, from Fortuyn to Wilders and Baudet, demanded the cessation of Muslim immigration on the grounds that Islamisation threatens the future of Dutch 'Judeo-Christian' culture.[489]

In the reactionary world of populist radical right politics, the nativism of the Party for Freedom is shaped to a significant degree by their perceived 'enemies.' If Muslims are the enemy, 'the people' must be Christian and secular. Positive elements of Dutch political culture – democracy, freedom of expression, separation of Church and state – are framed as creations of Christian and humanist culture, and claimed to be antithetical to Islam. Yet this framing is made possible only by a wider Dutch re-conceptualising of Dutch culture as Christian or Judeo-Christian in the face of Muslim immigration.

The development of Christianism in the Netherlands, and its adoption by the populist radical right, is thus connected to immigration of Muslims to the Netherlands, and to the greater visibility of public religion after the September 11, 2001 Islamist terror attacks on the United States. The secularisation of the Netherlands and subsequent dissolving of the pillar system of managing religious difference – which was not needed in an environment in which religion was privatised – left religion largely outside of the public sphere. Christianity did not disappear entirely from the public sphere, but was instead secularised into Dutch and/or Western 'culture.' When Muslims entered this environment, first as guest workers and later

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of Mosque construction, see Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015; Peter Teffer, "Dutch election: Christian Democrat would bin Ukraine treaty" *EU Observer,* February 27, 2017. https://euobserver.com/beyond-brussels/137036. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/94-english/1937-speech-geert-wilders-bornholm-denmark-june-13-2015.

[488] See Sybrand Buma's remarks on Islam providing no "cultural enrichment" in Toby Sterling, "Christian Democrat Buma could be unexpected winner of Dutch vote," March 15, 2017. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-election-buma-idUSKBN16L1OX. See also Rutte's attacks on Turkish-Dutch in Adam Taylor, "Dutch PM tells immigrants 'act normal or go away,'" *Washington Post,* January 23, 2017; https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/23/dutch-pm-tells-immigrants-act-normal-or-go-away/?utm_term=.c7e544d30b81

[489] See Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century, 250-251, 2016; Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?" 2018.

as permanent migrants, their resistance to secularisation and increasing identification as 'Muslim' was sometimes perceived by secular Dutch as a challenge to secular differentiation of religion from politics. While a church, or a Christian religious holiday, or even a crucifix, might be understood a part or a symbol of Dutch 'culture,' a mosque, an item of Islamic dress, or an Islamic holiday, was often perceived to be an unwelcome religious intrusion into secular public space.[490] As a result, Muslim difference highlighted the otherwise unexamined Christianity embedded within Dutch culture, making some Dutch identify as Christian when faced with Islam. This Christianity, however, is little more than an identity, and has no religious content but is best understood as Christianist secularism – a type of nativism based on a religio-civilisational classification of people. Christianist secularism, then, is a reconceptualising of secularism as a product of Christianity, rather than a break from Christianity.

The Party for Freedom have enjoyed electoral success while seizing upon this wider re-conceptualising of secularism as 'Christian,' and of Dutch culture as Christian and secular, and use Christianist secularist rhetoric to justify the exclusion of Muslims from Dutch society.[491] My examination of the rise of Christianism in the Netherlands in this chapter, particularly within the context of the establishment and growth of the Party for Freedom, suggests that Dutch people's encounter with Islam in the Netherlands has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of Dutch secularism, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into Dutch 'culture.' Recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed for secular Dutch to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian. It has thus created Christianist secularism, a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' The Party for Freedom – among other populist parties in the Netherlands – have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define Dutch identities in religio-civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the grounds that Islam is an alien

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[490] Baudet's FwD "has proposed a "Law in Defense of Dutch Values" that, among other things, would prohibit arranged marriages, demand that the Holocaust be taught in all schools, and ban any face-covering garments, including balaclavas and niqabs, from public spaces." Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?" 2018. The Party for Freedom calls for the banning of Mosque construction, see Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015; Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016.

[491] The Party for Freedom's share of the vote increased three per cent between 2012 and 2017. However, the emergence of Baudet no doubt took votes for the PVV, as did the increasingly nativist rhetoric of Rutte and Buma during the 2017 election campaign period.

religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.' The following chapter examines the discourse of the Party for Freedom in 2012-2017 in order to test this hypothesis.

Chapter five: Discourse Analysis of the Party for Freedom 2012-2017

In the previous chapter I argued that the Party for Freedom uses religion in its discourse to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' because it has embraced a form of Christian identitarianism I have labelled (following Brubaker) Christianist secularism. Christianist secularism, I argued, is a reaction to Muslim immigration to and the higher visibility of Islam in the Netherlands. The presence of Islam, I contended, has made secular Europeans more aware of public religion, and cognizant of the particular – and especially Christian – nature of their own secular culture. It has thus highlighted the manner in which Christianity has been secularised into culture, demonstrating cultural continuity between Europe's religious past and its secular present which may not have been as obvious before the arrival of Muslims. The resulting recognition of the Christianity embedded in secular European culture has allowed the Party for Freedom to wield Christian identity – a civilisation-based identity which can be incorporated within the party's nativism – as a weapon against the minority Dutch Muslim populism.

In this chapter I test this hypothesis by examining the Party for Freedom's use of religious discourse between 2012 and 2017. This period is significant, because it falls between an initial low point for the party – the 2012 elections – in which it lost most of its seats in Dutch parliament as well as its place as part of a ruling coalition, and a new high in 2015-2016, when the party began to top opinion polling in the wake of growing concern over the immigration 'crisis.' This period of resurgence did not last, however, and the party found itself losing support in the lead-up to the March 15 2017 election, ultimately coming second with 20 seats to the VVD's 33 seats.[492] Despite the party's failure to maintain the support it held in 2015-2016 in the election of 2017, the period between 2012 - 2017 marked a resurgence for the Party for Freedom after the disappointment of the 2012 election results. Though the Party for Freedom finished a distant second in the 2017 election, ongoing

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[492] "Daily Chart: Dutch Election Results," *The Economist,* March 16, 2017.
https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2017/03/16/dutch-election-results.

concern about Muslim immigration appears likely to keep populist radical right movements – and Christianist secular discourse – relevant in the Netherlands for the foreseeable future.

In order to understand the meaning and purpose of the Party for Freedom's use of religion in their discourse, this chapter analyses its leader's – Geert Wilders – discourse at three important junctures: at during the 2012 election campaign, at the height of the 2015 refugee crisis, and during the 2017 election campaign. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis I analyse the discourse of the Party for Freedom.[493] In this chapter, I apply CDA techniques to three texts produced by Geert Wilders, and by examining his language attempt to understand the underlying messages, purposes, and ideology of the texts, as well as understand the political and social practices to which they are related. This chapter consists of two elements. First, a Critical Discourse Analysis of three texts written by Geert Wilders, one during the 2012 election campaign, one during the 2015 immigration crisis, and another during the 2017 election campaign. Following this is a discussion of the data produced by the CDA, in which my hypothesis is tested against the findings produced by the CDA and my discussion of its results.

Party for Freedom Discourse during the 2012 Election Campaign

In this first section of the chapter I analyse Party for Freedom's use of religion in their discourse in the election year of 2012. I have selected for analysis a speech Wilders gave, in English and later published on his personal website, at the Colorado Christian University on June 30, 2012. To understand the meaning of this speech and Wilders' use of religion, I use techniques derived from Fairclough's CDA. The purpose of this is to understand the relationship between the text and the social practices and ideologies by which it was produced and which it in turn may produce. Following Fairclough's conventions, I examine the medium through which Wilders delivers the text, the time, place, and intended audience(s) of the text, analyse the language, and finally examine the ideologies to which the text belongs and to which it may contribute. In particular, the CDA tries to uncover the underlying messages in Wilders' discourse. To do this I seek answers in selected texts produced by Wilders to the following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key

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[493] See Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992; Norman Fairlough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis" in T.A. Van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction,* vol. 2, London: Sage, 1997.

elements of Christianist secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[494] (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society? The CDA thus pays special attention to the manner in which conceptions such as "the people,' 'Islam,' and 'Judeo-Christianity,' are constructed in the texts, how they are used to create an exclusive nationalist identity, and their role within the party's nativist ideology. The language of the texts are analysed, and word frequency of key terms relating to Islam and Christianity are noted, as are terms related to ingroup and outgroup formation i.e. 'our,' 'they,' 'we,' etc... More frequent use of 'Islam' and 'Christianity,' especially in conjunction with terms used to create ingroups and outgroups, will indicate the degree to which Wilders relies on religious identity to aid in ingroup and outgroup formation.

The medium chosen by Wilders is a speech to a particular conservative American audience at Western Conservative Summit; the speech was later transcribed and published on Wilders' personal website. The speech was given during the lead-up to an election, and should therefore be considered part of his 2012 election campaign. The address appears to be aimed at two different audiences. He addresses a conservative American audience with whom he claims to share a Christian based worldview. Equally, his remarks cannot be understood apart from the coming Dutch elections, and therefore Wilders' speech must considered to be aimed at a domestic audience.

 Summary of Wilders' speech at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver, USA, 2012[495]

Opening remarks: (paragraphs 1-5.) Wilders thanks the summit organisers for inviting him. Expresses sympathy for those affected by nearby wildfires. Praises city of Denver, especially its Christian University and 'Centennial Institute' "with its motto 'Faith, family and freedom'.[496] Your motto shows that you have your priorities right. Faith, family and freedom are the pillars of our Judeo-Christian civilization and need to be defended."[497] Wilders also

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[494] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.
[495] Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver, 30 June, 2012. https://www.geertwilders.nl/index.php/component/content/article/87-news/1795-speech-geert-wilders-at-the-western-conservative-summit-denver-30-june-2012.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Ibid.

introduces his major theme: "the situation in Europe and in particular in my own country, the Netherlands."[498]

Wilders tells the audience of the effect of Islam on his life: (paragraphs 6-13) "For the past eight years I have been living under 24 hour police protection;" "I have been marked for death for criticizing Islam; " "My views, in a nutshell, are that Islam, rather than a religion, is predominantly a totalitarian ideology striving for world dominance. I believe that Islam and freedom are incompatible."[499]

Explaining the dangers of Islam: (paragraphs 14-24) "There are many moderate Muslims, but there is no such thing as a moderate Islam. There is only one Islam and it is a dangerous ideology. It is intolerant, it is violent. It should not be tolerated, but should be contained." "During the past three decades, Europe made a fatal mistake. It allowed millions of people from Islamic countries to immigrate into Europe. So many people rooted in a culture entirely different from our own Judeo-Christian and humanist tradition have entered Europe that our heritage, our freedoms, our prosperity and our culture are in danger."

Warning Americans against allowing Muslims to settle in the United States: (paragraphs 25-40) "many Americans see immigration as something which is inherently good for a country, since it contributed so much to the United States. But while most of the former immigrants to the United States came from Europe, a continent with the same Judeo-Christian roots as America, Europe's contemporary immigrants do not share our common roots. On the contrary, the Islamization of our society is undermining our Western Judeo-Christian values." "Islam is also coming for America. Indeed, it has already arrived. Your country, too, is facing a stealth jihad."[500]

Wilders' plan to protect the West from Islam: (paragraphs 40-67)

"Defend the right to speak what we see as the truth;" "end cultural relativism. "...our Judeo-Christian values are far better and superior than the Islamic values;" "stop the islamization

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[498] Ibid.
[499] Ibid.
[500] Ibid.

process;" "take pride in our nations again;" "We will not submit to Islam. Never. We will survive with our own Judeo-Christian heritage"; "the truth will set us free."[501]

Language analysis

Wilders' purpose in this speech is to convince his audience that Islam poses a threat to Western civilisation, and that to combat Islam his audience must "end cultural relativism" and proclaim the superiority of "Judeo-Christian values." The language Wilders uses reflects the distinction he makes between Islam, which is constructed as a tyrannical political force, and the "Judeo-Christian" West, which is constructed as a free society. Key terms "Judeo-Christian" and "freedom" appear six times each, always as a reference to the culture of the West. In contrast, Islam is defined as a "totalitarian ideology" pretending to be a religion, and a "threat" to the culture, heritage, and values of the West. Muslims are 'othered' throughout the speech, and described as not belonging to "our nations," (mentioned twice), "our civilisation," (twice) and "our culture" (twice). This "our" or alternatively this "we" (used 56 times) is described in religious terms, explicitly in "our Judeo-Christian values" and our "Judeo-Christian civilisation," but otherwise implicitly. "We" belong to Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilisation, which is "ours." "We" are free, peaceful. "They," on the other hand, are Islamic, unfree, and "violent," and bent on "our" destruction.

Wilders' text is a powerful example of Christianist secular discourse. His Christian identitarianism appears early in the text, as he claims he and his audience belong to a "Judeo-Christian" civilisation in need of "defending."[502] This Judeo-Christianity is invoked not as a system of ethics, a form of worship and religious practice, or a type of spiritual feeling. Rather, it is invoked as an identity and as the ultimate source of the West's culture and values, and furthermore used as a description of the people who ought to inhabit Western states. In other words, the term is used to describe "us" and in doing so to exclude "them." Wilders' biblical reference "the truth will set us free" is a rare example – perhaps understandable given he is addressing a primarily Christian audience – of the Party for Freedom leader quoting (or almost quoting) from the Bible. It is, however, an exception which proves the rule, perhaps, that Wilders' rarely makes any statements based on references to the Bible in his rhetoric. This statement, while certainly biblical, is used here in an entirely secular context.

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[501] Ibid.
[502] Ibid.

The text is unusual insofar as Wilders mentions the importance of "faith."[503] Religious faith is not often mentioned in a positive manner by populist radical right parties. Wilders, however, does not explain why faith is good, or even what he means by the term, and does not mention it again in the speech. The text is secular, insofar as it speaks of "Judeo-Christian" values, but not Jewish or Christian ethics, theology, or morality. The Bible is absent from the text, despite Wilders' praise for "faith." Moreover, Western civilisation is described as partly "humanist," indicating that Wilders believes the West cannot be defined by religion alone.[504] Humanist is not defined in the text, and may be a term referring to post-Christian atheist/agnostic Westerners.

At the same time, Wilders and his party's philo-Semitism appears through his inclusion of Judaism and Jewish people within the bounds of Western civilisation. The problematic nature of this claim – especially in light of the Holocaust – is not examined in this text. Nor is the manner in which Judaism or the Hebrew Bible has contributed to Western culture discussed. The Judeo in 'Judeo-Christianity' is not defined in the text, but should not be understood as being entirely cynical in nature, and an attempt to win Jewish votes. Wilders' affection for Israel appears sincere, and may be in part the result of the time he spent in the country during the 1980s. Therefore the Judeo part of his 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' category, while absent of religious meaning, is not entirely empty. Its use indicates that Wilders believes Jewish people are Western and secular, and therefore welcome inside 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' civilisation.

Homosexuality and womens' rights are not discussed in this text, perhaps because some in his conservative Christian audience might object to Wilders liberal stance on sexual morality and support for women's rights. Wilders' major theme, however, is the need to defend "freedom" from the forces of Islam.[505] He claims to be a victim of Islam and the unfreedom it spreads wherever it goes, and therefore urges his audience to not make the same "mistake" the Dutch made by allowing Muslims to immigrate and then suffering a loss of freedom as a result.[506]

Islam is constructed in the text as a "totalitarian" political ideology, not at religion, bent on conquering the West and destroying its freedoms. Throughout the text Islam is represented as

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[503] Ibid.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Ibid.

the ultimate antagonist, and a source of violence and fanaticism. Muslims who do not act violently are described as not following the true teachings of Islam, which are never moderate but extreme. The identity of the West is described, on the other hand, as "Judeo-Christian and Humanist," and linked to "freedom." Judeo-Christianity and Humanist is not defined, but appears to be constructed as a kind of mirror image of Islam, and therefore invoked in order to exclude Muslims from the West. It is, as Kluveld has remarked, a vague and changeable term without any connection to religious faith or Christian ideals. It is at best a stand in for whatever Wilders is claiming Western culture to be: democratic, free, secular – or something else entirely should the need arise.[507] Confronted by Islam, Wilders merges Judeo-Christianity and Humanism – three concepts which may at times be opposed to one another – into a single cultural tradition. This cultural tradition, according to the text, is the basis for the free, prosperous and peaceful culture of the West. Therefore in order to protect Western civilisation from "totalitarian" Islam, the West must, according to Wilders, recognise the "superior" nature of Judeo-Christian values, and defend them from Islamisation.

<center>Ideological and Social Context</center>

Wilders' use of religion in this text can be understood within the context of populist radical right discourse in the Netherlands,[508] and in particular as an example of the Christianist secular rhetoric used by a number of populist radical right parties both within the Netherlands and across Western Europe.[509] A central concern of the Party for Freedom and other populist radical right parties is the growth of Islam in the West, which they seek to combat by demanding the cessation of Muslim immigration. Much of the Party for Freedom's use of religion in their discourse, then, is concerned with Islam and the alleged dangers it poses to Western society. The discourse of the Party for Freedom should thus be understood within the context of the growth of Islam in Europe, and the manner in which it has altered European self-conception. The discourse of the Party for Freedom should be understood as reacting to

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[507] Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century, 241, 2016.

[508] Wilders' comments may also be understood within an American context. Wilders is of course speaking to an American audience consisting mostly of religious (Christian) conservatives, in a post-9/11 (yet pre-Trump) environment in which demonization of Muslims was common. Many in his audience would have applauded his anti-Islam rhetoric and Christian identitarianism. Wilders' popularity among conservatives in the United States in 2012 is interesting, and suggests that identitarian populism was already – well before the election of Donald Trump – gathering support inside conservatives circles. Much could be said on this subject; this thesis, however, is on the Western European political situation, and will therefore not comment further on the immediate American context of Wilders' speech.

[509] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017; Marzouki and McDonnell, "Populism and Religion," 1-2, 2016.

and being shaped by events – the increasing presence and visibility of Islam in the Netherlands – but as also trying to re-shape public discourse and conceptions of Dutch national identity.

The presence and visibility of Islam in the Netherlands immigrants has made secular Dutch more aware of public religion, and Muslim difference and religiosity has made them cognizant of the secularised Christianity within their contemporary culture. In this environment, it is possible for xenophobic parties such as the Party for Freedom to exploit cognizance of secularised Christianity existing within Dutch culture, and weaponise it, using it as a tool to exclude non-Christians – particularly Muslims – from Dutch society. Wilders' text reflects this recognition of Christianity's secularisation into Western culture. He makes no reference to religion beyond a brief and vague reference to the importance of "faith," yet describes Western culture as being based upon Jewish, Christian, and Humanist principles.[510] While he tempers his Christianist secularism before his American audience, leaving out references to his pro-gay politics and praising "faith," Wilders' message remains entirely secular. His description of Western civilisation and its values as "Judeo-Christian and Humanist," while not entirely contradictory, appears designed to highlight the secularised elements of Judaism and Christianity within Western secular culture, and to show the continuity between secular humanism and Christianity.[511] In doing this, Wilders' attempts to capitalise on the religionising effect the presence of Islam has on Western society, and the manner in which Muslim immigration has increased cognizance of the historical role Christianity and Judaism played in shaping Western identity and culture.

Wilders claims Western "freedom" and "prosperity" comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition.[512] He capitalises on Western fears of Islam by placing Muslims outside of "our" Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition, and linking the relative poverty and unfreedom of many Muslim majority nations with Islamic culture, suggesting that Muslim immigrants will destroy Western freedom and wealth. Wilders' ability to connect the secular culture of the contemporary Western world which is made possible by the change in self-perception inside secularised Western countries that has occurred due to Muslim immigration. Wilders' rhetoric in this text capitalises on this change and tries to create a new Western civilisational identity, based on a combination of Judaism, Christianity, and secular humanism. This

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[510] Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver," 2012.
[511] Ibid.
[512] Ibid.

'civilisation' is constructed as a mirror image of Wilders' conception of Islam – backward, anti-humanistic, unfree, and violent. These conceptions of Islam on the one hand, and the Judeo-Christian and Humanist West on the other, are inculcated in the Party for Freedom's nativism, which in this text Wilders expresses by praising the nation-state, but defines Western states' national cultures – and by extension the Western 'ingroup' – as Judeo-Christian. Thus we see an absence of racialist language in Wilders' speech, but an abundance of religio-civilisationalist rhetoric designed to re-shape Western identity and thereby exclude Muslims from living within Western states.

The Party for Freedom's use of religion in its discourse in 2015

Two-thousand and fifteen was a significant year in the Netherlands, and indeed in Europe, due to the record number of people – mostly Syrian and Iraqi Muslims – seeking asylum in Europe. More than one million people sought refuge in Europe, with around 890,000 settling in Germany in 2015 alone.[513] The Netherlands, in contrast, accepted just over 2000 refugees in the 2015-2017 period.[514]

As the number of people seeking asylum in Europe increased, so did the sense of crisis. Perhaps due to this growing sense of crisis, and the perception among some Europeans that their governments were unable or unwilling to stop the flow of people coming to Europe, right-wing populists across Europe seized the initiative and campaigned heavily and often successfully against centrist parties who, they argued, had failed 'the people' and allowed Muslim immigrants to threaten European identity and culture.[515]

Unsurprisingly, much of Geert Wilders rhetoric in 2015 revolved around the immigration 'crisis' facing Europe and the Netherlands. To understand the Party for Freedom's response to this crisis, I analyse a text produced by Wilders during the height of the crisis, and in which he elaborates at length on his conception of Western religious identity and the danger

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[513] "Refugee numbers in Germany dropped dramatically in 2017," *DW*, January 16, 2018. https://www.dw.com/en/refugee-numbers-in-germany-dropped-dramatically-in-2017/a-42162223.

[514] The Netherlands agreed to take 7000 refugees, but only settled 2100 by mid-2017. See *Refugees in the Netherlands*, Government of Netherlands website, https://www.government.nl/topics/asylum-policy/refugees-in-the-netherlands.; "The Netherlands has accepted 2100 refugees under EU quota scheme," *Dutch News,* July 27, 2017. https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2017/07/the-netherlands-has-accepted-2100-refugees-under-eu-quota-scheme/.

[515] See Norris, "It's not just Trump: Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why," 2016.

posed to the West by Muslim migrants. The speech, while it does not deviate from Wilders' and the Party for Freedom's typical anti-Muslim, Judeo-Christian identitarianism, has been chosen for analysis because in it Wilders speaks – in untranslated English – longer and more extensively than usual on his and his party's conception of Western culture and identity and its relationship with Judaism and Christianity. The speech therefore provides rich information about Wilders' and thus the Party for Freedom's discursive use of religion.

In a dramatic address before a Free Speech Organisation in Bornholm, Denmark,[516] Wilders elaborated on his opposition to Islam, but also on the religious underpinnings of contemporary Western culture and identity.[517] The speech is addressed to multiple audiences. His initial audience was attendees associated with the Free Speech Organisation. Wilders decision to speak before a free speech organisation in Denmark may have meant speaking in front of a friendly audience, who may have perceived Wilders as a courageous figure whose right to express himself had been unfairly curtailed in his home country. Equally, because the speech was later published on his personal website the audience for the speech extended beyond the initial hearers, and toward Wilders' supporters in the Netherlands and across the world.

Summary of Wilders' speech to the Free Speech Society, Bornholm, Denmark.

Opening remarks: (Paragraphs 1-5) Wilders thanks the organisation for inviting him, praises Denmark, and the Free Speech Society, remarking that "the Danish Free Press Society is one of the most courageous organizations in the world."[518]

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[516] To interpret this text I turn again to Fairlough's discourse analysis, examining the time, place, and intended audience(s) of the text, the key words and phrases used therein, and the primary message(s) the text, and their relationship with emerging post-secular discourse and practice in the Netherlands. I will do this for all subsequent section examining the rhetoric and policies of the Party for Freedom.

[517] Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.
[518] Ibid.

Wilders discusses the attack on the First Annual Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest in Garland, Texas: (paragraphs 5-8) ", the Garland event was attacked by two jihadis from Islamic State." "We have been born in free Western nations. Freedom is our birthright. And those who want to deny it to us do not belong in our society."[519] "Next week, I will show the Garland cartoons on Dutch state television in the broadcasting time allotted to my party ...we have to show them that we will not be intimidated ...we will never submit ...we will always remain the free people we are."[520]

Wilders proposes to fight Islam's attack on free speech by attacking Muslims' right to free expression: (paragraphs 6-34) "there are people ...who will say to me: "You are an advocate of free speech, and yet you want to ban the Koran and close down mosques and Islamic schools. Isn't that a contradiction?" I tell you: It is not."[521] "Islam is a totalitarian ideology aimed at establishing tyrannical power over non-Muslims."[522] "West has a concrete identity. Our identity is not Islamic but based on Judaism, Christianity and humanism. Our freedoms result from this identity. By depriving Islam of the means to destroy our identity, we are not violating freedom; we are preserving our identity and guaranteeing freedom."[523]

"The terrible situation we are in today is caused by our tolerance of evil." "...our Western leaders today are making the same mistake that the European leaders made in the 1930s. They are appeasing Islam and refuse to see it for what it really is: dangerous and evil."[524]

Wilders describes his programme for 'saving' Europe from Islamic rule: (paragraphs 35-56) "Let us stop bowing to Islam! No appeasement of Islam anymore!"[525] "A choice has to be made ...between Islam and freedom."[526] "...one million immigrants, mostly Islamic, are waiting in North Africa to cross into Europe. If we do not stop them, we will be facing a catastrophe;" "Worldwide, the growth rate of Islam is more than double that of Christianity.

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[519] Ibid.
[520] Ibid.
[521] Ibid.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Ibid.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid.

...Do not think that this will not affect the world in which future generations will be living;" "If Christianity or Buddhism were to become dominant in the world, there would hardly be a problem for freedom of speech. But when Islam becomes the major force, it is going to be hell for everyone;" "...churches and Christian schools will be closed down by Islam and women and homosexuals will be treated badly;" "We are at war and we should win it."[527]

Language Analysis

The theme of Wilders' speech is the importance of defending freedom of expression from Islam. Yet Wilders is clear that he does not defend universal freedom, but would curtail the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion on the grounds that the spread of Islam itself threatens freedom of expression. He further claims that Islam is ideologically opposed to freedom, that the freedoms of the West are the product of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and that therefore Muslim migrants to Europe undermine the Judeo-Christian basis of European culture and politics and threaten its freedoms. Because 'freedom' (used 31 times in the speech), is for Wilders a product of the Jewish, Christian, and Humanist tradition, it is frequently referred to as "ours" (seven times). Wilders thus implies that "Islam" (mentioned 20 times) is naturally opposed to freedom.

At the same time he draws a sharp line between Muslims and westerners, 'othering' Muslims in an attempt to convince his audience that they should be excluded from Western societies. "We" (used 62 times), according to Wilders, in the West love freedom, which is a part of our Jewish, Christian, and Humanist "identity" (used 5 times), but Islam threatens this identity and therefore the freedoms which stem from it. He gives his audience the impression he and the non-Muslim population of Europe find themselves at the mercy of a large and implacable foe, a notion belied by the fact that Muslims make up just 6% of the Dutch population.[528] Yet Wilders,' in somewhat hyperbolic language, describes Islam as an "evil" force which will by "2070" become larger than Christianity, and which will inevitably affect the freedoms enjoyed by Westerners. Islam is further described as a monolithic force, containing not only mosques and Islam schools, but extending to the local "halal shop," with each part playing a

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[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid.

role in forcing all Europe to submit to "Sharia" (used 8 times) law.[529] Thus Wilders declares that the West must "defend" its culture and freedoms, and "resist" Islam and its attempt to "enslave" Europe.[530]

Wilders' Christianist secularism is displayed throughout his address. His Christian identitarianism in this text is absent of religious content. Furthermore, his concept of Judeo-Christianity is not clearly defined, but is used to define the 'identity' of the West, and described as the origin of Western freedoms. It does not, therefore, refer to anything pertaining to Jewish or Christian theology, ethics, or spirituality. Equally, while portraying himself as a defender of "Judeo-Christian" values such as "freedom," he announces an illiberal plan to deny Muslims the right to express their faith and ideas.[531] In this way Wilders is able to define himself as a defender of liberalism, while simultaneously proscribing Muslims' right to freedom. He further casts himself as a defender of freedom by describing the oppression of women and homosexuals, Christians and Jews which will allegedly occur if Europe does not forbid Muslims from migrating to and Islamising Europe. He does this rhetorically by referring to himself and his audience as part of the Western 'ingroup', and by defining the West as a freedom loving civilisation based upon Judeo-Christian and Humanist values. "We" are Western, and therefore "freedom is our birthright," according to Wilders. Muslims are Wilders' 'outgroup.' "They" despise freedom and therefore do not belong in the West.

Islam is constructed throughout the text as a form of slavery, but also as a Nazi like force bent on invading Europe.[532] Proof of Islam's inimical attitude towards freedom is presented in the text in the example of the violence directed at organisers and participants in the First Annual Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest in Garland, Texas, on May 3, 2015. Wilders frames the attack on the event by two American Muslims in a simple manner befitting his hostility to Islam, and as an example of Islam's inherent intolerance of freedom of expression. The potential for a political motive behind the attack is ignored by Wilders, who ascribes the violence committed by just two American Muslims entirely to the religion of Islam, and by extension charges all Muslims with being enemies of freedom.

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[529]Ibid.
[530] Ibid.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Perhaps Wilders' is playing on the term 'Islam' meaning something like 'submission.' This concept of submitting to God is not merely Islamic, however. St. Paul describes himself as a slave or servant of Christ in Philippians 1:1.

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The Garland incident is further framed as a small taste of what is to come if European politicians allow Syrians, Iraqis, and other North African and Middle Eastern people to migrate to Europe in large numbers. The 'immigration crisis,' which Wilders describes as involving one million mostly Muslim people waiting in North Africa for an opportunity to migrate to Europe, is thus framed as a catastrophe for freedom loving peoples, who will be overwhelmed by "evil" Muslims who will destroy freedom of expression and enslave the continent under the banner of Islam.[533] In his quest to defend Judeo-Christian freedoms from Islam, Wilders compares himself to Winston Churchill defending Britain from Nazi Germany, and Abraham Lincoln fighting the rebellious, slave owning American South.[534]

Religion, in the form of Judeo-Christian and Humanist identity, is used to 'other' Muslims throughout the text. While Judeo-Christian and Humanist is a remarkably empty term, it is clear that it refers to the ingroup, or "us." Jews, Christians, women, homosexuals, and secular humanists, are "us." Muslims are constructed as the one group outside of this ingroup. In this way, Wilders' construction of Islam cannot be understood apart from his construction of Judeo-Christianity; both exist as mirror images of each other. The former contains everything Wilders considers negative (religiosity, conservative sexual mores, authoritarianism, totalitarianism) while the latter contains that which Wilders approves (freedom, European culture). The emptiness of 'Judeo-Christianity' is reflected in Wilders' remark that it would not matter if Buddhists ruled the world, because they – like Christians – love freedom.[535] Far from claiming freedom to be purely Western and Christian in origin, Wilders falsely claims freedom to be common across humanity and lacking only in Muslim dominated environments.

<div align="center">Ideological and Social Context</div>

The text must be understood in the context of the political and social events occurring during the period in which it was written, and in particular in relation to the growing immigration 'crisis' of 2015. The text can thus be read as a response to the growing number of mostly Muslim peoples arriving in Europe after fleeing violence in Syria, Iraq, and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa. Disquiet in the Netherlands and across Europe over the potential negative consequences of the unprecedented migration of Muslims to Europe grew

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[533] Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.
[534] Ibid.
[535] Ibid.

across 2015, with the popularity of populist radical right movements which opposed granting Muslims asylum in Europe growing as a result.[536] In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders was among the most strident voices demanding that no Muslim be granted asylum in the country.[537] His 2015 speech may thus be understood as providing justification for this stance, and using the Garland incident as an example of the consequences of allowing Muslims to immigrate to a Western country.

Wilders' opposition to European Union and Dutch government plans to allow Muslim refugees to find asylum in a variety of European nations, on the grounds that Islam threatens Judeo-Christian and Humanist freedoms, appears to have proven successful. The Party for Freedom performed poorly in senate and provincial elections held in March 2015, receiving a slightly smaller share of the vote than in the previous elections held in 2011.[538] The party's fortunes changed in August-September 2015.[539] Polling suggests that between September 2015 and February 2017 the Party for Freedom was either the most widely supported party in the Netherlands, or the second most supported party. The Party for Freedom's growth in popularity thus occurred during the high point of the immigration crisis, during which the party strongly opposed – unlike the mainstream Dutch political parties – allowing Muslim asylum seekers refuge in the Netherlands. It cannot be conclusively proven that Dutch voters supported the party in greater numbers due to their anti-immigration stance. However, given the explosion in popularity of right-wing populist parties across Europe which occurred during this time, and the explicitly anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric used by these parties, it is difficult to believe that the Party for Freedom's opposition to allowing Muslims

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[536] See Norris, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why," 2016; Jasper Muis and Tim Immerzeel, "Causes and consequences of the rise of populist radical right parties and movements in Europe," *Current Sociology,* 65(6), 2017. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392117717294.

[537] See Wilders' comments on the wisdom of adopting Australia's policies towards unlawful immigration in order to stop "Islamization" in Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders for US congressmen, Washington D.C.Conservative Opportunity Society, 29 April, 2015. https://www.pvv.nl/36-fj-related/geert-wilders/8324-speech-geert-wilders-for-us-congressmen-washington-dc-conservative-opportunity-society-29-april-2015.html.

[538]"Dutch political landscape never more divided, election results show," *Dutch News,* March 19, 2015. http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/03/dutch-political-landscape-never-more-divided-election-results-show/.

[539] The Peil poll graphic illuminates the sharp rise in the Party for Freedom's electoral fortunes in the second half of 2015, which – despite peaks and troughs – continued until the 2017 elections. See the graphical illustration of Peil polls archived at https://home.noties.nl/peil/politieke-voorkeur. A clearer image of the party's rise in the second half of 2017, using Peil and other polling services, can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_Dutch_general_election,_2017.

to find refuge in the Netherlands did not play a role in their increasing popularity during 2015.[540]

In understanding the success of the party's opposition to Muslim immigration, it is important to examine Wilders' use of the term 'freedom.' If Muslims are to be excluded on the grounds that their presence is likely to prove injurious to freedom, it is vital that we understand what is meant by this term. For Wilders, as for other populist radical right parties in Western Europe,' European "Judeo-Christian" freedoms cannot survive the mass immigration of Muslims to Europe. For Wilders, then, freedom is a very important concept. His choice to name his political group 'Party for Freedom' indicates how important the concept of is for him and his supporters.[541] He does not, in the text, offer a definitive description of 'freedom.' He claims that Western freedoms are the product of Judaism, Christianity, and Humanism, but it is difficult to find any religious content in his understanding of freedom. In the text, 'freedom' refers to the contemporary Western freedom to be homosexual, draw images of Muhammad, and moreover do other things that Islam forbids or is claimed to forbid. 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' freedoms might then be understood to refer to secular liberal freedoms, in particular the freedom to defy religious orthodoxy on a range of social issues. This 'freedom' may be related to Christianity and Judaism insofar as Wilders believes that the two religions separate religion from other spheres of human life in a way Islam cannot, and thus insofar as the two religions have been separated from the 'sacred' and secularised into parts of Western culture.

This close linking of (Judeo-)Christianity and "freedom" is common to several populist radical right parties in Western Europe, where a further blurring of the line between (Judeo-)Christianity and secular culture is a feature of their Christianist secularism.[542] Secular humanism, in Christianist secularism ideology, is not a break from Christianity, but part of a Judeo-Christian tradition, the continued existence of which guarantees the freedoms of those who live within its boundaries. Reflected in the text, then, is Christianist secularism, which weaponises the blurring of the boundary between secular culture and its freedoms and (Judeo-)Christianity, and uses it as a rhetorical tool to exclude Muslims from Western societies.

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[540] Norris, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why," 2016.
[541] The Austrian Freedom Party another example of an anti-liberal party claiming to support freedom.
[542] See Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

The Party for Freedom's use of religion in its discourse in 2017

In the lead up to the 2017 elections Geert Wilders wrote an article, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," encapsulating his ideology and his party's political agenda in that year.[543] The article was published initially in Dutch, but translated into English and published on Wilders' personal website. Like much of Wilders' discourse, it is aimed at both a domestic and international audience. Importantly, while the article serves as both an election year political manifesto designed to rally supporters and a piece of populist political commentary on the failings of the Rutte government, it may be read as a document promoting typically populist radical right ideas of nationalism, welfare chauvinism, opposition to Islam, and the protection of the West's Judeo-Christian freedoms and identity. This article is thus chosen for analysis because it provides an English language expression of Wilders' and the Party for Freedom's identitarianism, which does not deviate from the party's previous stated positions on the need to protect the Netherlands' Judeo-Christian and Humanist culture and identity from Muslims and elites, yet provides a succinct example of Wilders' and his party's marriage of Judeo-Christian identitarianism, nationalism, and welfare chauvinism.

Outline of "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation"[544]

Wilders praises the historical achievements of the Dutch people: (paragraphs 1-4) "Pim Fortuyn was right. Nothing is impossible for us. We are Dutch;" "We are the only people in the world living in a country which for the largest part we created ourselves;" "We founded New York and discovered Australia. Sometimes, it seems like we have forgotten it all."[545]

Wilders attacks Mark Rutte and his VVD government: (paragraphs 5-9) "This government has destroyed our country with its austerity policies and has allowed our country to be colonized by Islam. ...Let us liberate our country;" "A politician like me, who speaks the truth about a huge problem many Dutch are confronted with every day – yes, I am talking about the terror of Islam and the Moroccan problem – is dragged to court ...while imams can preach all the hatred they want and the political elites keep silent."[546]

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[543] Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[544] Ibid.
[545] Ibid.
[546] Ibid.

Wilders decries the influence of Islam in the Netherlands: (paragraphs 10-12) "Islam says it wants to kill us. The Koran leaves no doubt about that." "(Muslims) give us the middle finger. Islamic hooligans parade with IS flags through the streets in The Hague and occupy bridges with Turkish flags in Rotterdam. This is our country, but their flags are waving." "...this is our country, our Netherlands! And it cries for liberation."

Wilders' plan for liberating the Netherlands: (paragraphs 13-19) "I will protect our beautiful country. And this is only possible if we de-Islamize. I want to make it the core of my policy;" "Our values are not Islamic, but are based on the Judeo-Christian and humanist civilization." "Twelve years ago, Theo van Gogh was murdered. He gave his life for the freedom that lies at the heart of our Dutch identity. And that identity must defend itself. We must not allow those who want to destroy our freedom to abuse freedom in order to take ours away. We must stop being naive and defend ourselves. Because this is our country." "Even Zwarte Piet (Black Pete) is not allowed anymore. The elite wants to abolish the word "allochtoon" (foreigner), but it is the native people who are losing their country." "...this great nation ...is ours and will remain ours!"[547]

Wilders introduces a new nationalist economic plan: (paragraphs 20-22) "Dutch money for the Dutch people! Not a penny to Africa, Turkey, Greece or Brussels anymore;" "We will be able to give our elderly a decent old day. We will be able to lower the retirement age to 65 again and no pensions will have to be cut;" "It is intolerable that Dutch people are avoiding healthcare because they cannot afford it, while asylum seekers, who on average have 1,000 euros more healthcare costs a year, get everything for free."[548]

Wilders calls for "direct democracy:" (paragraph 23) "Our political system is ...ruled by the same arrogant political elites with their false promises and hypocritical apologies. If the mess created by Mark Rutte has taught us one thing, it is this: the people should be able to pull the emergency brake when the political elites violate their will."[549]

Wilders describes his ideal Netherlands: (paragraphs 24-26) "A strong and sovereign country where hard work is rewarded and the weak are protected, where terrorists cannot just cross the border at Hazeldonk [main border crossing with Belgium], where women can walk the streets in skirts without being harassed or sexually assaulted, where care is affordable and

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[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid.
[549] Ibid.

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pensions are decent, where all citizens – including Jews, homosexuals, women, and critics of Islam – are safe. Where patriotism is not an insult but a badge of honor. Where Islam is shown the door." "It is time for liberation! Let us reclaim our country together." [550]

Language Analysis

"Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation" is a nationalistic and nativist text in which Wilders portrays himself as the potential saviour of the "destroyed" Netherlands. In accordance with his nationalism and nativism, Wilders' use of language in his article is designed to create a dichotomy between 'the people' of the Netherlands and the "elites" and "Muslims" he claims are destroying the country. He addresses his readers as "we" on 37 occasions, and uses the term "our" on a further 54, including when describing "our country" (6 times), "our identity" (3 times), "our flag" (3 times) "our culture" (3 times), and "our freedom" (2 times). In the text "we" refers to the Dutch people, and therefore Wilders' use of "we" and "our" in this manner reinforces his connection to and his representation of 'the people.' The Dutch people, according to Wilders, are not Muslim or Moroccan. Rather, they are "based on Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilization."[551]

This sentence illuminates Wilders' crude nativism, or his method of distinguishing the ingroup ('the people') from the outgroup. While deeply nationalist and a nativist, Wilders' nativism is partly based upon a Huntingtonian civilisationalist conception of the world in which Islam and the Judeo-Christian and Humanist West are in a state of conflict. Muslims are therefore constructed in this article as the ultimate 'other.' Most often, Muslims are contrasted with "we" and said to belong to a culture incompatible with that of "our" country. As in previous occasions, Wilders claims that this incompatibility stems from Muslims and Dutch having a vastly different religious heritage, which has led the two groups to hold widely differing values and senses of group identity.[552] According to Wilders, Muslims cannot belong to "our" culture, civilisation, and share in "our identity" because they belong to a foreign (Islamic) system of values and a different identity.'[553] As a result of this different identity and different set of religion derived values, Muslims refuse to fly "our flag" and oppose "our freedom(s)."

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[550] Ibid.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Ibid.

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Moreover, the Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition is again linked closely with "freedom" (used 8 times). Islam, on the other hand, is linked in the text to Nazism and the occupation of the Netherlands by Germany forces during the Second World War. Wilders ties his struggle against both Islam and 'elites' to the fight against Nazi Germany. He speaks of the Netherlands as if Muslims had occupied it the way the Nazis had in the early 1940s. Therefore he writes of the country requiring "liberation" (liberate/liberation is used 7 times) from Islam, just as it required liberation from Nazism. Islam is referred to extensively throughout the text, always in a negative manner, (Islam\Islamic 10 times) with an explicit call for the country to "De-Islamise" occurring on one occasion.[554]

Wilders contrasts the dismal state of the "occupied" and "hijacked" Netherlands under Mark Rutte, who is described as "arrogant," "elite," and compared to a "laughing donkey," with his own ideal Netherlands. In this version of the country – in which Wilders is Prime Minister – the people are again proud of their nation. Moreover, in this fantasy, Wilders constructs himself as a protector of Jewish people, and gay and women's rights, from conservative Islam.[555] In this imaginary Netherlands, Islam has been "shown the door," resulting in a freer and happier society. Muslims here become the threatener of the Netherlands' core value of freedom, and of its national and civilisational Judeo-Christian and humanist identity.[556]

Wilders' Christianist secularism emerges several times in the text. Most significant is his stock characterisation of the Netherlands as part of Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilisation. While invoking two religions, his use of this term is a part of the Party for Freedom's secularist posture: it contains no religious (theological, ethical) content drawn from Christianity or Judaism. In the text Wilders' use of the term has two functions: it defines Dutch culture in opposition Islam, and on this basis demands the exclusion of Muslims from living within Dutch society.

Other aspects of Christianist secularism are displayed in the text. Wilders' ostensible liberalism is demonstrated in his demand that Dutch freedoms be protected from totalitarian Islam, and in his declaration that if he were Prime Minister gay people, women, Jews, and critics of Islam would be safe from Islamic violence. Equally, this ostensible liberalism is shown to be false throughout the text, insofar as Muslims are to be – in Wilders' ideal

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[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid.

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Netherlands – prevented from expressing their religious belief in public if not removed from the country altogether.

Islam is constructed in the text as one of the two primary antagonists (alongside the 'elites' who allowed Muslims to enter and 'Islamize' the Netherlands) against which Wilders struggles in the name of 'the people.' While one ethnic group is singled out, the "Moroccan problem" is mentioned only briefly, and in conjunction with the larger Muslim problem Wilders perceives to be affecting the Netherlands. [557] Muslims are described in the text as trying to take away the freedoms the Dutch enjoy, casting Muslims as anti-freedom, and casting Judeo-Christian and Humanist based Dutch culture as pro-freedom. The concept of a Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilisation, which Wilders invokes in the text, is thus used to differentiate the ingroup ('the people') from outgroups (Muslims) throughout the text. Wilders does not define exactly what 'Judeo-Chrisitian and Humanist' means, or who may be included in the category, other than to declare Muslims to be outside its boundaries. Judeo-Christian and Humanist culture is described primarily as being pro-freedom, and is for this reason antithetical to "totalitarian" Islam.[558] No actual religious content appears to exist in Wilders' claim that his society is based upon Judeo-Christian values. Religious belief has thus nothing to do with being Judeo-Christian and Humanist, except insofar as practicing Muslims cannot fall within this category. This suggests that the term's primary purpose is to define Dutch and Western culture in such a way so as to exclude Muslims from being included within its boundaries.

<center>Ideological and social context</center>

The text was written during the 2017 Dutch parliamentary election campaign, and in response to the centre-right VVD government's response to the 2015 immigration crisis. In particular, the text responds to the VVD's decision to allow Muslim refugees – albeit only 2,000 – find asylum in the Netherlands. Wilders' use of religion in the text is therefore best understood within this context. The decision to allow the majority Muslims refugees to settle within the Netherlands was initially popular with the Dutch public. As the number of asylum seekers grew, however, the public mood changed. More Dutch began to sympathise with the anti-immigration position taken by the Party for Freedom. The rising popularity of the Party for

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[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid. "Totalitarian" is a favourite claim of Wilders about Islam, see his use in Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders for US congressmen, Washington D.C.Conservative Opportunity Society, 29 April, 2015.

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Freedom is reflected across Western Europe, where a number of other populist radical right parties grew in popularity due in part to their anti-immigration policies. In the text Wilders attempts to capitalise on the change in public mood by demonising Muslims, claiming in particular that Islam is a Nazi like totalitarian ideology bent on Islamising the Netherlands and destroying its freedoms. These freedoms are framed as Judeo-Christian in origin, a framing common to Dutch populist parties and politicians.[559] In the text Wilders makes little distinction between Judeo-Christianity and Humanism, describing the three as compatible or essentially the same thing. However, Wilders is not trying to make a sophisticated philosophical connection between the two religions and the secular politics and culture of the contemporary Netherlands. Rather, the concept of 'Judeo-Christianity and Humanism' is a relatively empty term which offers, for Wilders, an identity which can be used as a tool with which 'the people' may be differentiated from 'others,' and which may help the Dutch overcome the loss confidence in the supremacy of their culture.[560] For example, in the party's one page manifesto for 2017, a plan to "de-Islamize" the Netherlands is announced, but any plan for protecting Christianity and Judaism is absent, indicating the party's overall lack of interest in religion and deep secularism.[561]

Judeo-Christianity can be used as a tool in this manner because Muslim immigration to the Netherlands, and moreover the greater visibility of Islam in Europe, has already shown to Europeans the significance of Christianity as a culture force within secular Dutch and wider Western culture. Once it became possible for secular Dutch to identify as cultural Christians, then it was possible for Wilders to wield Judeo-Christian and Humanist identity as a weapon against the Netherlands' Muslim minority. Thus even though 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' is a relatively empty term built upon an inversion of European perceptions of Islam as the mirror image of Christianity and anti-Enlightenment, the term has power in the Netherlands due to recognition of the secularisation of Christianity into culture.

Discussion

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[559] Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[560] See "Spiegel Interview with Wilders: 'Merkel is Afraid,' *Spiegel Online,* November 9, 2010. http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/spiegel-interview-with-geert-wilders-merkel-is-afraid-a-727978.html.
[561] Geert Wilders, "Preliminary Election Program PVV 2017-2021,", 2016.

Critical Discourse Analysis reveals three aspects of Wilders' rhetoric in 2012-2017. First, Wilders uses Christianist secular rhetoric throughout the three texts. Christian identitarianism is a common feature of the texts, with Wilders identifying Western civilisation, Dutch culture, and the values and heritage of 'the people' as Judeo-Christian and Humanist, and insisting that Judeo-Christianity alone defines the culture and values of the Netherlands. At the same time Wilders is strongly secularist, and apart from a brief positive mention of "faith" in 2012, says nothing positive about religious belief and practice whatsoever.[562] Rather, he seeks to defend the practice of separating Church and state from Islam, which he claims will – if allowed – dissolve any difference between religion and politics and initiate Islamic rule in the Netherlands.

Wilders' Christianist secularism is also displayed in his ostensible liberalism. He portrays himself in the texts as a defender of gay and women's rights, the right to freedom of expression, and in particular the right to speak publicly against Islam – all rights he claims are threatened by the 'Islamisation' of the Netherlands. Yet his liberalism is hollow insofar as his party wishes to use deeply illiberal and authoritarian tactics to suppress Islam, including the banning of the Qur'an and the construction of Mosques, and the creation of a Judeo-Christian and Humanist *leitkultur* in the Netherlands.[563]

Wilders' philo-Semitism – which is in his case personal, yet also a hallmark of the Christianist secular ideology of a number of parties belonging to the populist radical right – is in evidence throughout the examined texts. Judaism is described as a founding element of Western civilisation.[564] Wilders' philo-semitism may be understood as an attempt to win Jewish votes, though given the small number of Jews in the Netherlands and their left-leaning politics, this attempt is unlikely to prove successful. It is perhaps more likely, then, that the purpose of Wilders' philo-Semitism is to demonstrate the superiority of Western civilisation over Islam. Wilders and his party supports the state of Israel, and uses the economic success and democratic nature of the country to demonstrate the superiority of Israeli culture and values over Islam. By bringing the Jewish people inside Western civilisation, through the creating of a Judeo-Christian heritage, Wilders is thus able to 'prove' his point that Judeo-Christian Western values lead to freedom and prosperity while Islam leads to totalitarianism

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[562]Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver," 2012.

[563] Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* 114, 2014.

[564] Wilders' trip to Israel perhaps shaped his philosemitism, see Cnaan Liphshiz, "Is the Honeymoon over for Geert Wilders and Dutch Jews?" *Times of Israel,* May 2, 2014. http://www.timesofisrael.com/is-the-honeymoon-over-for-geert-wilders-and-dutch-jews/; [564]. Wetheim, "Geert Wilders and the Nationalist-Populist turn Towards the Jews in Europe 281, 2017.

and violence. Equally, support for Jewish people and Israel is used by Wilders to indicate that the Party for Freedom is a liberal party opposed to the anti-Semitism of the radical right. In doing this he is able to defend himself and his party from charges that they are a racist and extreme organisation.

Second, Wilders uses the concept of a Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition to divide between 'the people' who belong to the Netherlands and those who do not belong. The terms "we" and "our" are among the most common words Wilders uses, sometimes adjoined to "civilisation," "heritage," and "country." He does not refer, however, to 'our religion,' but most often speaks of Judaism and Christianity as if they were ideologies which have contributed to the creation of Western culture, rather than religious traditions. This religion-based civilisational identity is employed by Wilders in the service of Dutch nationalism. Thus Wilders' nationalism is of a special kind; he speaks often of civilisational concerns, and promotes himself as an international figure of significance, yet his civilisationalism never overshadows his belief in the supremacy of the nation-state as the highest form of human organisation. Perhaps the best way of understanding this seeming contradiction is that Wilders' brand of nationalism is based upon a civilisational concept of Dutch identity, and that he invokes religion based civilisational identity so as to make a clear distinction between the Judeo-Christian 'people' who belong in the Netherlands, and the Muslims who do not belong.

The purpose of this civilisationalist language is to construct a group – consisting of Wilders, the party and its supporters, and people he believes share in his conception of Dutch identity – to whom the Netherlands belongs to who alone belong to the Netherlands. In creating this group, Wilders automatically excludes groups and individuals who do not fit the criteria he has set for membership of 'the people.' Throughout the texts Wilders excludes Muslims and 'elites' from this "we," and constructs them as illegitimate foreign elements within the Netherlands, which first threatened and then ultimately "destroyed" the country. He defines Dutch and Western identity as "Judeo-Christian and Humanist." Islam is thus, by being left out of this formulation, identified by Wilders as outside of this tradition, but also antithetical to Judeo-Christianity and Humanism. Therefore he demands the exclusion of Muslims from Dutch society. Equally, Wilders demands the Netherlands be saved from "elites," who have "destroyed" the country by handing it to Muslims.[565] His quarrel with elites is also expressed

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[565] Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.

in terms relating to religious identity. 'Elites' have, according to Wilders, abandoned the Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition and embraced cultural relativism.[566] This abandonment of or loss of confidence in the Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition has, according to Wilders, had serious consequences for the Netherlands. He claims the replacement of Judeo-Christianity and Humanism with cultural relativism has created a space for Islam to flourish, and ultimately "Islamicize" the Netherlands.[567] Therefore it is not only Muslims who are rejected from Wilders' conception of the Dutch people, but 'elites' who reject the religion derived identity and values which he claims define the Dutch nation.

Wilders' differentiation of peoples based on religious identification and history is not unique to him or the Party for Freedom, but part of a wider discourse on religion in the Netherlands. This discourse is common among both the populist radical right within the Netherlands, and among right-wing populists and some conservatives in wider Western Europe. Frits Bolkestein and Pim Fotruyn, and later Thierry Baudet, have decried the alleged danger Islam poses to the Netherlands' Judeo-Christian culture and identity.[568] Moreover, the wider populist radical right movement in Western Europe can also be situated within this discourse, as indeed can some conservative centre-right European politicians. In France, right-wing populist National Front leader Marine Le Pen emphasises the dual (Judeo-)Christian and secular nature of French culture, and alleges that Islam is incompatible with this culture.[569] The Alternative for Germany Party uses similar rhetoric arguing for the exclusion of Islam from Christian based, yet secular, German society.[570] This discourse is thus not limited to the Netherlands, but is evident throughout Western Europe. Moreover, an appeal to Christian or Judeo-Christian identity, and the demand that Muslim immigration cease because Islam is

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[566] Ibid.

[567] Ibid. Attacking cultural relativism occurs elsewhere in Wilders' discourse. See for example Calla Wahlquist, "Geert Wilders tells Australia to abandon multiculturalism or end up like the EU," *The Guardian,* 21 October, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/oct/21/geert-wilders-tells-australia-to-abandon-multiculturalism-or-end-up-like-the-eu.

[568] See Hemel, "(Pro)Claiming Tradition: The 'Judeo-Christian' Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism," 53-54; Elizabeth Kolbert, "Beyond Tolerance," *The New Yorker,* September 9, 2002; Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?"2018.

[569] See for example Le Pen's comments about the Judeo-Christian heritage of France in Marine Le Pen, quoted by Alduy in "Has Marine Le Pen Already Won the Battle for the Soul of France?" 2014; see also Le Pen's comments on the Christian heritage of French secularism in Marine Le Pen, Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, 2017.

[570] According to AfD politician Hans-Thomas Tillschneider "Islam is foreign to us and for that reason it cannot invoke the principle of religious freedom to the same degree as Christianity," a remark met by "loud applause." The party also declared in a manifesto that Islam is not part of Germany. See "Far-right AfD says Islam not welcome in Germany," *Al Jazeera,* May 2, 2016. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/afd-islam-germany-160501155848003.html.

incompatible with (Judeo-)Christian identity and culture, is an essential element of populist radical right politics.

Third, the texts construct Islam as a monolithic civilisation opposed and antithetical to Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilisation. In the three texts Wilders uses religion and religious identity in a primarily instrumental manner, i.e. in order to exclude Muslims and 'elites' from Dutch society, but his language also reflects a belief that national identity, and the identity of 'the people,' can be described in religio-civilisational terms. Islam is constructed throughout the texts as a civilisation based upon a "totalitarian ideology". The texts do not describe Islam as a 'religion.' This may be because Wilders, as a secularist, conceives of religion as a wholly private affair which must be excluded from the public sphere. The perception that Islam does not remove itself from the public sphere, but contains its own system of political organisation, may encourage Wilders to label it a particular threat to secularism and thus to homosexuals, women, and non-Muslims.

Wilders' anti-Muslim rhetoric grows in intensity over the 2012-2015 period. Where in 2012 Wilders was merely warning against encroaching Islamisation, by 2015 his rhetoric was apocalyptic, decrying the potential of Muslim refugees from Syria and other parts of the Middle East and North Africa to spread "evil" Islam and destroy Western freedoms.[571] By 2017 Wilders was claiming to live in a Netherlands "destroyed" by the 'elite' VVD government, which allowed Muslims immigrate and reduce Dutch freedoms.[572] The escalating demonisation of Islam – which takes the form of the use of rhetoric which attributes to Islam and Muslims all negative qualities, while attributing to Western "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" civilisation all positive qualities – can itself be attributed to growing fears about immigration and Islam occurring during the immigration 'crisis' of 2015. Wilders' rhetoric during this period can thus be understood as an attempt to capitalise on the growing fear of Muslims and Islam during 2015 by using extreme and apocalyptic language, casting Muslim immigrants as a invading force and Islam as a totalitarian doctrine hostile to the freedoms inherent in Judeo-Christian and Humanist societies. Positioning himself as a potential savour, he claims to be the only person capable of rescuing the Netherlands from the subjugation and slavery Islam inevitably brings. Thus Wilders constructs Islam as the negative imame of Judeo-Christian and Humanist Western free societies. "We" in the Judeo-Christian and Humanist Netherlands are free, peaceful, and prosperous. "They" are Muslims;

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[571] Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.
[572] Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.

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unfree, violent, prone to terrorism, totalitarian, "evil" and bent on invading and enslaving the West.

The table below shows Wilders' shifting language throughout the 2012-2017 period.

	2012 Election Campaign	2015 immigration 'crisis'	2017 Election Campaign
Key Words	"Judeo-Christian" "freedom" "we" "our"	"Freedom" "Islam" "we" "identity" "sharia" "Christian/Christianity"	"our country" "liberate/liberation" "Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilisation" "freedom" "Islam/Islamic"
Core Message	Islam threatens the Judeo-Christian West. Western freedoms are a product of the West's religious heritage and must be protected from totalitarian Islam.	Muslim immigration threatens freedom of speech and the West's Judeo-Christian identity. The world's growing Muslim population threatens freedom of expression, secularism, and Christianity.	The Netherlands has been destroyed by Muslims and elites. Wilders will liberate the country through a process of de-Islamisation and restore freedom and Judeo-Christian and Humanist values and identity.

Throughout the examined texts, then, Wilders uses almost no language that could be described as 'religious.' His concept of the West as Judeo-Christian and Humanist civilisation is not remotely theological or religious in nature, but a concept created as Islam's mirror image and in order to exclude Muslims from Dutch society. Part of the instrumentalisation of religion in the texts involves Wilders' attack 'elites' who encourage multiculturalism and what Wilders calls 'cultural relativism' in the Netherlands. By defining Dutch culture as Jude-Christian and Humanist, and describing this tradition as the reason for the Netherlands' prosperity and success, Wilders is able to portray the 'elites' who have

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encouraged Muslim immigration and multiculturalism as threatening the heritage, future, and people of the Netherlands.

Despite his invoking of Christianity and Judaism, Wilders does not appear to see anything positive in the moral teachings of the two religions, or to use the religions as tools with which to sacralise the Dutch state and make it an object of worship. Rather, for Wilders, 'the people' and the Dutch nation are already sacred and worthy of protection, not Christianity or Judaism. If churches are worthy of preserving in the face of Islamisation, it is not because they are religious centres, but because they are symbols of Dutch and Western culture. In this way, Wilders makes Churches sacred through their association with secular Dutch culture. Paradoxically, if Christianity and Judaism are sacred to Wilders, it is only because they have been secularised into the Dutch culture he holds to be sacred.

Wilders' ability to weaponise religious heritage and concept of Judeo-Christianity and Humanism thus stems from the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture,' a process which took place after secularisation, and after the entrance of Muslims into secularised, depillarised Dutch society. As the pillar system broke down in the 1960s and 1970s, religion became increasingly divorced from Dutch people's sense of personal, group, and national identity. However, when Muslim 'guest-workers' neither left the Netherlands after their initial period of employment ended, nor secularised and assimilated into Dutch society, their presence began to be perceived by politicians such as Fits Bolkestein, Pim Fortuyn, and Geert Wilders, as a threat to secular society and Dutch identity. By maintaining their Muslim identity and traditions, Muslim immigrants demonstrated the inability of secularism to convince Muslims to privatise their faith, cease practicing their religion openly and identifying themselves according to their religion. Thus entry of Muslims into the Netherlands, and their subsequent marginalisation due to their religious beliefs and practices, demonstrated that Dutch secularism was not religiously neutral but privileged Christianity. While it pretended to be neutral, the Dutch secularism allowed, for example, Christian holidays to be nationally celebrated with public holidays, a privilege Islam was never allowed. Indeed, in Dutch secularism, Christian holidays become secularised into 'cultural events' synonymous with the Netherlands. Islamic holidays are, on the other hand, always seen as 'religious' in nature and thus a threat to secular differentiation of religion and politics.

Thus while secular culture appeared neutral when there was no religious difference, the entry of Muslims demonstrated the Christian or post-Christian nature of Dutch secularism. As

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Christianity became secularised into culture, in the face of Muslim difference Dutch secular became partly Christianised, until the two seemed almost inseparable. The Party for Freedom perceives this religionising of Dutch identity occurring, and bases its political platform upon the identification of Dutch culture with (Judeo-)Christianity, and upon the notion that Islam is incompatible with Dutch culture. Therefore, the religious differentiation practiced by the Party for Freedom is a reflection of the religionising of Dutch identity, and the popularity of the party is a product of public acceptance of religion as a source and element of identity, culture, and heritage.

There is, then, a causal relationship between Wilders' conception of the Netherlands as a Judeo-Christian and Humanist culture, and the growing presence of Islam. The presence of Islam, and in particular his perception of Muslims as a group uniquely resistant to secularisation, have undoubtedly played the largest roles in convincing Wilders that his own society and its secular culture is the product of a Judeo-Christian heritage. Thus in his rhetoric Islam is described as a uniquely dangerous force antithetical to Judeo-Christianity and its core value of 'freedom.'

The presence of Muslims, their retention of Islamic dress, symbols, beliefs and practices, and some Muslims violent reaction to the denigration of their religion and its founder, appear to have convinced Wilders that Islam is incompatible with secularism. Moreover, the presence of Muslims and their obvious differences have demonstrated the non-universality of Dutch culture and its values. Instead, when contrasted with Islam, Dutch culture appears to be closely connected with Christianity. The Enlightenment and secular humanism appear, when compared with Islam, to be not merely a break with Christianity, but also a continuation of Christianity.

Moreover, by defining Dutch society and Western Civilisation as Judeo-Christian and Humanist Wilders denies both the universality of secularism, but also the inevitability of secularism's triumph over religion. Moreover, Wilders' rhetoric suggests he believes that secularism – as a form of national identity – is not equipped to alone withstand Islamisation, but requires Christianity and Judaism to be incorporated into a religio-secular Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition in order to provide secularism with the strong identity and confidence in its basic principles it requires to be able to reject Islamisation.

Wilders thus demonstrates a loss of faith in the ultimate triumph of secularism over religion. Where in 2012 he was merely warning against the threat of an Islamic takeover, by 2017 he was claiming that the Netherlands had been Islamised and effectively ruined.[573] And where in the mid-2000s Wilders had supported American neoconservative efforts to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan, by 2017 not only did Wilders no longer believe this was a possibility, but claimed Muslims had drastically reduced Dutch freedoms.[574] To combat this loss of freedom and culture, Wilders claims the Dutch must return to their Judeo-Christian and Humanist heritage and values.[575] What is most interesting about this new use of the West's religious heritage is that it involves the use of religion to buttress 'weak' secularism against its perceived enemies, and therefore a blurring of the lines between the secular and the religious. There is, then, in Wilders rhetoric a growing recognition that secularism is, (a) unique to the West, but has, (b) failed to triumph over Islam. This loss of faith in the march of secularism throughout the world, and a newfound sense that secularism may be weak inside Europe, is at the root of Wilders linking secular culture to the Netherlands' religious heritage, and his efforts to strengthen Dutch and Western identity in the face of threats stemming from the "totalitarian ideology" of Islam.[576]

Why, then, does the Party for Freedom use religion in their discourse to differentiate 'the people' from 'others,' or the ingroup from outgroups, in the 2012-2017 period? The research conducted as part of this chapter indicates that the party uses religion in this manner because it has embraced Christianist secularism, or a secularism which grafts a Christian identity onto a secularist worldview. The party has adopted Christianist secularism as a way of meeting the perceived challenge posed by Islam and Muslim immigrants to the secular Dutch state.

The Party for Freedom's use of religion in their discourse is a product of many forces: racism, xenophobia, fear of Islam, low fertility rates and the subsequent necessity of a large-scale immigration program to support economic growth, and longing for an imagined past in which the country was culturally uniform and united. Most of all it is the product of cultural

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[573] Compare Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver," 2012, against the more extreme rhetoric about Islamisation expressed here: Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[574] See Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[575] See Pope Benedict XVI, "Europe and its discontents," *First Things,* January 2006. https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/01/europe-and-its-discontents; John Milbank and Adrian Pabst,The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future, London: Rowman & Littlefield,2016, 2; Adrian Pabst, "A Christian Commonwealth of Nations is Europe's best future," *ABC Religion and Ethics,* January 31, 2013. http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2013/01/31/3679912.htm; Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, Ciaran Cronin and Max Pensky (editors and translators), Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2006, 150-151.
[576] Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver," 2012.

uncertainty. Having discovered that Muslims are often not interested in assimilating into the irreligious, secular culture of the Netherlands, the Party for Freedom has lost confidence in the universality of Western secularism. Thus having lost their triumphalist secularism and belief in the universality of Western culture, the Party for Freedom perceive the Netherlands to be open only to people who share their 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' heritage.

Wilders' rhetoric on religion and religious identity has helped produce electoral success for the party, because it is designed to capitalise on the changes in Dutch self-perception which occurred after de-pillarisation and large scale Muslim immigration to the Netherlands, and on Dutch fears of cultural and ethnic decline. Wilders use of religion as a tool of differentiation, and beyond him Fortuyn's and Baudet's use of similar rhetoric, reveals how Muslim immigration has made some Dutch perceive their secular worldview and culture to be a product of their nation's (Judeo-)Christian heritage, rather than a break from Christianity. Equally it reveals that when challenged by Islam, secular populist radical right parties will draw on their nation's Christian heritage in order to exclude Muslims and defend their culture from perceived Islamisation. This is done partly – perhaps mostly – for instrumental reasons, yet Wilders' use of religion in his rhetoric suggests that he perceives 'culturally relativist' secular culture to be too weak to stand on its own against Islam. He therefore invokes the idea of "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" civilisation, which is supposedly "superior" to all others yet under tremendous threat from cultural relativism and Islam, in order to defend secular Dutch culture from Muslim immigrants.[577] In doing so, he uses Judaism and Christianity to buttress secularism against supposedly anti-secular Islam. The end result is Christianist secularism: a strange mélange of religious identity grafted onto a secular nationalist worldview, ostensible liberalism, philo-Semitism, and deep hostility towards Islam. While one of the central purposes of Christianist secularism is to protect secular society from Islam, it also re-introduces religion to the public sphere, if only in the form of identity, and combines religion, culture, and concepts of nation and people together in a dangerous manner. Thus while Christianist secularism is a response to the perception that Muslim immigrants allow religion to escape its boundary in the spiritual realm and invade the public sphere, Christianist secularism is also a sign of a concerning religionising of national identity in the Netherlands.

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[577] See Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century 241, 2016.

Chapter Six: The National Front and Religion

I have argued throughout this thesis that the discourse of populist radical right parties in Western Europe can be understood in relation to the concept of Christianist secularism.[578] I have further argued that the increasing visibility of religion – particularly Islam – in Europe has encouraged populist radical right parties to use religion as a tool with which to differentiate between 'the people' and 'others.' Therefore I argued that following the mass immigration of Muslims to Western Europe, some Europeans have come to believe that (1) their own secularism is unique to their societies and a product of their particular religious heritage, and (2) Islam represents a wholly different religious and political tradition which by its own nature cannot secularise and is therefore incompatible with Western culture and values.

Over the next two chapters I will test my hypothesis by examining the use of religion in the discourse of the French National Front. In this chapter I begin my analysis by examining the National Front's historical use of religion. I show how the party's use of religion and sense of France's religious identity has changed over time, and been received differently by the French public throughout the past four decades. I describe how as France became more secular, and as the party's supporters became more secular, the National Front retained its strong religious identity and use of Catholic symbolism. I also show how under Marine Le Pen's leadership the party began to position itself as both a defender of *laïcité* and secular republican values, but also of Christianity and France's Catholic heritage.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first describes the religious and political context in which the National Front came into being, and contends that the National Front began as part of a long tradition in right-wing French politics which explicitly links French culture to Catholicism and opposes *laícité*. The second section examines the National Front under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen (1972-2011.) It contends that under Jean-Marie Le Pen the National Front remained a radical right, anti-Semitic, Catholic identity political party, though one which over time became focused on the threat of Islam to the "Judeo-Christian" French state.

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[578] Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016; Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

The third section examines the Marine Le Pen led National Front (2011--), and demonstrates how the party's rhetoric on religion shifted during this period, as Marine Le Pen moved the party away from the anti-Semitic radical right and towards the populist radical right. The section contends that under Marine Le Pen the party moved away from its traditional Catholic identity politics, and reconceptualised *laïcité* as an integral part of France's Judeo-Christian heritage. The final section attempts to explain Marine Le Pen's use of religion in her discourse, and argues that it should be understood in the context of a broader re-conceptualising of French identity and religion after large scale Muslim immigration to France, and as an expression of the Christianist secularism prevalent among a number of populist radical right parties in Western Europe.

The National Front's relationship with Religion in historical context

The National Front is a populist radical right political movement founded in 1972, and which has its origins in a number of earlier conservative and fascist movements which opposed Gaullism and Communism, and displayed sympathy towards the *Ancien Régime* and the Catholic Church.[579] Since its inception the party has emphasised the importance of maintaining French identity, and for this reason has consistently opposed immigration, especially immigration from majority Muslim countries.[580]

The National Front, however, is not a strictly Catholic party. It has even been described as "anti-Christian" by a prominent French Catholic bishop.[581] Yet the party has a long and complex relationship with Christianity. Its relations with the Catholic Church, in particular, have been particularly curious. While the Church has on occasion condemned the party's xenophobia, the party has continued to use specifically Catholic symbols – Joan of Arc, Clovis – as emblems for both the National Front and for the French nation.[582]

Contemporary France is renowned for being a secular state. The nation's official secular ideology is known as *laïcité,* a word which may be translated simply as secularism, but which I will refer to in its French form when talking about the French conception of secularism. It is

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[579] See Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France: Continuity and Change under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen,* Spring: Cham, Switzerland, 2017, 7-12.
[580] See Peter Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse, and Power*, Routledge: London and New York, 1999, 19-22
[581] Peter Davies, "The National Front and Catholicism: From *Integrisme* to Joan of Arc and Clovis," Religion Compass 4(9), 2010, 576–587, 576. 10.1111/j.1749-8171.2010.00237.x
[582] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité,*" 89, 2016.

possible to elucidate *laïcité* or laicism by comparing it to what Elizabeth Shakman Hurd has termed "Judeo-Christian secularism."[583] Laicism, according to Hurd, conceives of religion as an "adversary" and an "impediment to modern politics".[584] Judeo-Christian secularism, which is the form of secularism practiced in the United States, allows religion to be practiced in the public sphere, though with certain restrictions, and often encourages religious organisations to take an active role in public life.[585]

French laicism – *laïcité* – seeks to exclude religion from public life and attempts to create a religiously neutral state. From a purely legal point of view, contemporary French secularism is best defined by France's 1905 law on the separation of Churches and State.[586] This law, which remains the basis of French notions of religion's place in public life, enshrines "Freedom of conscience" on religious matters and forbids the state from funding religious activity – with certain exceptions.[587]

France did not always, of course, have a secular constitution. The strict division between religion and politics, and church and state, is a product of the anti-clerical nature of the 1789 French Revolution. In their haste to create a new society based upon the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, French revolutionaries "unleashed violent bouts of anticlericalism and dechristianization and a terror that led to the death of 2-3,000 clergy and the exile of over 30,000 more".[588] In their Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which guaranteed religious freedom and removed the privileges enjoyed by the Catholic Church, the revolutionaries were able to begin the secularisation process which ultimately culminated in the 1905 law establishing *laïcité* as a fundamental principle.[589]

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[583] Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations,* 31, 2008. Hurd makes an important point in her book about the influence of religion in the Western world when she remarks that "authoritative forms of secularism that dominate modern politics are themselves contingent social constructions influenced by both so-called secular and religious assumptions about ethics, metaphysics, and politics" See Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Politics,14,* 2008.

[584] Ibid, 31. See also Ibid, 36-37.

[585] Ibid.

[586] Legifrance, **"Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat,"** (version as of August 2, 2016). https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070169&dateTexte=20160802

[587] Ibid.

[588] David Blackbourn, "The Catholic Church in Europe since the French revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33(4): 778-790, 1991, 789.

[589] See Legifrance, "Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen de 1789". https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/Droit-francais/Constitution/Declaration-des-Droits-de-l-Homme-et-du-Citoyen-de-1789

Yet Catholicism did not disappear, and France remains, at least according to the CIA World Factbook, "63-66%" Catholic.[590] Nor has the public presence of Christianity vanished, despite the promise of secularism to create a religiously neutral public sphere. The French government continues to contribute to the upkeep and even reconstruction of Churches built before 1905, and to co-fund Christian and some Jewish – but not Muslim – schools to this day.[591] Thus while the 1905 law promised equality of religions in France, practically the country has continued to privilege Christianity (often equating it with integral elements of French 'culture'), and in particular Catholic Christianity.[592]

After the terror and repression of the Revolution, a number of French Catholics began to organise politically around the restoration of the Monarchy and a return of Catholic identity and values.[593] Others, as Oscar Arnal writes, saw their only hope for survival, in attempts to Christianise the revolution and to "identify with positive forces for change within modern society."[594] Political parties which sought to return France to its 'true' Catholic and Monarchical self attained a degree of significance in the late 19th century, where they enjoyed a degree of support, and sometimes disapproval, from the Catholic Church.[595]

The most important of these groups was the integrist *Action Française*. Created in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair and dominated by Catholic nationalists, the party was consistent in its opposition to secular republicanism. It is interesting to note that Charles Maurras, a classicist who dominated the party intellectually throughout most of its history, believed that nation was more important than religion; his devotion to returning France to its Catholic roots was not precipitated by religious beliefs. Rather, Maurras thought that France was essentially a culturally Catholic nation, and that the country ought not to deny this important aspect of its 'authentic' self.[596] Later, in the mid-20th century, Nazi controlled Vichy France embodied many of the values of France's radical right, combining conservative Catholic social views, Christian identity and authoritarian governance. This should not be surprising, especially given that *Action Francaise* leader Charles Maurras supported the

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[590] CIA, The World Factbook, Entry for France. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/fr.html.

[591] See Mayanthi Fernando, "The French Myth of Secularism," *The Conversation,* January 15, 2015. https://theconversation.com/the-french-myth-of-secularism-36227.

[592] Ibid.

[593] Oscar L. Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action Francaise, 1899 – 1938,* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985, 3

[594] Ibid.

[595] For a full discussion of the Catholic nature of Action Francaise, and the relationship between the party and the Catholic Church, see Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action Francaise,* 1985.

[596] Ibid, 14-15.

Vichy puppet state, and together with certain other party members wielded a great deal of influence inside the regime.[597]

In the second half of the 20th century, however, the most important influence on French politics after the war came from General Charles de Gaulle, the first and founding President of the Fifth French Republic, and from the political philosophy named after him, Gaullism. While de Gaulle was himself a Catholic and a political conservative, he upheld France's secular constitution and its revolutionary ethos: *liberté, egalité, fraternité*. As Gaullism became the dominant political philosophy of post-war France, so mainstream conservatives began to accept *laïcité* as an essential element of the French state and French culture.

The radical right, however, continued to challenge Gaullism and oppose *laïcité* and its characteristic demand that religion be entirely privatised and removed from the public sphere. For example, the *Action Française* movement, though it had complex relations with the Church, conceived of the French nation as essentially Catholic.[598] *Action Française* became discredited after the end of the Second World War due to its association with the Nazism, but its anti-secularism and emphasis on the importance of retaining France's Catholic culture was inculcated in a later political movement, the National Front.

The National Front can thus be understood as part of a long tradition in right-wing French politics which explicitly links French culture to Catholicism and opposes *laícité*. The party, much like the *Action Française*, has never been exactly aligned with the Catholic Church. Rather, it embraced Catholic thinkers who were sometimes at odds with the Vatican. Indeed, it was not the contemporary Catholic Church to which the National Front expressed loyalty, but to France's ancient Catholic heritage. Thus the party often held traditional, pre-Vatican II Latin Mass at party events, and invoked Catholic practices as key aspects of French identity.[599]

One of the most significant developments in France during the 1970s was the advent of mass immigration from French colonies. During this period opposition to immigration became the defining characteristic of the National Front and of radical right politics in France. Of course, the country had experienced waves of immigration, including from North Africa, during the

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[597] John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism: 1914-1958,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 315.

[598] See Arnal, *Ambivalent Alliance: The Catholic Church and the Action Francaise,* 1985.

[599] Peter Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology, Power, and Discourse,* 29, 1999.

19th and early 20th centuries.[600] After the Second World War, and due to concerns about France's low fertility and the need for workers, immigration levels were increased.[601] Most significantly, a large and growing proportion of immigrants to France were from North Africa, particularly Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. In 1946 just 2% of immigrants to France were North African. By 1982 39% of immigrants came from this region.[602]

The presence of mostly Muslim people from the Middle East and North Africa, and indeed parts of sub-Saharan Africa, had a powerful effect on French politics. Immigration had simply not been an important issue in France before the mid-1970s. Even radical right did not organise itself around opposition to immigration before the 1970s.[603] In the 1980s, however, opposition to immigration – particularly from North African countries – became a defining policy of groups such as the National Front. The growing number of French citizens identifying as Muslim – 8-10% of the population as of 2008 or between 5-7 million people – solidified opposition to immigration as the key policy issue for the party.[604] What is most interesting is that the National Front objected to these immigrants primarily on cultural and religious, rather than on racial, grounds. This was partly, perhaps, to do with a growing taboo around racism and racist language in France, or as Roy suggests a conscious choice to fight Gramsci inspired left-wing ideas about ending 'white' cultural hegemony.[605]

The increasing unpopularity of Muslims in France – and the related growing power of the National Front – may also be related to the economically and educationally disadvantaged position of some French Muslim immigrants and their children. Due perhaps to the poverty and isolation experienced by Muslim communities, Muslims tend to be vastly overrepresented in the prison population.[606] The criminality of jihadist groups, who have

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[600] Perhaps surprisingly, France has settled more immigrants in the past two centuries than any other country in Europe. In 1930, foreigners made up a larger share of the French population than the population of the United States. See Alec G. Hargraves, *Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in contemporary France*, London: Routledge, 1999, 5.

[601] Hargraves, *Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in contemporary France*, 10-11, 1999.

[602] Hargraves, *Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in contemporary France*, 11-12,1999.

[603] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," 80-81, 2016.

[604] Percentage of Muslims estimated by the US State Department in 2008. The French government did not keep figures on religious and ethnic demographics. See US Department of State, "International Religious Freedom Report 2008: France." https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2008/108446.htm.

[605] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," 82-83, 2016.

[606] No official figures are kept, but it is likely that at least 27% of all inmates in French prisons are Muslims, with a figure of 40-50% more likely, and probably no more than 60%. Whichever number is correct, it is clear that Muslims – who are 8-10% of the population – are overrepresented in the prison population. See Sam Bowman, "Are 70% of France's Prison Inmates Muslim?" *Adam Smith Institute,* March 29, 2017. https://www.adamsmith.org/blog/are-70-of-frances-prison-inmates-muslims. See also "Caged Fervour: Should jails segregate Jihadists?" *The Economist,* September 17, 2016. https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21707230-should-jails-segregate-jihadists-caged-fervour.

killed hundreds of French people in the past two decades, has also undoubtedly played an important role in increasing the visibility, and unpopularity, of Muslim immigrants. Yet perhaps as important as these factors is the different and perhaps greater religiosity of Muslims, which makes Muslims especially visible in France. All have contributed to a growing sense among non-Muslim French that one can either be Muslim or French, but one cannot be both.[607]

This is not to say that real cultural differences have not emerged between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of France. Indeed, the controversy surrounding the 2012 publication of cartoons satirising Islam's Prophet in *Charlie Hebdo,* which angered some French Muslims, might be used to highlight apparent differing attitudes to freedom of speech in France. Yet it would be misleading to simply state that Muslim are less tolerant of free speech than other French. While the French state considers racial vilification a serious offense, and prosecutes racist 'hate speech', it is reluctant to prosecute those who insult a person or group's religious beliefs and practices. For some French Muslims this may seem hypocritical, and they may wonder why freedom of speech is allotted to those who insult Islam, but not those who insult a racial group.

However one interprets the Charlie Hebdo affair, this difference of opinion on the matter of freedom to criticise or satirise religion has led some French, to conclude that Islam is incompatible with *laïcité*. Such is the basis for the party's call to halt immigration from Muslim countries to France. This is particularly interesting, because the party – as we have seen – was from the beginning rooted in a tradition of opposition to secularism. Yet at least since 2011, when Marine Le Pen took over the leadership of the party, we see the party seeking to preserve France's Catholic heritage and identity by defending *laïcité* from hostile and religious Muslims.

The idea that Islam threatens *laïcité* has prompted a long running debate in France over the wearing of religious items or religious dress in public places. Thus France has banned certain forms of Islamic dress, while also restricting the religious ornamentation worn by people of

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[607] A notion perhaps not substantiated by facts. When asked if they identify more as Muslim than French citizens, 46% of French Muslims said they considered themselves more Muslim, and 42% considered themselves French citizens first. In Britain, however, 81% of Muslims reported feeling more Muslim first. Jodie T. Allen and Richard Wike, "How Europe and its Muslims populations see each other," in *Muslims in Western Politics,* Abdulkader H. Sinno (ed.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, 154.

other faiths – including Christianity – in public places.[608] In this case, French politicians reacted against the perceived oppression of women by Islam by trying, in their own way, to regulate women's dress. In another irony, conservative politicians – who a generation ago might have opposed the wearing of the bikini on the grounds that it is immodest – now try to prevent religious women from dressing in a manner they perceive to be 'modest.' Thus we find Marine Le Pen and the National Front attacking Muslims from a relatively left-wing or liberal position, and describing Muslims as a conservative and retrograde element threatening liberal sexual freedoms.[609]

In the next two sections of this chapter I discuss the history of the National Front, which I divide into two eras: the Jean-Marie Le Pen era and the Marine Le Pen era. I cannot cover, of course, every aspect of the National Front during these two eras. Therefore I describe and analyse only the events which shaped the party's relationship with religion, and show how this relationship evolved over time and in relation to Muslim immigration and increasing secularisation.

The National Front and religion: 1972-2011

The National Front's relationship with religion, and especially with the Catholic Church, evolved partly as a result of both the personality of Jean-Marie Le Pen, as well and the growth of non-white and often non-Christian immigration to France in the 1970s and 1980s. Throughout his period as leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen did not merely lead the party but in crucial ways personified the party.[610] His personal story, personality, and political and religious beliefs helped form the party he dominated for more than three decades.

Jean-Marie Le Pen was born in 1928 in Trinité-sur-Mer, a fishing village in Brittany.[611] Educated at the Jesuit college Saint-Francois-Xavier, he lost his father, who was serving in the French Navy, when he was fourteen years old.[612] Le Pen appears to have engaged in a certain amount of myth-making about his own formative experiences. He claimed to have

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[608] Legifrance, **"LOI n° 2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010 interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public (1),"** (version current as of October 31, 2017). https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000022911670.
[609] Alduy, "Has Marine Le Pen already won the battle for the soul of France?", 2014.
[610] Ibid, 1.
[611] Jonathan Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics: The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen,* New York: New York University Press, 29, 1995.
[612] Ibid.

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worked for the French resistance during the war, and to have illegally "kept a rifle, an automatic pistol and ammunition in his home."[613] He appears to have exaggerated his role in the resistance, claiming to have personally taken part in battle against German troops, a suggestion which has since been discredited. [614]

What we do know about Le Pen's youth is that he became something of a street fighter during his university days, when he studied law in Paris, and where he was engaged in street battles against Communist youth.[615] A self-styled patriot and defender of French colonialism, he quit his studies and volunteered to fight against the Communist Vietnamese, and later fought in Algeria during the French-Algerian war.[616]

Le Pen joined Pierre Poujade's populist movement, the UDCA, and was elected to the National Assembly in 1957. He claimed to be attracted to the UDCA because it sought to defend the interests of shopkeepers against big business and 'elites,' though the party's xenophobic, anti-intellectual, and anti-Semitic politics no doubt also appealed to the young Le Pen.[617] After falling out with Poujade, Le Pen became involved in other radical right movements sympathetic towards the Vichy regime and French Nazi collaborationists before founding, in 1972, from out of disparate right-wing elements his own party, the National Front.[618]

In its first few years, the party was not particularly concerned with the issue of immigration.[619] The party was at first more interested in rehabilitating the Vichy regime and other collaborationists, opposing Communism, defending French Colonialism, and promoting conservative social values. Yet from its inception the party has sought to identify itself as a protector of French identity. The prevalence of Nazi sympathisers among the early National Front organisers meant there was a decidedly neo-pagan aspect to the party's notion of French identity, and what Olivier Roy has called an exulting of "pre-Christian Europe".[620] Roy suggests that even though the early National Front "took the Celtic 'cross' as their emblem, it was more the Celtic dimension that attracted them," for they were highly critical

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[613] Ibid.
[614] Ibid.
[615] Ibid, 30.
[616] Ibid 30-31.
[617] Ibid, 31.
[618] Ibid, 33-34.
[619] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité,*" 80-81, 2016.. Yet for an opposing position see Davies, "The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse and Power," 20, 1999.
[620] Ibid, 81.

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of the Vatican II liberalizing reforms.[621] According to Roy, religion was not deeply important to the early National Front, which in its 1973 programme made no reference to religion or *laicité*.[622] Nor was the party orientated towards populism at this point, Roy writes, but was driven by primarily by pagan neo-fascist ideology.[623]

While Roy is right to point out the importance of neo-pagan, anti-Christian ideology in the National Front, it must be remembered that Catholic identity – if not Catholic belief – has since the beginning been important to the party. Jean-Marie Le Pen has described himself as a believing Catholic, and has throughout his political life surrounded himself with Catholic fundamentalists and others who believe that France ought to have a strong Catholic identity.[624] There is always a temptation among thinkers who sympathize with Christianity, or with religion in general, to dismiss the religious nature of the National Front Of course, the party cannot be said to be a religious party in the sense that it bases its policies upon Christian principles. However, under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen the party celebrated the traditional Latin mass at their rallies and other events, and is influenced by Catholic thinkers including rebel Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who was himself a vocal supporter of the National Front.[625] It is very likely that Latin Mass was celebrated at party rallies in part because it was perceived to be especially conservative and right-wing, rather than because the party actually wished its supporters to engage with Catholic principles and theology.

Nevertheless, traditional Catholicism and Christian imagery was important to the National Front precisely because – though the party's voters were rarely devout – the party believed "that in some undefinable way, the Church is a bulwark against the 'mortal perils' that confront France, and that the good health of the Church conditions that of the nation."[626] This mixture of different elements – neo-pagan, Catholic, secular – within the party makes it difficult to categorise the party as solely Catholic. Having said that, under Jean-Marie Le Pen's leadership the party was firmly attached "to religious teaching and the values of the Church in its strictures on the family, abortion, contraception and homosexuality."[627] Moreover, throughout the 1970s and 1980s the party condemned the secularising French

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[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid.
[623] Ibid.
[624] See Peter Davies, "The National Front and Catholicism: From *Integrisme* to Joan of Arc and Clovis," Religion Compass 4(9), 2010, 576–587.
[625] Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology Discourse and Power*, 30, 1999.
[626] Ibid, 29.
[627] Ibid.

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revolution, and described it as an essentially anti-Catholic event which sought to destroy the Church and Catholic France.[628]

The early National Front's anti-Communist, anti-Semitic, and Vichy regime sympathising brand of politics does not appear to have appealed to French voters, and the party struggled to attract support throughout the 1970s. An important change came over the party in the late 1970s – Roy dates it from 1978 – when the party changed both its political ideology as well as its rhetoric. Rather than attack Communist and Jewish influence in France, the party focused on stopping immigration to France, which they claimed was undermining French culture and creating unemployment. However, the party did not object to immigrants based solely on their race, but instead complained that people of different cultures could not live together. The mostly Muslim North African immigrants who began arriving in France in large number in the 1970s could not, according to the party, assimilate into French society because they had grown up in an entirely different culture and with a vastly different religious heritage.[629]

The advent of large scale non-European immigration had an interesting effect on French culture. Jean Raspail's 1973 novel *The Camp of the Saints* captures the reaction of some French people when confronted by the first large wave of Arab and African migrants. In his book Raspail describes the invasion of Europe by third world peoples – who are supported by Western intellectuals who see the newcomers as a cleansing force – who by the end of the story have marginalised white people and taken over their territories. It is instructive to note that Raspail is not specifically concerned about religion in his novel, and does not identify migrants by their faith. Indeed, his novel did not sell well when it was first released and was poorly reviewed by all publications with the exception of a handful of radical right magazines. Yet *The Camp of the Saints* grew in popularity over time, and became embraced by right-wing thinkers across the Western world who adapted its racist ideology to fit their own religion and culture based differentiation of peoples, and who – like a growing number of French – were concerned about the effect Muslim immigration was having on their country.[630]

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[628] Ibid, 29.
[629] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité,*" 82-83, 2016.
[630] For an example of the populist right's embrace of Raspail's book see Virgil, "Decline and Fall: The Grim Message of *The Camp of the Saints" Breitbart,* 24 November 2014. http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2014/11/24/decline-and-fall-the-grim-message-of-the-camp-of-the-saints/.

The National Front was the party which capitalised on the fears some French people held about the future of the country and its culture in the face of mass immigration. The party's skilful use of identity politics, its use of the language of 'culture' rather than 'race' or ethnicity, and its anti-immigration program brought the party increased support in the 1980s. While Le Pen received just 0.76% of the vote in the 1974 Presidential elections, his party's fortune's soon improved, and by the early 1980s was winning seats in European and legislative elections.[631] Its electoral success saw Jean-Marie Le Pen elected as a municipal councillor in Paris in 1983, won him a seat in the National Assembly in 1986, and saw him receive 14.4% of the vote in the 1988 presidential elections as he became one of the best known – and most controversial – French politicians of his generation.[632]

Drawn to the National Front in the 1970s and 1980s were a number of important Catholic thinkers, many from the ultra-conservative and Traditionalist wing of the Church. Perhaps most significantly, from the late 1970s until his death, the National Front enjoyed the occasional support of Archbishop Lefebvre – who was excommunicated by the Church in 1988 – who approved of the party's ultra-conservativism and support for Tridentrine Mass.[633] Despite this support from some important Catholic figures, in the first two decades of its existence the party remained on the fringes of French politics, yet over time attracted voters in increasing numbers. For example, it is interesting to note that during this period the number of devout Catholics voting for National Front candidates decreased markedly. In the period 1984 – 1997, the number of devout Catholics voting for the party halved, while non-religious National Front voters more than tripled in number.[634] Yet during this period the party continued to use Catholic imagery, promote traditionalist Catholicism, and even hold Latin mass at their election events.[635] The party's deep links with Catholicism – which continued even as the Church itself disavowed the party – can be partly attributed to the existence of an influential Catholic wing.[636] But the importance of Catholicism goes beyond the importance religion holds to devout Catholics. Rather, Catholicism appears important to non-religious National Front voters, who may see in the Church and in Catholicism vital elements of the culture which makes France French.

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[631] Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics: The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen,* 52, 1995.
[632] Ibid, 52-53.
[633] See Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, entry for "MGR Marcel Lefebvre" in *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far-Right*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
[634] Davies, "The National Front and Catholicism: From *Integrisme* to Joan of Arc and Clovis," 577, 2010.
[635] Ibid.
[636] Davies, "The National Front and Catholicism: From *Integrisme* to Joan of Arc and Clovis," 577, 2010.

The continuing use of Catholic imagery demonstrates how important Catholic identity – rather than devout Christian belief – was to the National Front. For example, in 1996 the party celebrated the 1500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis, the Frankish king who converted his people to Christianity, who the party described as the creator of "this eternal France that we love."[637] For the party, France was created the moment that Clovis was baptised, thereby forever linking Christianity to French identity.

The National Front's other symbol for France and the Party, Joan of Arc – the peasant girl who in the 15th century was called by God to defend France from the English – is similarly linked to Christianity, specifically to Catholicism. In the National Front's celebration of both figures there is a mixing of religion and nationalism, which specifically describes the French people as both indigenous to the land and of Christian heritage. How Christian, it must be asked, is this kind of ethno and religious nationalism? The New Testament does not, of course, advocate ethno-nationalism, but rather St. Paul famously remarks in a letter that when one becomes a Christian religious heritage and ethnicity ceases to be important, but one is bound together with all other Christians. Yet one suspects that Jean-Marie Le Pen would prefer a France that was white, yet entirely without belief in any god or supernatural force, to a France that was devoutly Catholic but black African. This is not to say that religion is not important to Le Pen and the National Front, but that they believe Catholicism alone does not make a French person, but rather Catholic heritage is one important ingredient in French identity.

For the National Front under Jean-Marie Le Pen, France was for people who shared his religious and ethnic heritage and who were deeply rooted in France. Certain groups were automatically excluded by Le Pen under this scheme. Minority groups were, according to Le Pen, not to be despised as inferior, but merely as being too different to become French. Thus Le Pen was able to say that he loved "Maghrebins" but that "their place is in the Maghreb."[638] To defend French identity was not to condemn difference, but for Le Pen was to celebrate of national differences and particularities, and in particular to defend the true French people who were not cosmopolitans but rooted in their particular way of life.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s the party reached new heights of popularity and significance under Jean-Marie Le Pen. At the 1995 Presidential elections Le Pen won 15% of

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[637] Ibid, 584.
[638] Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe,* 183, 1994.

the vote but failed to make the second round of voting.[639] In 2002, however, he astonished the world by finishing second in the first round of Presidential voting.[640] It is important to note that Le Pen's campaign in 2002 was based largely on his populist style argument that immigrants and elites – French President Chirac chief among them – were responsible for the rising crime and unemployment that allegedly plagued France. During the campaign, Le Pen described the "Islamic population" of France as holding values "different from those of the Judaeo-Christian world."[641] French Muslims, he said, "spat at the president of the republic" and "booed when the national anthem was played at a soccer game."[642] Moreover, according to Le Pen, the North African Muslim population of France is a "grave phenomenon" which threatens France's future.[643] In such statements we see how Le Pen – a noted anti-Semite – has reacted to the mass migration of Muslims to France by turning towards a 'Judeo-Christian' identity. For Le Pen, this identity excludes Muslims from being accepted into French society, for the obvious reason that they are not 'Judeo-Christian.' Despite Le Pen's rhetoric, his National Front remained anti-Semitic, and did not meaningfully include the Jewish people within this identity.[644] Equally, Le Pen's late turn towards Judeo-Christian identity begs the question, why are Muslims outside the Judeo-Christian tradition when their religion is in part derived from Judaism and Christianity?

Jean-Marie Le Pen's objections to Islam appear to stem from his Francophillia, racism, and his ultra-conservative attitude towards maintaining traditional hierarchies. This is significant, because it puts him at odds with many populist radical right politicians – including his daughter – who emerged in the 2000s, and who hold more moderate or even progressive views on sexual and gender matters. For this new generation of right-wing populists, the Islamic veil must be banned because it oppresses women. Jean-Marie Le Pen did not oppose the Islamic veil, and was not overly concerned about female oppression. Rather, he once

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[639] Peter Davies, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: From de Maistre to the Present,* London: Routledge, 2002, 145. It's important to note that most NF support came from the skilled and unskilled working classes see Bruno Cautrés, "Old wine in new bottles? New wine in old bottles?: Class, Religion, and Vote in the French Electorate -- the 2002 Elections in Time Perspective," in *The French Voter: Before and After the 2002 Elections,* Michael S. Lewis-Beck (ed), Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, 82.

[640] The reaction of experienced journalists demonstrates the surprising nature of Le Pen's success in 2002, see "France's Election Shock," *PBS Newshour,* April 22, 2002. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/europe-jan-june02-election_4-22/.

[641] Adar Primor, "The Veil? It protects us from ugly women," *The Guardian,* April 25 2002. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/25/france.features11.

[642] Ibid.

[643] Ibid.

[644] Jean-Marie Le Pen was forced out of the party he founded, partly on the grounds that his views – and anti-Semitism – was too extreme. See "France's National Front expels founder Jean-Marie Le Pen," *The Guardian,* 20 August, 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/20/frances-national-front-party-expels-founder-jean-marie-le-pen.

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attempted to 'joke' about the veil by saying that he favoured its use because "it protects us from ugly women."[645] Moreover, Le Pen's conservatism sometimes resembles Islamic conservatism, especially in their shared opposition to homosexual rights, abortion, and feminism. To the end of his time as leader of the National Front, Le Pen never fully embraced the values of *laïcité*, nor did he ever cease describing French culture in partly religious terms. Rather, he opposed Muslim immigration not because he feared it would lead to a more religious and conservative society, but because he saw Muslim immigration as a tool used by the left to destroy Catholic – or later 'Judeo-Christian' – France.

Despite his impressive result in the first round of voting in 2002, Le Pen did not ultimately become President of France. His initial success galvanised the left, which collectively voted against the National Front leader and for his more moderate right-wing rival, Jacques Chirac. The relatively unpopular Chirac won in a landslide, with Le Pen receiving just 17% of the vote and finding himself utterly rejected by the French electorate. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, following this rejection by voters the party found itself in the political wilderness for several years, and experienced mounting financial problems which accompanied a loss of electoral support.

The National Front and Religion: 2011--2017

In 2011 Jean-Marie Le Pen resigned from the leadership of the party he had created and dominated for several decades. The party's inability to gain new supporters and its financial woes, as well as Jean-Marie Le Pen's age, appears to have eventually forced him to retire from his role. His daughter, Marine Le Pen, succeeded him as leader. Marine Le Pen very quickly began to reform the party, in line with her conception of French identity, which was strikingly different to that of her father.

Marine Le Pen made a number of significant changes when assuming the position of leader. She attempted to detoxify the party's fascist image by disciplining members – including her own father – who made grossly anti-Semitic comments, denied the Holocaust, or minimised Nazi war crimes.[646] At the same time, she consciously moved the party toward the centre by

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[645] Ibid.
[646] See Steve Cannane, "Marine Le Pen's de-demonising of the National Front puts her within striking distance of the Presidency," *ABC News,* 8 May, 2017. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-06/french-election-marine-le-pen-de-demonises-national-front/8503110.

softening its ultra-conservative social policies, particularly on issues such as gay rights and abortion. Importantly, by moving the party towards the centre Le Pen was able to attack French Muslims for being too conservative, and for not observing secular differentiation of religion from politics. Thus while her father had attacked Islam from a radical right perspective, Marine Le Pen attacked Islam from a populist position, emphasising the danger Muslims allegedly pose towards women, homosexuals, and the principle of secularism.[647]

Marine Le Pen has described herself as a Catholic, yet she could not be described as a socially conservative Catholic. She has avoided marriage since her 2006 divorce and has a partner, Louis Aliot, a French lawyer of Algerian-Jewish heritage who himself became Vice-President of the party in 2011. Despite her own rejection of Christian norms, she has described France as a country founded on Judeo-Christian values, and has called French culture secularised Christianity.[648] At the same time, Le Pen has taken an increasingly hardline position in defence of *laïcité* during her time as party leader, and appears to support – unlike her father – France's 1905 law separating Church and State.[649] Yet this increasingly uncompromising defence of secularism has not meant that she no longer regards France as a Judeo-Christian nation. Rather, Le Pen appears to maintain not merely the compatibility of Judeo-Christian beliefs and secular differentiation, but that Judeo-Christianity underpins France's secular values.

Marine Le Pen's leadership had an immediate effect on the National Front's popularity. In 2007, under her father's leadership, the party won 10% of the vote at the Presidential elections. In 2012 the party achieved its then best ever result, with more than 17.90% of French voters backing Marine Le Pen for President of France. Her popularity continued to rise, with an astonishing 33% of French voters backing the National Front at the 2017 presidential elections.[650] While Marine Le Pen's leadership had an almost immediate effect on the party's image and rhetoric, party policy changed little in her first two years as leader. While on economic matters the party increasingly emphasised the need for protectionism,

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[647] See Le Pen's comments on protecting homosexuals and women from Muslim immigrants in Alduy, "Has Marine Le Pen already won the battle for the soul of France?" 2014.

[648] At a party rally in 2017 she described France's core secular values – Liberty, equality, and fraternity – as coming from its Christian heritage. See Emma Green, "The Spectre of Catholic Identity in Secular France," *The Atlantic,* May 6, 2017. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/christian-identity-france/525558/.

[649] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité,"* 2016, 90.

[650] See the official results from the French interior ministry as reported in The Guardian, Sean Clarke and Josh Holder, "French Presidential election May 2017 – full second round results and analysis," *The Guardian,* 26 May, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/may/07/french-presidential-election-results-latest.

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their social policy remained very conservative and right-wing.[651] The National Front remained opposed to immigration, the relaxing of abortion laws, and allowing homosexuals to marry.[652] The manner in which policies were presented, however, did change in 2012. Culture and religion are brought to the forefront of National Front policy, but in an entirely different manner to that of the Jean-Marie Le Pen years. Christianity and secularism are blurred into one single entity called French culture, which is said to be threatened by globalisation – by neoliberal economics and the Islamic faith brought to France by migrants.

For example, in 2007 the party's election manifesto claimed immigrants were destroying the French economy, French culture, and behind a great deal of criminal activity. As Stockemer and Barisione write, "during most of Jean Marie Le Pen's presidency, anti-immigration or xenophobia was the central theme of the party's programme; all other policy areas were seen through an anti-immigration lens."[653] In 2012 economic and cultural protectionism were the focal points of the manifesto. Immigration was dealt with more subtly, and the problems immigrants brought to France woven into the manifesto's sections on economic and social policy, and emphasis on the need to protect France from global capitalism and Islamic fundamentalism.[654]

The most significant policy change was on *laïcité.* Jean-Marie Le Pen was strongly anti-secularist, and sought to return France to its Catholic roots. National Front policy during his time as leader reflected his position on *laïcité* which he saw as an impediment to returning France to its authentically Catholic self. The 2012 National Front manifesto, however, lauds *laïcité* as an integral element of the French Republic and makes only one reference to Christianity, and only then in the final pages.[655] This mention, however, is extremely enlightening. The FN manifesto notes that Christianity has been the religion of the majority of French people for more than a millennium, and thus France's national culture and

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[651] Gilles Ivaldi. The Successful Welfare-Chauvinist Party? The Front National in the 2012 elections in France. ESA's Research Network on Political Sociology (RN32) Mid-term conference, Nov 2012, Milano, Italy. Panel on 'The Populist Radical Right in the Context of the Economic and Socio-Political Crisis: Comparative Perspectives and Country Studies,' 18. https://hal.inria.fr/halshs-00765428/document.

[652] Ibid, 10.
[653] Daniel Stockemer and Maruo Barisone, "The New Discourse of the National Front under Marine Le Pen: A Slight Change with a Big Impact," *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 32(2) 100–115, 2017, 107.
[654] Ibid.
[655] "Notre Projet, Programme Politique du Front National," *Front National website*. https://www.frontnational.com/pdf/Programme.pdf, 2011, 105. While I try to avoid French language sources, this section of the manifesto has not been addressed in English.

traditions are Christian in nature.[656] Immigrants should not flout, the manifesto says, these Christian traditions which are, after all, an integral part of French identity.[657] Curiously, following this declaration is a stronger message defending *laïcité*, which the party intends to strengthen by altering the constitution to make recognition of religious groups illegal, ban religious attire (especially the Islamic veil) from public places, and prevent Muslim led women's only swimming events at public pools.[658] The mention of France's Christian heritage appears to contradict the message that secular neutrality – *laïcité* – is a vital part of French life. Again, however, this seeming contradiction can be explained if for Marine Le Pen both Christianity and secularism are intrinsic elements of authentic French culture. While 2012 was an electorally successful year for the National Front, it was not until the December 2015 regional elections that the party moved into the French political mainstream. The success of the party occurred during the height of the immigration crisis, during which Marine Le Pen strongly opposed allowing Muslim asylum seekers refuge in France, a position at odds with her conservative and left-wing rivals. The 2015 regional elections were thus the first significant test of the party's anti-asylum seeker policies.[659] The National Front received the most support of any contesting party, winning 27.73% of the vote, just over 1% more than the Nicolas Sarkozy led The Republicans.[660] Despite winning the greatest share of the vote, the party failed – stymied by the concerted efforts of other parties – to win a single region. Nonetheless, Marine Le Pen was now one of the most influential politicians in France, and though her party held no regional seats, the National Front's hard-line against Muslim asylum seekers was clearly supported by – at the very least – the 27% of French who voted for the party.

Success followed the party into 2017. In February 2017 the National Front summarised its major policy positions in a manifesto detailing its "144 commitments" to the French

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[656] Ibid, 105.
[657] Ibid.
[658] Ibid, 106.
[659] Muslim immigration was among the most contentious issues in France in 2015. For example, French novelest Michel Houellebecq published in 2015 his novel *Submission*, which described the coming Islamist revolution in France, which he author has occur in the year 2022. In *Submission* Marine Le Pen appears to be heading for victory in the second round of presidential elections, but is upstaged by a Muslim Brotherhood candidate who – with the support of the left – wins a majority of votes and becomes French President. The new president enacts sweeping reforms which quickly do away with secularism, gender equality, and which privilege Islam above other religions. Houellebecq's primary target in his somewhat satirical novel is not so much Muslims or Islam, but French secular culture and the intellectuals it produces, which the non-religious Houellebecq finds little worth in, and which he appears to perceive as being weak and almost deserving of being swept away by the more vigorous culture of Islam.
[660] *Les Républicains;* essentially a rebranded UMP.

people.[661] The "144 Commitments" is a populist and nationalistic document in which the FN pledges to take France out of the Eurozone so as to protect its economy and culture.[662] Significantly, left-wing protectionism and welfarism are mixed with more traditional right-wing economic policies such as lowering taxation and cutting spending. For example, industries are to be re-nationalised when necessary,[663] and immigration limited to 10,000 people per year.[664] On the other hand, financial incentives are to be given to French families in order that they should produce more children,[665] and French civilisation, values, traditions, and identity are to be defended in an amended French constitution.[666] To this end, *laïcité* is to be strengthened to combat Islamic fundamentalism, and women's rights protected from Islamism.[667] Interestingly, abortion and the restoration of the death penalty – discussed in the 2012 FN manifesto – go without mention in 2017.[668]

Christianity is not mentioned by name in the 2017 manifesto. In her rhetoric, however, Marine Le Pen returned to the theme of France as a Judeo-Christian civilisation threatened by Islamists. In a speech announcing her decision to run for President, Le Pen described liberty, equality, and fraternity as Christian principles secularised – principles she implied were absent in Islam. Le Pen's niece and National Front candidate, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, moved beyond her aunt's Christianist secular rhetoric and called for France to return to its Christian roots, and for the exclusion of Islam on the basis that it is incompatible with Christianity. Thus in 2017 the National Front displayed in their discourse a mixture of Gaullist secularism, Christianist secularism, and in the rhetoric of Maréchal-Le Pen something more akin to Jean-Marie Len Pen style Catholic identity politics. Drawing it all

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[661] The document is no longer available on the FN's national website and Marine Le Pen's 2017 campaign website has been deleted. Google cache of document can be found here: https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:yw3VV1SZqesJ:https://www.marine2017.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/a4_35_engagements_fedes_bd.pdf+&cd=5&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=au The document has been preserved by the Loiret branch of the FN: http://www.fn-loiret.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/projet-presidentiel-marine-le-pen.pdf

[662] John Henley, "Marine Le Pen promises liberation from the EU with France first policies," *The Guardian,* February 6, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/05/marine-le-pen-promises-liberation-from-the-eu-with-france-first-policies.

[663] *Front National* "144 Engagements Présidentiels," http://www.fn-loiret.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/projet-presidentiel-marine-le-pen.pdf. Commitment 34.

[664] Ibid, commitment 26.

[665] Ibid, commitment 55.

[666] Ibid, commitment 91.

[667] Ibid, commitment 9.

[668] Paul Smith, "What Marine Le Pen's 144 point presidential plan for France actually says," *The Conversation,* February 14, 2017. https://theconversation.com/what-marine-le-pens-144-point-presidential-plan-for-france-actually-says-72910.

together is opposition to Islam and Muslim immigration, and a sense that French identity and heritage must be defended from the threat posed by Muslim migrants to France.

The 2017 French Presidential elections, the first round of which were held on April 23 and the second on May 7, marked the electoral breakthrough for which the FN had been longing. In the first round of voting Marine Le Pen came second, winning 21.30% of the vote.[669] Her right-wing rival from The Republicans, Francois Fillon, attracted just over 20% of the vote. The winner was *En Marche!* candidate Emmanuel Macron, who won 24.01% of the vote. Thus Marine Le Pen faced Macron in the second round. This time Macron trounced Le Pen, winning 66.10% percent of the vote to Le Pen's 33.90%.[670] While the heavy loss no doubt disappointed Le Pen and her supporters, never before had an FN candidate won so many votes. Marine Le Pen received almost twice as many votes as her father received in his supposed breakthrough year of 2002. There were special circumstances in 2017 which may explain the increased National Front vote. The Republicans' candidate, Fillon, lost popularity during the campaign due to a scandal in which he and his wife became embroiled.[671] Equally, Le Pen was running at a time in which voter dissatisfaction with the traditional governing parties had reached a high.[672]

It would be wrong, therefore, to suggest that the party's success post-2011 was due entirely to Marine Le Pen's attacks on Islam and reconceptualisation of French culture as Judeo-Christian and thus incompatible with Islam. Perhaps more significantly, under Marine Le Pen the party became, more explicitly, a party for working class patriots opposed to both neoliberalism and multiculturalism. In other words, Le Pen positioned the National Front as the party for people who opposed right-wing economics but favoured cultural homogeneity, and who favoured left-wing economic protectionism and welfarism but opposed left-wing efforts to make France a multicultural society. Like other populists, the National Front under Marine Le Pen sought to blame 'globalists' and 'elites' for the real and imagined problems

[669] "French presidential election: first round results in charts and maps," *The Guardian,* April 23, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/apr/23/french-presidential-election-results-2017-latest.
[670] "French Presidential Election May 2017 full second round results and analysis," *The Guardian,* May 26, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/may/07/french-presidential-election-results-latest.
[671] See Angelique Chrisafis, "Francois Fillon under formal investigation for 'fake jobs offenses,'" *The Guardian,* 14 March, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/14/francois-fillon-placed-under-formal-investigation-over-fake-jobs.
[672] According to polls, Hollande was the "most unpopular president in French polling history." See "Alone and unpopular, France's Hollande throws in the towel," *France24,* 1 December, 2016. https://www.france24.com/en/20161201-france-hollande-unpopular-president-legacy.

mass immigration has brought to France since the 1970s, and divided these 'elites' from 'the people' of France who have allegedly suffered on account of their mismanagement.[673]

It is moreover difficult to know whether the National Front's use of religion in their discourse specifically influenced voters. One cannot easily imagine the average person in the street speaking about the Judeo-Christian foundations of their secular culture. Yet 33.90% percent of voters supported a candidate who expressed exactly this notion, suggesting that there must be some feeling within France that Muslims do not fit into French culture because they lack a Christian heritage and/or because they practice a faith which does not differentiate between religion and politics. The National Front remains divided on the issue of secularism, with a Catholic wing remaining hostile to Marine Le Pen's devotion to *laïcité* – even if she understands the concept as being derived ultimately from Christian principles. Yet whether Catholic or secular, the party consistently identifies France's Christian heritage with contemporary French identity, and attracts both secular and religious voters who sympathise with its political programme.

Explaining the National Front's use of religion in their discourse

Christian identity has played a powerful role in the discourse of the National Front almost since its inception. In this chapter, however, I have shown a shift occurring in National Front rhetoric on religion, which became especially pronounced after the resignation of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen's assumption of party leadership. This change involved two distinct things. First, a move away from race based differentiation of peoples, and from a conception of French identity which emphasised race or ethnicity, and towards a religious/cultural based differentiation of peoples and a conception of French identity based on religion and culture. Second, the party began to accept *laïcité* as an essential part of French culture. This acceptance of *laïcité* did not mean, however, that the party's Christian identity was jettisoned. Rather, under Marine Le Pen's leadership *laïcité* became identified as a unique expression of France's Judeo-Christian culture and heritage.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front opposed *laïcité* and France's secular identity, and sought to return France to a pre-secular condition in which Catholic identity and conservative

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[673] "The main thing at stake in this election is the rampant globalisation that is endangering our civilisation" – Marine Le Pen quoted in Angelique Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen rails against rampant globalisation after election success," *The Guardian,* April 24, 2017.

Christian values formed the basis of French identity and culture. Late in his career he spoke of France's Judeo-Christian identity, and warned of the danger Islam posed to this identity, however his party did not abandon its then essential anti-secular position.

Marine Le Pen shifted the party's rhetoric, and dramatically altered its conception of French identity after becoming leader in 2011, by meshing together France's Christian heritage with its secular culture and constitution. In doing so, she was able to bring secular and (Judeo-)Christian French into a single identity, while constructing Muslims as an 'other' outside of the religio-secular Judeo-Christian identity. This shift has involved a secularising of Christianity into 'culture,' and sacralisation of *laïcité*, merging the two into a single Judeo-Christian tradition which is at once both secular and sacred.

Why have these changes occurred? This conceptualising of *laïcité* as an integral part of French identity and culture, rather than an imposition upon it, has been noted by Olivier Roy. Yet according to Roy, Marine Le Pen is a secularist who uses religious rhetoric merely in order to legitimise her – and her party's supporters – antipathy towards Muslims. He argues that Marine Le Pen has effectively removed from the National Front its Catholic values, and shifted it towards an embracing of *laïcité*.[674] Marine Le Pen's use of religion is thus described as cynical and instrumental, and designed merely to construct Muslims as an 'other' and exclude them from French public life.

There is no doubt that the National Front constructs Muslims as a pernicious 'other' which threatens French culture and identity. However, it may be too simplistic to dismiss Marine Le Pen's rhetoric as wholly cynical in nature. Roy himself points to something more complex occurring in France, where he notes "religion, identities, nation, culture, and values" coming together and leaving identity to become the "key word with which to deal with any kind of differences (racial, religious, linguistic or ethnic)".[675] Moreover, the National Front is not the only political party emphasising the religious aspect of French identity, or suggesting that (Judeo-)Christian values are a cornerstone of French culture. Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy made remarks which appeared to break with France's secular republican tradition, describing the French as "heirs to 2000 years of Christianity"[676] and calling for a "positive *laïcite*" which could welcome religion back into the public sphere through a

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[674] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to Laïcité 91, 2016.
[675] Ibid, 93.
[676] Kemal Kirisci, "Religion as argument in the debate on Turkish EU membership," in Dietrich Jung and Catharina Ruadvere (eds), *Religion, Politics, and Turkey's EU Accession,* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, 29.

dialogue.[677] The French, he argued, ought to be proud of their "magnificent Christian heritage, and added that "as a secular president" he felt free to talk about these issues, and to urge the French to remember that they are obliged to pass on this heritage to their children.[678]

In this way Sarkozy very explicitly sought to return religion into public life, though it should be observed that by 'religion' Sarkozy clearly meant Christianity, and perhaps solely Catholicism. His attitude towards Islam is perhaps revealed in his steadfast opposition to Turkish membership of the European Union, which Sarkozy opposed on cultural grounds, and by his decision to ban the Islamic veil from public places. [679] Sarkozy's call for Christian culture and heritage to be embraced by French people, and for Islam to be excluded from the public sphere, strongly resembles the National Front's identity politics and religion based differentiation of peoples. This suggests that religion, or perhaps simply religious identity, has become more important to French people at least since the early 2000s.

Given France's – and especially mainstream French politics – secular reputation this is somewhat surprising. There is no indication, however, that France is becoming a more religious nation. Rather, populist radical right and some conservative French politicians are meshing together religion and secularism in an effort to redefine French identity and culture so as to link it exclusively with Judaism and/or Christianity. There is no question that this is done in part to legitimise fear and dislike of Muslims, and to legitimise the repression of Islam within France. However, it may also point to deeper changes within French society which have developed as a result of the increasing visibility of religion in France, and the growth of Islam and Muslims' perceived unwillingness/inability to privatise their religious beliefs and practices. Of course, this is not to suggest that the Christianism of Sarkozy is the same as that of Marine Le Pen, or Francois Fillon. The Christianism of Marine Le Pen is special to her insofar as it appears to be a Christian identity grafted onto an entirely secularist political programme. Where Sarkozy calls for religion to return to the public sphere, Le Pen demands its total exclusion, except where it has been thoroughly secularised into 'culture.' Marine Le Pen thus can be understood to hold a Christianist secular worldview, different to the more post-secular Christianism of Sarkozy.

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[677] Robert Marquand, "With Pope's visit, Sarkozy challenges French secularism," *Christian Science Monitor,* September 15, 2008. https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2008/0915/p01s01-woeu.html.

[678] Paola Totaro, "Sarkozy genuflects to Christian past in pilgrimage for votes," *Sydney Morning Herald,* March 5, 2011. http://www.smh.com.au/world/sarkozy-genuflects-to-catholic-past-in-pilgrimage-for-votes-20110304-1bhzl.html.

[679] Kemal Kirisci, "Religion as argument in the debate on Turkish EU membership," 29, 2008.

That Christianism should become prevalent in the discourse of a number of right-wing French political parties while France itself becomes increasingly secular may appear curious, but it becomes understandable if there has been a meshing of identity, religion, culture, and nation in France in which both Christianity and *laïcité* become intrinsic elements of national culture and identity. For example, though the secular and religious may seem to be in opposition, or at least belong to different spheres of human activity, in the rhetoric of Marine Le Pen they are merged into a single tradition and conception of French identity. Thus for Le Pen, French culture is Christianity secularised; *laïcité* is sacralised and said to form the final product of the France's Judeo-Christian heritage, and Christianity is secularised into culture and made part of France's identity.[680]

The mechanism by which this identification of France as simultaneously secular and (Judeo-)Christian has occurred appears to be through two separate events: the introduction of Islam into the country, and the eroding of France's national sovereignty by the forces of globalisation, neoliberalism, and the European Union. For example, according to Marine Le Pen, the twin threats to French culture and identity are Islam and neoliberalism. The latter Le Pen identifies as part of an agenda spread by 'elites' and the European Union, which she claims to be undermining France's identity and culture and eroding the French nation itself. Islam, too, according to Le Pen, threatens French identity and culture, due to the two cultures' fundamental incompatibility. Too many Muslims in France, according to Le Pen, have not secularised, but continue to practice their religion in public. For Le Pen, this is an indication that Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, "is not soluble in secularism."

To combat the perceived threat of Islam and neoliberal/EU attacks on French sovereignty and identity, Le Pen – like Sarkozy – turns towards France's religious past. By defining French culture and identity as Judeo-Christian yet secular, Le Pen is able to 'other' Muslims, and exclude them from French society. Equally, she is able to reject the neoliberalism and multiculturalism of the European Union as an Anglo-Saxon imposition on France, antithetical to its Judeo-Christian heritage and contemporary secular culture.[681] This instrumental explanation of Le Pen's post-secular seeming blending of *laïcité* and Judeo-Christianity into French 'culture' does not tell us, however, why this specific language is being used. Le Pen

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[680] See Le Pen's remark that France has "Christian roots" yet is "*laïque.*" Marine Le Pen, quoted by Roy in "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to Laïcité, 91, 2016.

[681] See Le Pen's comments after the coming second in the first round of voting in the 2017 Presidential elections, as quoted by Chrisafis in "Marine Le Pen rails against rampant globalisation following election success," 2017.

and the National Front could just as easily legitimise anti-Muslim attitudes and call for the exclusion of Muslims on purely secular grounds. Equally, they could oppose neoliberal economics and the weakening of French sovereignty on secular-nationalist grounds. Why, then, is religion and religious identity invoked by Le Pen when defending France and French identity from its perceived enemies?

The answer may lie in the manner in which Muslims immigration has altered some French people's sense of their national and civilisational identity. Following the mass immigration of Muslims to France, Marine Le Pen and people who share her worldview have come to believe that (1) *laïcité* is unique to France and a product of its particular religious heritage, and (2) Islam represents a wholly different religious and political tradition which by its own nature cannot secularise, and is therefore incompatible with French identity, culture, and values. This has occurred, first, because Muslim difference and visibility makes French culture more visibly Christian in nature. Before the mass migration of Muslims, and especially before it became clear that most French Muslims were unlikely to assimilate into French culture and entirely privatise their religious beliefs and practices, National Front rhetoric highlighted the differences between *laïcité* and Catholicism. For the party and its leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, secularism appeared to mark an unwelcome break from the 'true' Catholic France.

After Muslims became numerous, and Islam became a visible and visibly different presence in France, the National Front began to become conscious of the elements of France's secular culture which marked not a break but a continuation of Catholicism and (Judeo-)Christianity. As this occurred, the barrier between the secular and religious began to break down as both were merged into 'identity'; Christianity was secularised into French culture and identity, and *laïcité* was sacralised – not as a religion, but as a vital element of French culture and the laws of the French nation-state. In this environment it is possible for Christmas to become a secular holiday, and a skyline filled with Church spires no longer simply a symbol of Christianity, but an element of French culture. In contrast, symbols of Islam – including the headscarf – may be interpreted as an affront to the France's Judeo-Christian identity and culture.

By defining French culture – including French secularism – as a product of France's Christian heritage, the party is able to exclude Muslims from the public sphere, on the basis

that Muslim belong to a religion that cannot secularise, and thus cannot become truly 'French.' In linking secularism to Christianity, and demonising Islam as unable to secularise, the National Front is ultimately acknowledging that secularism is unlikely to triumph over Islam, and that Islam must therefore be excluded from France. Thus by insisting on the cessation of Muslim immigration to France, and by demanding oppressive measures targeting Islam and Islamic symbols, the Marine Le Pen led National Front tacitly acknowledge the inability of *laïcité* to secularise France's Muslims.

It is possible, then, to understand the Marine Le Pen's use of religion in her rhetoric as an expression of the Christianist secularism common among populist radical right parties in Western Europe. For example, despite her appeal to Christianity, there is no evidence that Le Pen and the National Front seek to benefit from the moral language of Christianity and Judaism, or wish to use religion inspired ethics when discussing complex moral issues such as euthanasia or abortion. Rather, religion is admired for its ability to define French culture, values, and identity in a manner which prevents the National Front's enemies from defining themselves as French. Moreover, Le Pen has moved the party away from policies informed by conservative or traditional Catholicism, and towards policies informed by contemporary secular mores. Equally, while the National Front is deeply nationalist, it has a civlisationalist streak. As Davies notes, while the National Front objects strongly to "artificial" European constructions such as the European Union, it is supportive of the notion of a common European heritage which must be defended from outsiders.[682] In these ways, the National Front meets the criteria set by Brubaker for inclusion in the Christianist secularist group of populist radical right parties.[683]

My examination of the rise of Christianism in the France, particularly within the context of the growth of the National Front post-2011, suggests that French people's encounter with Islam in France has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of French secularism, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into French 'culture.' Recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed for secular French to identify themselves and the French nation-state as Christian and/or Judeo-Christian. This effect has

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[682] Peter Davies, *The National Front in France: Ideology, Discourse, and Power*, Routledge: London and New York, 1999, 96-97.
[683] See Rogers Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," *The Imminent Frame,* October 11, 2016. https://tif.ssrc.org/2016/10/11/a-new-christianist-secularism-in-europe/; and Rogers Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40:8, 1191-1226, 1193, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700.

contributed to the Christianist secularism of Marine Le Pen; a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' The National Front has largely – though not entirely – embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define French culture as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.' The following chapter examines the discourse of the National Front in 2012-2017 in order to test this hypothesis.

Chapter Seven: Discourse Analysis of the National Front: 2012-2017

In the previous chapter I argued that under the leadership of Marine Le Pen the French National Front used religion in its discourse to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other.' It did this, I argued, because it has embraced a form of Christian identitarianism I have labelled (following Brubaker) Christianist secularism. Christianist secularism, I argued, is a reaction to Muslim immigration to and the higher visibility of Islam in France. The presence of Islam, I contended, has made secular Europeans more aware of public religion, and cognizant of the particular – and especially Christian – nature of their own secular culture. It has thus highlighted the manner in which Christianity has been secularised into culture, demonstrating cultural continuity between Europe's religious past and its secular present which may not have been as obvious before the arrival of Muslims. The resulting recognition of the Christianity embedded in French culture has allowed the National Front to wield Christian identity as a weapon against Muslims.

In this chapter I test this hypothesis by examining the National Front's discourse in the 2012-2017 period. During this period Marine Le Pen initiated the de-demonisation programme, which was intended to remove visibile racism and anti-Semitism from the party, and which appears to have helped the party re-fashion its image as a mainstream political party. The period is ideal to test against my hypothesis, because within it the National Front moved away from its Catholic conservatism and towards what Brubaker calls 'Christianist' secularism, the most important features of which include "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality,

gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[684] Furthermore, the popularity of the party's new image

and relationship with religion and secularism was tested at Presidential elections twice during

this period: in 2012 and 2017.

I test my hypothesis against the party's discourse at three separate points: during the 2012

presidential campaign and elections; during the immigration crisis of 2015, and during the

2017 presidential campaign and elections. Through techniques derived from Fairclough's

Critical Discourse Analysis I analyse the discourse of the National Front.[685] I apply CDA

techniques to three texts produced by Marine Le Pen, and by examining her rhetoric attempt

to understand the underlying messages, purposes, and ideology of the texts, as well as

understanding the political and social practices to which they are related. This chapter

consists of two elements. First, a Critical Discourse Analysis of three texts written by Marine

Le Pen, one during the 2012 election campaign, one during the 2015 immigration crisis, and

another during the 2017 election campaign. Following this is a discussion of the data

produced by the CDA, in which my hypothesis is tested against the findings produced by the

CDA. The language of the texts are analysed, and word frequency of key terms relating to

Islam, secularism (*laïcité*) and Christianity are noted, as are terms related to ingroup and

outgroup formation i.e. 'our,' 'they,' 'we,' etc... More frequent use of 'Islam' and

'Christianity' especially in conjunction with terms used to create ingroups and outgroups will

indicate the degree to which Marine Le Pen relies on religious identity to aid in ingroup and

outgroup formation.

National Front Discourse during the 2012 Election Campaign

Once elected President of the National Front on January 16, 2011, Marine Le Pen began a

policy of de-demonisation, shifting the party's image from a radical right, anti-Semitic, racist,

and socially conservative party, to a more mainstream 'patriotic' populist movement. Under

the de-demonisation programme, the party's relationship with religion changed. Before 2011.

the party maintained an at least ambivalent, if not hostile, stance towards *laïcité*.[686] Upon

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[684] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

[685] See Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change,* 1992. See also Fairlough and Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 1997.

[686] Davies, "The National Front and Catholicism: From *Integrisme* to Joan of Arc and Clovis," 576, 2010.

becoming party President Marine Le Pen, however, reversed this stance, declaring *laïcité* and Christianity to be fundamental elements of French society and culture.

For example, in a 2011 interview to French parliamentary TV broadcaster LCP Le Pen claimed that French culture and secularism had Christian roots, and that Islam was inimical to secularism. "Secularism is absolutely not compatible … not natural in Islam, because Islam mixes the spiritual and the temporal," she told the television station.[687] "Muslim countries that are secular," she added, "have usually been so due to force."[688] France, on the other hand, has "Christian roots" which have given the country its "identity."[689] French identity was furthermore not merely Christian but "secular."[690] "We'll hold this identity," Le Pen insisted, "and we won't let this identity be changed."[691] These remarks illuminate the underlying notions of the relationship between Christianity and *laïcité,* and the reasoning behind her opposition to Muslim immigration, Le Pen took to the 2012 Presidential election.

The French Presidential election of 2012 emerged as a three way battle between incumbent conservative president Nicolas Sarkozy, Socialist challenger Francois Hollande, and Marine Le Pen. This situation pitted Marine Le Pen against Nicolas Sarkozy in a battle to win over right-wing voters. While neither Le Pen nor Sarkozy emerged triumphant after the elections, which were won by Francois Hollande's Socialist Party, the two right-wing presidential candidates' battle for the conservative vote exposed the continuing importance of religious identity in secular France. Le Pen and Sarkozy each sought to win over conservatives by emphasising the need to protect French identity from 'outsiders' – particularly Muslims – though in strikingly different ways. During his presidency Sarkozy had described France as a Christian country which was harmed by its ultra-secular constitution and public culture, and which would benefit from returning Christianity to the public sphere.[692] Marine Le Pen took a somewhat different approach, emphasising the importance of strengthening *laïcité* in order to protect French civilisation from immigrants. Upon receiving the required backing from her

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[687] "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," 2011.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid.
[690] Ibid.
[691] Ibid.
[692] See Sarkozy's comments on Christianity and France to this effect as reported by Robert Royal in "Sarkozy and Secularism," *First Things,* January 3, 2008. https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2008/01/sarkozy-and-secularism.

party and its supporters to run for President in 2012, she gave a speech describing the reasons behind her decision to run, her core ideological values, and her vision for France.[693]

In the following section I analyse this particular text using techniques derived from Fairclough's CDA. The purpose of this is to understand the relationship between the text and the social practices and ideologies by which it was produced and which it in turn may produce. Following Fairclough's conventions, I examine the medium through which Le Pen delivers the text, the time, place, and intended audience(s) of the text, analyse the language, and finally examine the ideologies to which the text belongs and to which it may contribute. In particular, the CDA tries to uncover the underlying messages in National Front discourse. To do this I seek answers in selected texts produced by Marine Le Pen to the following questions: (1) does the discourse display the key elements of Christianist secularism: "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[694] (2) How is Islam constructed in the discourse? (3) How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society? The CDA thus pays special attention to the manner in which conceptions such as "the people,' 'Islam,' and 'Christianity,' are constructed in the texts, how they are used to create an exclusive nationalist identity, and their role within the party's ideology.

Summary of Marine Le Pen Speech, 'Why she is running for President of France,' 16 March, 2012.

0.00 – 1.35 (Opening remarks: "Beginning today millions of citizens will feel hopeful again"; "They should know that they can have confidence in me, that I am conscious of the immense task, of the unheard-of sacrifices that will be necessary to restore the country;" "The moment has come to tell all French people the meaning of my candidacy."[695]

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[693] It is rare to find entire speeches by Marine Le Pen translated into English. The only sources available are provided by American right-wing organisations and blogs. MRCTV and the "Gates of Vienna" weblog have translated and transcribed, respectively, Le Pen's 2012 speech. See https://www.mrctv.org/videos/marine-lepen-speech-why-she-running-president-france and https://www.gatesofvienna.blogspot.com.au/2012/03/marine-le-pen-why-i-am-running-for.html.

[694] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.
[695] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen Speech: Why she is running for President," March 16, 2012. https://www.mrctv.org/videos/marine-lepen-speech-why-she-running-president-france

1.35 – 2.00 (Le Pen introduces herself and the core reasons she is running for French President) "Chairman of a political party, a woman, mother of three, I fight." "I fight against everything in the Republic that harms France today ... and I defend the vision of the France that I love."[696]

2.00 – 3.05 (Le Pen argues that France suffers from high crime and a lack of security) "Like all mothers I would like my family to live in security;" "for all mothers I want to restore peace and order in our country;" "But I see that this is not the case;" "The number of criminal attacks has only gone up ... the number of immigrants implicated in these attacks has been going up constantly!"[697]

3.05 – 4.27 (Le Pen criticises France's schools and government efforts to improve them) "As a mother, I hope, as do all French mothers, that my children have a successful life;" "I ask the schools to transmit to them the knowledge accumulated by the brilliant generations that preceded us ... I don't want a levelling to the lowest common denominator, I don't want political correctness in our secondary schools;" "Our teachers suffer from an ill that our society has tolerated for too long: the refusal to use any authority on certain pupils."

4.28 – 5.00 (Le Pen attacks immigrants and defends herself against charges of racism) "No material or human investment can repair the damage done to a society that yields permanently to undisciplined individuals and violent minorities;" "They say I am fiercely anti-immigration. It's true." "They dare to say I am xenophobic and racist. Nothing could be further from the truth of my life;" "I simply say that I totally refuse immigrants who themselves refuse the authority of French law and French culture." [698]

5.00 – 6.46 (Le Pen praises France and French culture) "French civilization is a splendid alchemy of our art, our laws, our literature, of our fundamental rights, dearly acquired, of our beliefs, our values, our traditions, our habits, our mores, our code, our life-style;" "I do not want this civilization to bend under the blows of financial interests or fanatical ideologies whose concepts take us back to the Inquisition;" "...I want a France that is part of the modern world, proud of her civilization and unyielding to those who want to impose on her principles that are not hers;" "Can we place this progress in jeopardy under pressure from religious

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[696] Ibid.
[697] Ibid.
[698] Ibid.

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minorities? Everyone can practice his religion and respect his own customs, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist. There is only one condition: that they respect the French Constitution."[699]

6.46 – 9.47 (Le Pen attacks 'globalist' politicians who give away French sovereignty to the European Union and for France to adopt neoliberal economic policies) "Today Brussels rules, and with it the all-powerful world of finance rules to an ever-greater degree;" "Our politicians' margin of maneuver in the management of the affairs of France has become so small that we wonder what the point is in electing them. ...they can only watch as the people sink into poverty;" "I prefer those who, like myself, see things as they are and make few promises, (but fight) in the name of our freedom and our prosperity against the dictatorships of Europe and minorities;" "the model of society proposed by the globalist left is diametrically opposed to my convictions;"[700]

9.47—12.38 (Le Pen outlines the National Front's economic and social programme) "To do this I will oppose the law of the jungle, where disloyal competition has become insurmountable, where relocating, economic destruction, poverty and massive unemployment have become an uncrossable limit;" "I am also a woman who fights against the mendacious Right, the Right that abandoned its values;" "I am a Frenchwoman among Frenchmen;" "France can return to the path of success and grandeur. The people can return to feeling proud."[701]

Language Analysis

There are three especially significant aspects to Marine Le Pen's address. The primary purpose of the speech is to present Le Pen as a saviour who alone has the ability to return France "to the path of success and grandeur," and who can return pride to "the people."[702] Her frequent use of the first person singular pronoun "I" (used 63 times), while understandable in the context of a speech announcing run for President, is self-aggrandising, and contributes to a typically populist attempt to present the leader as a saviour figure capable of communing with and understanding the needs of 'the people.' Le Pen constructs herself as maternal figure, a mother who is devoted to France and who can stand up to "Frenchmen" and "fight" for the country and the "convictions" of its people due to this powerful love.[703] In

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[699] Ibid.
[700] Ibid.
[701] Ibid.
[702] Ibid.
[703] Ibid.

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this way, Le Pen attempts to transform herself from ordinary woman into a Joan of Arc saviour figure capable of returning France to its former greatness.

Second, Le Pen creates an ingroup consisting of 'the majority' and an outrgoup, consisting of "immigrants," "minorities," "the globalist left," and the "mendacious right."[704] These groups, she claims, have hurt France and taken away 'the people's' pride in their nation. "Immigrants" (used twice) are indeed the major villains in the address, along with "globalist" politicians who have introduced neoliberal economics to France.[705] Immigrants are constructed as a "violent" and criminal 'other', who have harmed France by attempting to impose their culture on the French people.[706] Globalist politicians have introduced "the law of the jungle" into France, hurting the French people and economy, and diminishing the power and sovereignty of the nation-state.[707] Together they form two outgroups which threaten the "prosperity" and "freedom" of the ingroup.[708]

The ingroup Le Pen identifies as 'the people,' on whose behalf she claims to speak, are not described in ethnic or religious terms. They – or rather "we" (used 17 times) – are people who respect the authority of the French constitution and conform to "our" (used 29 times) French culture.[709] The vague descriptions of the outgroup and ingroup are an example of the third important feature of Le Pen's rhetoric in this text: her use of coded language to refer to the ingroup and outgroups. The terms "Immigrants," "religious minorities," and "violent minorities" are used in place of exact ethnic or religious descriptors. Equally, terms such as "the people," and references to people who conform to French culture and respect French law, are used in place of exact descriptions of the ethnic and religious composition of the ingroup. These unspecific terms allow Le Pen to attack minority groups without being accused of singling them out, and enables her to avoid the charge of xenophobia or racism. Terms such as French "civilisation", "ways of life," "mores," and "codes," are used without explanation, though they are obviously infused with meaning.

Ideological Analysis

The text may be understood within the context of the de-demonisation program initiated by Le Pen in 2011, and the National Front's subsequent move away from Catholic identity and

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[704] Ibid.
[705] Ibid.
[706] Ibid.
[707] Ibid.
[708] Ibid.
[709] Ibid.

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social conservatism, and towards mainstream secular French politics. Thus where under Jean-Marie Le Pen the National Front vocally opposed abortion, homosexual rights, and generally held to conservative or traditionalist Catholic principles, Marine Le Pen's speech is empty of references to this conservative program. It is silent on gay rights, women's rights, and Catholicism, neither opposing nor approving of them.

The text, however, is clear about what it opposes. Marine Le Pen declares opposition to "immigrants" and "globalists" who threaten the culture and livelihood of "the people,'' or the "majority" of French citizens on whose behalf she claims to speak.[710] While Le Pen's references to globalists and globalisation are clear enough, and appear to describe politicians who support or implement neoliberal economic policies and facilitate mass immigration, her references to immigrants are somewhat opaque.

Repeated references to the French constitution, the problem of "violent" minorities and the need for a secular system which allows people of all faiths to exist as coequals, betrays the primary target of Le Pen's language: Muslim immigrants. While the text is perhaps intended to be read as a secularist defence of secular neutrality in the public sphere, and an attack on religious believers who refuse to observe *laïcité,* it is also a response to the increasing visibility of Islam within France. As a result, the text may also be understood in relation to French resistance to globalisation, and opposition to mass immigration, in particular the immigration of North African and Middle Eastern Muslims to France. If we understand the "religious minorities" to refer primarily to Muslim immigrants who have not assimilated into French culture, we can see that Islam – or perhaps any religious person who does not observe secular differentiation of religion and politics, and who brings their religious beliefs and practices into the public sphere – is constructed in the text as a violent threat which tries to impose its own beliefs on others, and in doing so violates the principles of *laïcité.*

Thus throughout the text Le Pen constructs a strict dichotomy between the ingroup and outgroup by using the terms "we" and "us" to refer to the secular and culturally French, and excluding globalists and religious minorities from this ingroup. Islam, while not specifically placed in the outgroup, is present in the text as a violent religion whose adherents do not always obey French law. Yet because there are no explicit references to Christianity, it is difficult to situate the text within the Christianist secular discourse identified by Brubaker.

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[710] Ibid.

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Rather, the text is strictly secularist and lacks the vital Christian identity element which Christianist secularism grafts onto a secular worldview.

At the same time, it is important to note that the National Front's 2012 political programme can be situated within the Christianist secular paradigm. The programme explains the party's conception of French culture, values, and civilisation, claming that Christianity has been the religion of the majority of French people for more than a millennium, and that therefore France's national culture and traditions are Christian in nature.[711] Immigrants should not flout, the manifesto says, these Christian traditions which are an integral part of French identity.[712] However, the party also issues a strong message in the programme defending *laïcité*, which it intends to strengthen by altering the constitution to make recognition of religious groups illegal, banning religious attire (especially the Islamic veil) from public places, and preventing Muslim led women's only swimming events at public pools.[713]

Because the programme of the National Front contains Christian identarianism, it is possible to identify it as belonging to the wider populist radical right Christianist secular discourse described by Brubaker. Thus while Marine Le Pen's 2012 speech cannot be described as an example of Christianist secularism, it is itself situated within a wider discourse in which Christian identity is used to other and exclude Muslims. Moreover, Le Pen's language does not contradict the party's Christian identitarianism. Le Pen speaks of the importance of protecting French culture from religious minorities, however she does not describe the nature of French culture, what it is or who to whom it belongs. Yet Le Pen and the party under her leadership have previously described the "culture" of France as secular but also deeply Christian.[714] Equally, Le Pen has described Muslims as a particularly pernicious element in French society, insofar as Islam is a non-Christian religion uniquely resistant to secularisation.

The key to understanding the underlying message of Le Pen's address, then, lies in understanding her conception of French civilisation and values, the reasons she objects to the "immigrants" and "globalists" she frames as enemies of French civilisation, and moreover

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[711] Notre Projet, Programme Politique du Front National," *Front National website*. https://www.frontnational.com/pdf/Programme.pdf, 2011, 105. While I try to avoid French language sources, this section of the manifesto has not been addressed in English.
[712] Ibid.
[713] Ibid, 106.
[714] See Notre Projet, Programme Politique du Front National," 105,2011; "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," 2011

who she understands these "immigrants" and "religious minorities" to be.[715] Le Pen's 2012 speech expresses the notion that France is a secular society open to people of all faiths, as long as they are willing to abide by the secularising principles of the French constitution.[716] Yet the party's manifesto is clear – as was Le Pen in previous instances – that France has a Christian culture which must be protected from the eroding and diluting effects of globalisation, and especially from the Muslim immigrants globalisation has brought to France. Thus in the text Le Pen is able to use vague terms such as "culture" and "religious minorities" knowing that at least a portion of her audience will likely recognise that for the National Front, French 'culture' is specifically Christian, and that the religious minority referred to in the text is France's Muslim community.[717]

National Front Rhetoric on Religion in 2015

The mass immigration of more than a million people from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe – many of them Syrians fleeing the war in their country – made 2015 a particularly significant year in France. While some French and European politicians called for refugees to be welcomed, Marine Le Pen argued vocally against allowing any asylum seekers to settle in France. Throughout 2015, as refugees arrived in Europe, she argued that France must refuse entry to these people who, she said, posed a grave threat to the country and its culture.[718]

Le Pen was not alone in making this argument. She was joined by populist radical right parties across the continent of Europe, several of which were able to capitalise on the sense of crisis and claim that the governing centrist parties of their respective nations were failing 'the people' by allowing Muslim immigrants to settle in Europe.[719] In Britain, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, populist radical right parties grew in stature and significance in 2015, each arguing that Muslim asylum seekers must be repelled, because their presence threatened

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[715] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen Speech: Why she is running for President," 2012.
[716] Ibid.
[717] Ibid.
[718] See "Le Pen compares migrant influx to barbarian invasion of Rome," *RT,* September 15, 2015. https://www.rt.com/news/315466-le-pen-migrant-barbarian-invasion/; Lisa Mayor, "France's National Front leader calls Canada's refugee plan 'madness.'" *CBC,* November 27, 2015. http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/france-le-pen-canada-refugees-1.3340209; Lucy Draper, "National Front's Marine Le Pen says majority of refugees are economic migrants," *Newsweek,* September 9, 2015. http://www.newsweek.com/marine-le-penmarine-le-pen-migrantseconomic-migrantsfront-nationalnational-600595.
[719] See Norris, "It's not just Trump: Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why," 2016.

European nations' identity and culture.[720] In each case populist radical right parties made the defence of national identity from Islam a central element of their political platform.[721]

Immigration was not the only significant issue affecting France in 2015. A related issue, Islamist terrorism – in particular the November 13 attack attributed to Islamic State terrorists which killed hundreds of French citizens – had a powerful impact on French politics. The attacks appeared to prove Le Pen to be correct in her earlier assertion that allowing Muslims into Europe would increase the risk of further terrorist attacks and harm French and European culture. Indeed, shortly after the November 13 attacks, Le Pen authored a short article in *Time* in which she condemned the killings, and described her own vision for 'saving' France from Islamic fundamentalism.[722] In her article, Le Pen links the November 13 terrorist attacks to the migration crisis, arguing that France must no longer be prevented by European Union laws from protecting itself.[723] She further suggests that Islamic fundamentalism can be combated by strengthening *laïcité*.[724]

Summary of "Marine Le Pen: How France will combat the enemies of liberty," Time Magazine, November 18, 2015.

Paragraph 1: (Le Pen recounts the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and affirms the connection between Freedom and the French nation) "For the sixth time in a year, Islamic terrorism has struck France—and this time more viciously than ever before;" "...the Marseillaise embodies ...our unwillingness to yield to the barbarism of Islamic fundamentalism. Charles De Gaulle once said "There exists an immemorial covenant between the grandeur of France and the freedom of the world.""[725]

"Paragraph 2: (Le Pen criticises successive French governments for allowing the attacks to take place) "...if the enemies of liberty have decided to attack France with such barbarity, it's because over decades our country has forgotten that liberty must be organized, that it must be

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[720] Ibid.
[721] Betz and Meret, "Right-Wing Populist Parties and the Working Class Vote: What Have You Done for Us Lately?" 107–121, 2013.
[722] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

[723] Ibid.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Ibid.

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defended, that it is a kind of power which must be nurtured. To forget that truth weakens freedom."[726]

Paragraphs 3-4 (Le Pen calls for a strengthening of French sovereignty to combat Islamic fundamentalism) "Liberty is exercised in the context of national community;" "It is synonymous with a nation defined by strong borders, defined by our values, defined by our way of life, which is appreciated around the world;" "Not all of those we've opened our doors to have come to France with a love of our way of life;" "It only takes a dozen terrorists—some French in nationality, but not spirit, and others capitalizing on the poorly managed migrant crisis—to take the lives of at 129 of our countrymen."[727]

Paragraphs 5-6: (Le Pen affirms the importance of closing France's borders to "migrants," closing "radical mosques," and "liberating" Muslims from radical Islamism) "We must reclaim our national borders permanently and rescind French citizenship to dual-national jihadists because they do not deserve to be considered French;" "We must close radical mosques;" "We must stop welcoming thousands of migrants and regain our national sovereignty.""We must also clarify Islam's role in France. Our Muslim compatriots must no longer be hostage to radical Islamists. French rule of law and a renewed commitment to secularism will liberate them."[728]

Paragraph 7: (Le Pen calls for French foreign policy to focus upon fighting Islamic fundamentalism, ally itself with Russia and the Syrian government) "The threat we face calls us to ally with those who fight fundamentalist Islam; "Let's stop undercutting sovereign states, as Nicolas Sarkozy did disastrously in Libya in 2011."[729]

Paragraph 8: (Closing remarks; Le Pen calls for world solidarity with France in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism for liberty) "...a strong France, faithful to itself and master of its own destiny, is indispensable to world peace. Let us stand together. It is the only way to defeat, once and for-all, fundamentalism and the enemies of liberty."[730]

<center>Language Analysis</center>

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[726] Ibid.
[727] Ibid.
[728] Ibid.
[729] Ibid.
[730] Ibid.

Perhaps because she addresses an international but primarily American English speaking audience in this article, Le Pen seldom refers to herself in first person ("I" is used 3 times), but instead writes of "we" (used 19 times) and "us" (used 28 times).[731] Thus rather than present herself as the saviour of France, Le Pen uses inclusive language to internationalise her perspectives and ideology, and to connect France's struggles with terrorism with that of the United States and other countries which fight "Islamic fundamentalism."[732] Le Pen's "we" refers first to the French nation, but the term is also used to include her readers who value "liberty" and "freedom."[733] This "we" thus serves to separate individuals and groups in favour of liberty from the enemies of freedom: religious fundamentalists and politicians who violate "national sovereignty."

By dividing the world between pro-freedom and anti-freedom camps, Le Pen is able to identify herself and France within the pro-freedom side. According to Le Pen, France has a unique role to play in the world as a bastion of liberty. Therefore, she seems to suggest, all those who love freedom must defend France from the Islamic fundamentalists and globalist politicians who directly or through misguided policies attack French freedoms.[734] Moreover, because Le Pen identifies herself as a defender of France and its freedoms, she appears to suggest, the world must support her efforts to fight Islamic fundamentalism and to close France's borders, thereby preserving its freedoms.

Throughout the article she contrasts the "freedom" (used 4 times) and "liberty" (used 4 times) of the French nation with "Islamic fundamentalism" and "Islamic terrorism."[735] France, in Le Pen's article, is described as a symbol and beacon of freedom in the world. Islamic fundamentalism, on the other hand, is an "enem(y) of liberty".[736] She constructs French Muslims as either Islamic fundamentalists or victims of fundamentalism who require liberation. The purpose of this language is to 'other' Muslims and place them in an outgroup, and furthermore to identify them as enemies of freedom, or as innocent victims of Islamic fundamentalism who must be liberated by the secularism which will allow them to privatise their religious practices and beliefs, and in doing so integrate into French society.

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[731] Ibid.

[732] Ibid.

[733] Ibid.

[734] Whether Islamic terrorists are actually fighting against French freedoms is unclear; it is likely there are a variety of political, social, and religious motivations.

[735] Ibid.

[736] Ibid.

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Significantly, unlike in her 2012 speech, here Le Pen names the religious minority she claims is threatening French liberty: Islam. However, she is careful to attack only "Islamic fundamentalism," not Islam itself or all Muslims. Rather, she separates (bad) Islamic fundamentalists, who do not privatise their religion, from (good) Muslims who are observant of *laïcité*.[737] This separation reflects the distinction she makes between illegitimate public religion, and legitimate private religion. Muslims who secularise and thus privatise their faith may be accepted members of French society. Those who do not do this are fundamentalists and must be barred.

Throughout the text Le Pen's language closely associates Islamic Fundamentalism – a term whose meaning is not explored – with unfreedom, while France and the concept of the nation-state are associated with freedom and peace. Nationalism and the Westphalian nation-state are thus constructed as peaceful and free entities, which themselves promote peace and freedom in the world. According to Le Pen, liberty can only exist within the context of the nation-state: supra-nation bodies such as the European Union are fundamentally hostile towards freedom, as are political parties and individuals who seek to erase national borders.[738] Thus Le Pen describes France's loss of liberty and peace as the result of the country's membership in the European Union. EU membership has precipitated a loss of liberty in France, according to Le Pen, chiefly because it prevents the French from managing their own borders.

Furthermore, Le Pen identifies Sarkozy's (and by extension U.S. President Obama's) violating of Libya's national sovereignty, done in order to hasten the end of Colonel Gaddafi's rule over Libya, as an example of what can go wrong when politicians ignore national sovereignty.[739] What Le Pen appears to be suggesting is that the Libya disaster, and the flood of immigrants which Gaddafi was holding back from crossing the Mediterranean, is the direct result of the decision to ignore Libyan state sovereignty and invade the country. Le Pen's linking of the failed revolution and international military intervention in Libya and the gradual dismantling of French borders and sovereignty is, then, an attempt to demonstrate how freedom and liberty can exist only within the sovereign nation state in full control over its borders, and any attack on national sovereignty is thus also an attack of freedom itself. In making this argument, Le Pen justifies the National Front's nationalist and nativist agenda,

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[737] Ibid.
[738] Ibid.
[739] Ibid.

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couching it in rhetoric which associates the party's nativism and anti-immigration (and particularly anti-Muslim) politics with freedom and liberty.

Ideological Analysis

Le Pen's use of language places her within both the Western European populist radical right movement, but also within French secular nationalism and especially the centre-right Gaullist tradition. The connection with populism is evident in her divisive language, which separates freedom loving peoples in the West from anti-freedom "Islamic fundamentalists," and her attacks on the European Union in the name of national sovereignty.[740] Her sympathetic attitude towards Russia may also connect her rhetoric to the populist radical right, which tends to view Russia as a standard bearer for nationalism and opposition to "cultural relativism."[741]

Equally significant is Le Pen's attachment to secular nationalist Gaullism, a philosophy which her father opposed during his time as National Front leader, and which he viewed as an affront to France's Catholic heritage. Marine Le Pen's quoting of de Gaulle, her description of France as a secular country, and her subtle anti-American language connect her rhetoric to De Gaul's secular nationalism and France first policies. She subtly attacks United States' policy towards the Middle East, and in particular towards Libya and Syria. She suggests the U.S. and France chose to support the wrong sides in the conflicts, and should have sought to protect secular dictators Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad against "Islamic fundamentalist" rebels.[742] These statements, while not entirely out of character for the leader of a party which is historically anti-American and fundamentally hostile to the liberal world order, are a demonstration of Le Pen's attempt to re-orient the party away from Catholic identity politics and towards the Gaullist centre-right.

The text is thus highly secularist, but does not contain the Christianism of the party's 2012 manifesto. References to Christianity are absent from the text, which makes no mention of France's Christian heritage or Christian culture present in contemporary France. Therefore it is not an example of the Christianist secularism identified by Brubaker as being common to populist radical right parties in parts of Europe. It is important to note, however, that during

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[740] Ibid..
[741] Ibid.
[742] Ibid.

the period in which Marine Le Pen authored this article, she used language which falls within Brubaker's Christian secular category. For example, in 2012 Le Pen described the culture and mores of France as being of very ancient Christian heritage, further categorising France as a Judeo-Christian – not Islamic – country.[743] The absence of Christian identitarianism from this text is significant. It shows an effort to disguise the party's Christianism from a wider audience, and to present secularism as something neutral – rather than peculiarly Christian – as she and her party have presented *laïcité* elsewhere.[744]

Other elements of the Christianist secular worldview remain: the text presents a pro-secular, ostensibly liberal and pro-freedom worldview despite authoritarian orientation of the National Front. Thus while the text is intended as a defence of liberty, the National Front under Marine Le Pen favour an authoritarian secularism, in which religion is removed from public sphere except where it is safely secularised into culture. The text is silent on other aspects of the Christianist secular ideology. For example, Le Pen does not demonstrate the philo-Semitism and concern for women's and gay rights common to other populist radical right parties in Western Europe. Her silence on these issues, however, is significant. The National Front under Jean-Marie Le Pen opposed gay marriage and abortion rights, and was famously anti-Semitic. Marine Le Pen's silence on these issues may be interpreted as a part of her de-demonisation effort to rebrand the party as a mainstream, socially moderate movement, though without losing the support of the National Front's social conservative voters.

Throughout the text fundamentalist Islam is presented as the primary antagonist in France's – and by extension the free world's – struggle for freedom. Islam itself is not constructed as an enemy, only fundamentalist Muslims and their interpretation of Islam. Le Pen thus differentiates between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims; 'good' Muslims are constructed as secular, and having privatised their faith in accordance with *laïcité* and French culture. 'Good' Muslims thus practice a legitimate form of religion; legitimate because it is apolitical and private. 'Bad' Muslims, on the other hand, practice their faith publicly, wear Islamic clothing and symbols in public places, and do not comply with the secularising principles of *laïcité*.[745] Their interpretation of Islam, according to Le Pen, does not separate Church and state (so to speak) or religion from politics. Rather, Islamic fundamentalists' Mosques are politically

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[743] Alduy, "Has Marine Le Pen already won the battle for the soul of France?" 2014.
[744] See Notre Projet, Programme Politique du Front National," 105, 2011 ; "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," 2011.
[745] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

dangerous centres of intolerance, and responsible for France's problem with terrorism.[746] 'Bad' Muslims practice an illegitimate form of Islam; illegitimate because it is political and public.

In constructing Islam in this way, 'good' Muslims may become part of the "we" Le Pen refers to in the text, and which she associates with France, secularism, and freedom.[747] 'Bad' Muslims, however, are an outrgroup which is associated with fundamentalism, religion, and authoritarianism. Furthermore, the text constructs Muslims as either fundamentalists or hostages of Islamic fundamentalism. Islamic fundamentalism is, then, constructed as a force preventing the necessary secularisation of Islam occurring, and thus preventing the integration of Muslims into French culture.

Marine Le Pen's secularism is emphasised in the text, but the National Front's embrace of Gaulism and *laïcité* was somewhat undercut by her niece and National Front candidate Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, who remarked that Muslims could "not truly be French" because they did not share the "customs and lifestyle" of France's "Christian heritage".[748] Maréchal-Le Pen's remarks echo the National Front 2012 manifesto as well as Marine Le Pen's own remarks about the "Christian heritage" of France in the impossibility of secularising Islam.[749] The Christianism of National Front's 2012 political platform, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, and earlier statements by Marine Le Pen, contradict the ultra-secularism of Le Pen's *Time Magazine* article.

The contradiction may not, however, be as extreme as it first appears. Much of Le Pen's ultra-secularism in the text is compatible with her and her party's Christianist claims that France has a Christian culture. The text does not deny Christianity's role in forming French culture; rather, it merely emphasises the importance of secularism to France. On the other hand, the text suggests it is possible for Muslims to secularise, something Le Pen has denied on other occasions.[750] The text's silence on Christian identity suggests that Marine Le Pen is an opportunistic politician, attempting to present French secularism as neutral space in this text, but describing the same as a culturally Christian space when it suits her purposes.

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[746] Ibid.
[747] Ibid.
[748] John Lichfield, "National Front: Marine Le Pen and Marion Maréchal-Le Pen expect electoral breakthrough for France's far-right," *The Independent,* December 4, 2015. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/front-national-marine-le-pen-and-marion-mar-chal-le-pen-expect-electoral-breakthrough-for-france-s-a6761051.html
[749] "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," 2011.
[750] Ibid; Alduy, "Has Marine Le Pen already won the battle for the soul of France?" 2014.

National Front discourse on religion in 2017

The French political landscape in 2017 was defined by the loss of public support for the traditional governing centrist parties, particularly Francois Hollande's Socialists. This loss of support opened a space for the technocratic centrist *En Marche!* movement and the National Front, which capitalised on growing dissatisfaction with the status quo and offered new forms of politics in its place. The two political parties offered strikingly different policies and visions of France's future. *En Marche!* leader Emmanuel Macron positioned himself as an internationalist and firm supporter of European integration, remarking that "there is not a French culture. There is a culture in France, and it is diverse."[751] By 2017 *En Marche!* was the most popular party in France.

Marine Le Pen's National Front emerged during the 2016-2017 period as the most popular right-wing party in France, eclipsing centre-right *Les Republicans,* the party of Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Fillon. Le Pen's political programme opposed the internationalism and neoliberalism of *En Marche!,* and her party articulated a starkly different vision of France and French culture**.** Le Pen and Macron would emerge as winners from the first round of Presidential elections in May, 2017. In the first round of voting Marine Le Pen finished second, winning 21.30% of the vote.[752] The winner was *En Marche!* candidate Emmanuel Macron, who won 24.01% of the vote. In a run-off election, Macron won 66.10% percent of the vote to Le Pen's 33.90%.[753] Macron's technocratic centrist platform of neoliberalism and globalism had won over Le Pen's nativism, left-wing economics, and identity politics**.**

Marine Le Pen discussed her policies and conception of French culture in her official Presidential campaign launch. In the address, given in the city of Lyon on February 5, 2017, Le Pen contrasts the 'Islamised' and 'financialised' France of today with the secularised Christian values of the 'true' France of yesteryear.[754]

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[751] The New York Times, "In Their Own Words: Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron," *The New York Times,* May 5, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/05/world/europe/emmanuel-macron-marine-le-pen-quotes.html.

[752] "French presidential election: first round results in charts and maps," 2017.

[753] "French Presidential Election May 2017 full second round results and analysis," 2017.

[754] While Le Pen's speech, and her comments on the importance of Judeo-Christian to France, were reported in the English language press, the most complete transcript of her speech appears on the website of the "right-wing think tank" the Gates Institute. Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," *Gates Institute Online*, February 5, 2017. https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9900/le-pen-speech.

Summary of Marine Le Pen's Presidential Campaign Launch Speech, Lyon, 5 February 2017

Paragraphs 1-8 (Le Pen defines the key topic of her address: the threat to French culture posed by 'globalisation.')

"The question is simple and cruel: will our children live in a free, independent, democratic country; will they live according to our cultural references, our values of civilization, our style of living, and will they even speak our French language..." "...unlike our adversaries, I am interested not only in the material heritage of the French, but I also want to defend our immaterial capital."[755]

Paragraphs 9-27 (Le Pen defines the "two totalitarianisms" threatening France: economic globalisation and Islamic Fundamentalism)[756]

"Globalization develops at two levels: from below with massive immigration and global social dumping; and from above with the financialization of the economy." "Economic globalization, which rejects any limits, has weakened the immune system of the nation by dispossessing it of its constituent elements: borders, national currency, the authority of its laws in conducting economic affairs, and thus allowing another world to be born and grow: Islamic fundamentalism." "These two ideologies want to subjugate our country."

Paragraphs 28-34 (Le Pen discusses the deleterious effects of "economic globalisation" on the nation state)

"With the globalists, cultures of peoples, that is, what makes the world's diversity, are destined to be erased in order to facilitate the commercialization of standard products and to facilitate hyper profits at the cost of ecological depletion of the planet or child labor of the Third World;" "This world where economics is an end in itself and man, a simple tool in its service, plunges us into an ephemeral era, in short, an artificial and deeply dehumanized world."[757]

Paragraphs 35-41 (Le Pen describes the threat Islamic fundamentalism poses to France)

"I want to denounce this powerful alliance between the promotion of savage globalization on the one hand, and the culpable inaction, even in the face of uncontrolled immigration and its

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[755] Ibid.
[756] Ibid.
[757] Ibid.

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direct consequence, the establishment of Islamic fundamentalism;" "Islamic fundamentalism, instrumentalizes the principle of religious freedom in an attempt to impose patterns of thought that are clearly the opposite of ours;" "We do not want to live under the yoke or threat of Islamic fundamentalism. It tries to impose upon us...The prohibition of mixing in public places, the integral veil or not, prayer halls in companies, street prayers, cathedral mosques, The submission of woman by prohibiting the skirt, work or bistro."[758]

Paragraphs 42-50 (Le Pen globalisation and "radical Islamism" with the "Christian" culture of the majority of French).

"Behind these two ideologies is inexorably the enslavement of people;" Economic globalism professes individualism, and radical Islamism communitarianism;" "France was built and on the principles in which the immense majority of French people still recognize themselves: the pre-eminence of the person and therefore its sacred character, individual freedom and therefore individual consent, national feeling and therefore national solidarity, equality of persons and therefore the refusal of situations of submission."[759]

"These principles for which we are fighting are affirmed in our national motto "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," which itself proceeds from a secularization of principles stemming from our Christian heritage."[760]

Paragraphs 51-59 (Le Pen demands greater "patriotism" in France)

"France is an act of love. This love has a name: patriotism." "It is what pits our vision against that of the globalists." "We believe it is time to revitalize national sentiment." "To all, and especially to people of all origins and all faiths that we have welcomed into our country, I repeat: there are no and there will be no other laws and values in France than those that are French."

"We will strictly apply the rules of secularism in a country whose tragic history has learned to guard against the wars of religion. We will extend the rules of secularism to public spaces and we will inscribe them in labor laws."[761]

Paragraphs 60-90 (Le Pen insists on the importance of restoring "liberty" to France)

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[758] Ibid.
[759] Ibid.
[760] Ibid.
[761] Ibid.

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"The first liberty is security." "We will re-establish the rule of law;" "We will stress the certainty of prosecution, the certainty of sanction, the certainty of punishment, the certainty that delinquent aliens are automatically deported." "In terms of terrorism, we do not intend to ask the French to get used to living with this horror. We will eradicate it here and abroad"

"Since we are at war with Islamic fundamentalism, we will apply to the enemies of France the legal devices of the state of war;" "Places of Islamic preaching will be closed and the sowers of hatred condemned and expelled. The legal windows of Islamism, especially on the Internet, will be extinguished;" "Finally, this revolution of liberty is that of our collective liberties, for state sovereignty, that is to say, for a free people to decide for themselves. This struggle for sovereignty is first, principal, essential, cardinal."[762]

"I will announce a referendum within six months on remaining or exiting the European Union." "The old left-right debates have outlived their usefulness. ...debates about secularism or immigration, as well as globalization or generalized deregulation, constitute a fundamental and transversal divide. This divide is ...between patriots and globalists." "The collapse of traditional parties and the systematic disappearance of almost all of their leaders shows that a great political re-composition has begun."

Language Analysis

The ostensible purpose of the text is to present the 2017 Presidential election platform of the National Front to the party's supporters and the wider French electorate. In the text Le Pen attempts to shape the discourse around the Presidential election by describing her party's policies as a response to the most important and salient issues of the day. Le Pen defines globalisation as the key issue with which French people are concerned, particularly the economic and cultural disruption she claims is the natural result of allowing "globalist" politicians to pursue a neoliberal economic agenda.[763]

Thus throughout the text Le Pen sets herself and her party apart from mainstream French politics, and the deleterious effects she claims the traditional governing parties' globalism has had upon the French nation and its culture. In order to differentiate the National Front from her centre-right and centre-left opponents, Le Pen constructs an ingroup consisting of the majority of the French, whom Le Pen claims to represent, and outgroups consisting of

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[762] Ibid.
[763] Ibid.

Globalists and Islamist radicals, whom Le Pen claims are destroying French culture and who she opposes. In order to construct these groups Le Pen refers continually to a "we" (used 39 times), by which she sometimes means merely the National Front, but often the majority of French citizens, who she claims oppose the globalism of mainstream French politicians and who she claims to alone be capable of 'saving' from "economic" and "cultural" globalisation.[764] Thus when Le Pen speaks of "our" France, and "our" values and culture ('our' is used 57 times) she 'others' the "globalists" and Muslims she deems to be fundamentalist as insufficiently French, and hostile to France and French culture.[765]

The majority French ingroup Le Pen calls 'patriots,' while the outgroup is the "globalists" (globalisation/globalist/globalists used 23 times). This distinction between patriotism and globalism is most important in the text, and identified as a new political paradigm in France, replacing the outdated left vs right dichotomy. The 'patriotic' ingroup identified by Le Pen is culturally French, and therefore culturally Christian yet observant of France's secular laws, pro-freedom, and endangered by economic and cultural globalisation. The outgroups are defined by their hostility to France, either because they support economic and/or cultural globalisation, which Le Pen claims is disrupting and destroying the French nation-state and culture, or because they are Islamic fundamentalists who refuse to observe the principles and laws of *laïcité*. Thus Le Pen places "globalist" politicians and businesspeople, and "Islamist radicals" in her outgroup throughout the text. [766]

Constructing an ingroup and outgroup based on a patriot-globalist divide is especially useful for Le Pen, whose party has long defined itself as a patriotic group associated with neither the left nor the right, but which is always loyal to France. Throughout the text the National Front is identified as the party of patriots, who will defend France from the culturally and ethically diluting forces of the market and business, and furthermore defend France's Christian derived secular values and culture from Islamic fundamentalism. Le Pen thus presents herself and her party as potential savours of France, and as the only political group that loves France enough to save the country from the "financialization" which has so weakened French sovereignty

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[764]Ibid.
[765] Ibid.
[766] Ibid.

and culture that it has allowed Islamic fundamentalists to create "another world" of religious fanaticism inside secular France.[767]

Muslims themselves are not automatically placed within the text's outgroup. Rather, only Islamic fundamentalists and Islamist radicals are described as being antithetical to the values and culture of France, and an existential threat to the country. However, by describing France as a culturally Christian nation, and speaking of secularism as though it were a specific product of Christianity, Le Pen may be understood as 'othering' Muslims and excluding them from belonging to 'the people' or the French and culturally Christian ingroup.

Ideological Analysis

The text can be understood as an example of populist – and specifically populist radical right – discourse. It is populist insofar as text constructs Le Pen as a potential national saviour who stands above politics and enjoys a direct connection with 'the people,' whose interests she alone claims to represent. Furthermore, it is specifically right-wing populist insofar as the text constructs an ingroup ('the people') which represents the 'true' and 'good' people of France, and pits them against outgroups (globalists; Islamic fundamentalists) who threaten the ingroup and their interests (the French nation-state, secularism, Christian values.)

The text is also best understood as a reaction to and an attempt to capitalise on a number of social and economic issues affecting contemporary France. These include the 2015 'immigration crisis,' ongoing economic problems stemming from the 2008 financial crisis and beyond it the disrupting influence of neoliberal economic policies, mass immigration (particularly from non-European nations), and terrorism and other criminal activities. Le Pen links these disparate problems and issues together, claiming them to be the result of the negative influence of globalisation which 'globalist' politicians have forced upon France. 'Globalists' are, according to Le Pen's text, the ultimate enemy of France and French culture.[768]

In the text Globalists are claimed to be destroying French culture by placing the acquisition of above all other values, above patriotism and the continuation of the French way of life. Globalists post an existential threat to France, according to the text, insofar as they are wiping away France's borders, erasing its culture and replacing it with neoliberal greed, and

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[767] Ibid.
[768] Ibid.

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encouraging mass immigration. The resulting loss of sovereignty and the presence of millions of non-French (and especially non-European) people has, according to the text, injured 'the people's' pride in their country, diluted French culture, and – most pernicious of all – allowed Islamic fundamentalism and Islamist terrorism to thrive within France. Le Pen's argument against globalisation, then, is that globalisation in Europe inevitability results in Islamisation.

A core concern in the text is the protection of France from Islamisation. For Le Pen, protecting France from radical Islam means strengthening *laïcité* and increasing patriotic feeling. Therefore the text is secularist. However, the text's secularism is 'Christianist' insofar as it grafts a Christian identity onto a secular political platform, and suggests that the secular is in certain respects a continuation of Christianity. The text, then, does not seek to differentiate between the ingroup and outgroups based on race, but rather on ideological and religious grounds: the 'patriots' of the ingroup love France and its Christian based secular culture. Christian identity is thus used to exclude and other Muslims and 'globalists,' and construct them as threats to France and its Christian-secular culture.

While Christianity is used to define the culture of French and the identity of the ingroup ('the people'), the text constructs Islamic fundamentalism – though not Islam itself – as a danger to France. Le Pen's argument is that while many Muslims obey France's secular laws and culture, Islamist radicals and Islamic fundamentalists refuse to secularise. Their insistence on practicing their religion in public, according to the text, constitutes an existential threat to France. Is Marine Le Pen suggesting, then, that Islam is compatible with French culture, and only Islamic fundamentalism incompatible? While Le Pen has on occasion claimed Islam is insoluble in secularism, more often – an in this text – she claims that only Islamist radicals are incompatible with secular French society.[769] However, Le Pen appears to be suggesting that Islamic fundamentalists are Muslims who bring their religion into the public sphere. This definition may include all observant Muslim within the 'fundamentalist/radical' category, marking the majority of Muslims out as part of an outgroup. Equally, her complaints about mass immigration posing a threat to French culture suggests that Islam itself, for Le Pen, is poses a threat to the continuation of French culture. According to the text, immigrant groups must assimilate into France's Christian based secular society.[770] Therefore, because Muslims have been constructed as being outside this Christian-secular ingroup, Le Pen insists upon

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[769] "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," 2011.
[770] Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.

their exclusion because their religion is foreign and has not been secularised into French culture.

This use of Christian identity to protect secular society marks the text as an example of the Christianist secularism Brubaker identifies as a hallmark of a number of populist radical right parties in Western/Northern Europe. For example, the text is ostensibly liberal, proposing to make France more 'free' by eliminating the Muslim fundamentalists (and their mosques) who threaten French liberty.[771] Equally, the text supposes that liberty is a unique product of France's Christian heritage, and safeguarded by its secular constitution and laws.[772] The text, however, is silent on gay rights, and support for Israel. But this silence marks a move away from Catholic conservatism, and the ultra-conservative policies towards homosexuals and women of the Jean-Marie Le Pen led National Front.[773] Indeed, the text represents Islam as a conservative force which threatens women's liberty, and secularism as a liberating force which protects women from religious restrictions on their dress and behaviour.

Ultimately, Le Pen's message is that France must turn away from the neoliberal economics which have undermined French culture and encouraged Muslims to settle in France, and return to the secularised Christian values that made France great. Christianity is thus not valued by Le Pen as a moral force or a useful form of spiritual practice. Yet neither is Christianity solely used instrumentally, and as a manner of distinguishing between the ingroup (or 'the people') and outgroups. Rather, Christianity is also constructed in the text as the progenitor of the secularism Le Pen considers to be among the most vital aspects of French political life, and of the core values of the French Republic: *liberté, egalité, fraternité*.[774]

Discussion

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[771] Ibid.

[772] Ibid.

[773] Moreover, Le Pen visited Israel in March, 2017, where she praised Israeli society and sought to encourage French Jews to support the National Front. See Mafred Gerstenfeld, "The Relationship between Israel and Marine Le Pen," *The Jerusalem Post,* March 28, 2017. https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/The-relationship-between-Israel-and-Marine-Le-Pen-485474; Amanda Taub, "France's Far Right, Once Known for its Anti-Semitism, Courts Jews," *The New York Times,* April 5, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/world/europe/france-jews-marine-le-pen-national-front-anti-semitism.html.

[774] Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.

CDA reveals three important aspects of the National Front's use of religion and Christian identity in their discourse in 2012-2017. First, a shift in Marine Le Pen's use of religion throughout the period. While three texts are too few to discern an overall pattern, the data suggests that Le Pen moved the party's position on religion immediately – following her acceptance of the Presidency of the National Front – away from her father's Catholic conservatism and Catholic identity politics.

Marine Le Pen's 2012 text demonstrates her determination to have the National Front embrace *laïcité,* and drop its attachment to Christian based social conservatism and identity, and appears intended as a defence of *laïcité* from the dangers of public religion.[775] France is described as a secular country which does not allow "religious minorities" to dictate to the secular majority.[776] Islam is not defined as an enemy *per se.* Yet it is difficult to understand Le Pen's attack on religious minorities as anything other than a reference to Muslims and Islam. Le Pen's decision to leave Islam unnamed is significant, and demonstrates the Le Pen's framing of secularism as a neutral space where all religions may co-exist, provided that they remain outside of the public sphere and privatised. This secularism is neutral – not 'Christian.' Yet the party's 2012 policy manifesto uses religion differently, in a manner which is Christianist and secular.[777] Thus there is an inconsistency in the National Front's use of religion in 2012. Sometimes the party presents secularism as a neutral space, other times as a product of France's Christian heritage. In a similar way, sometimes France is presented as a secular country, while on other occasions the Christian heritage of France is used.

A similar inconsistency is seen in 2015, and in the party's response to the 'immigration crisis' and Islamist terror attacks of that year. In a 2014 interview Le Pen described France as a nation with a Christian heritage, and whose mores and culture were profoundly Christian yet entirely secularised.[778] On the other hand, references to France's Christian heritage are absent from Le Pen's *Time* article. There France is described as a secular nation, whose secular freedoms are threatened by Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamist Radicals.[779] Significantly, however, Islamic fundamentalism is named as the enemy, and the form of public religion which challenges *laïcité* and must be suppressed in order for France to remain secular and

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[775] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen Speech: Why she is running for President," 2012.
[776] Ibid.
[777] Notre Projet, Programme Politique du Front National," *Front National website.* 105, 2011.
[778] Alduy, "Has Marine Le Pen already won the battle for the soul of France?" 2014.
[779] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

free.[780] Despite this inconsistency, the National Front had by 2015 decisively moved away from Catholic identity politics and social conservatism, embracing instead secular nationalism while remaining largely silent on issues such as abortion and gay rights.

Christian identitarianism made a strong return in Marine Le Pen's 2017 text, where it is used to differentiate between the ingroup ('the people') and the 'Islamic Fundamentalist' outgroup, the role secular identity played in the 2012 and 2015 texts. It is perhaps not possible to determine exactly why Le Pen chose to invoke Christian identity in her 2017 text. Given the inconsistent use of Christianity in National Front discourse in 2012-2017, it is likely Le Pen believed it was advantageous to invoke France's Christian heritage in her defence of French culture and secular from its perceived enemies. It may be that Le Pen discerned that her supporters, and perhaps sections of the wider French population, had reacted to the immigration of Muslims to France – particularly in the aftermath of the 2015 immigration 'crisis' – by more closely identifying as secular (or without religious belief) and culturally Christian. This is entirely possible, due to the effects of Muslim immigration on French identity. By this I mean the manner in which the increasing presence and visibility of Islam has made some French cognizant of the 'cultural' Christianity embedded in French culture, and which was largely invisible before it was contrasted against Islam and Islamic culture. The Christianist secularism in Le Pen's 2017 text may be an attempt to capitalise on the growing Christianist secularism of sections of the French public, who have grafted a sense of Christian identity onto their secular worldview in the face of Muslim difference.

Le Pen's 2017 references to Christianity may also be an attempt to keep her Catholic supporters, who were increasingly being represented by her Niece Marion Marechal-Le Pen. Marechal-Le Pen sought to return the party to something closer to the Catholic identity politics and social conservatism of Jean-Marie Le Pen, and was seen as something of a rival to her aunt.[781] By invoking France's Christian heritage, Le Pen may be attempting to signal to Marechal-Le Pen's supporters that she too shares their affection for Christianity, and belief that Christian identity – if not belief – is a defining aspect of French culture.

The National Front's use of religion in 2012-2017 is complex and inconsistent. Le Pen's 2017 text and the party's 2012 manifesto are demonstrations of Christianist secularism. Yet Le Pen's 2012 and 2015 texts do not explicitly identify France as Christian, but present

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[780] Ibid.
[781] Lichfield, "National Front: Marine Le Pen and Marion Maréchal-Le Pen expect electoral breakthrough for France's far-right," 2015.

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laïcité as a neutral space between religions and frame France as a country under attack by religious (Islamist) fanatics. The party's use of religion must therefore be understood as opportunistic and somewhat cynical. However, it may also be understood as a demonstration of the secularising of France and – paradoxically – the narrowing of the distance between Christianity and *laïcité* after Muslim immigration being reflected in the discourse of the National Front. Despite the inconsistencies, then, the National Front under Marine Le Pen have a relatively coherent position on religion: religion is dangerous if allowed in the public sphere, and acceptable if it is secularised. Secularised 'cultural' Christianity, for the party, is a vital part of French culture. Therefore Christianity must be defended if French culture is to be defended. *Laïcité* is also a vital element of French culture, according to the party, therefore it too must be defended alongside cultural Christianity. Islam is perceived as dangerous because it has not been secularised into culture, and cannot be privatised in the manner which Christianity has had its spiritual and moral elements subordinated to the laws of the secular French state. Therefore, according to the party, Muslim immigration must be stopped in order to preserve the secular freedoms of France and the continued observance of the separation of Church and state, which both Christianity and *laïcité* observe.

Table indicating a shift towards a more hostile stance towards Muslims in the discourse of Marine Le Pen in 2015, and a trend towards explicit Christian identitarianism in 2017.

	2012 Election Campaign	2015 immigration 'crisis'	2017 Election Campaign
Key Words	"I" "immigrants" "the people" "religious minorities"	"we" "Islamic fundamentalism" "secular" "Islamist radicals"	"we" "our" "Christian" "laicite" "Islamic fundamentalism" "cultural and economic globalisation"
Core Message	Immigrants and religious minorities threaten the culture and livelihood of 'the people' of France, whose interests Le Pen represents.	Fundamentalist Muslims threaten to destroy French freedoms and France's secular culture. The world must act against Islamic fundamentalists and to	Economic and cultural globalisation poses an existential threat to France, French freedoms, and French culture. Globalist politicians

		preserve French freedoms.	have allowed Islamic fundamentalism to flourish in France, violating *laïcité* and threatening the nation's future.

Second, Islam is never itself constructed as a threat to France in the three texts, but rather violent "religious minorities,"[782] "Islamic Fundamentalists" and "Islamist radicals"[783] are designated as threats to French secularism and (in the 2017 text) France's Christian values and heritage.[784] Le Pen's strongest criticisms, however, are not of Muslims or Islam, but of the "globalist politicians" and globalist ideology which have reduced French sovereignty and encouraged the mass immigration of Muslims to France.[785] Yet Le Pen describes the worst effects of globalisation as the 'Islamising' of France, which has occurred due to the combination of mass immigration of Muslims into an environment in which French culture has been diluted by neoliberal values (the worship of economic growth at the expense of carrying on French cultural traditions).[786]

Therefore Islamic Fundamentalism is the unwelcome outcome of the globalisation Le Pen fights against. Moreover, according to Le Pen, not all Muslims are threatening France and French culture. 'Good' Muslims, who privatise their religion and obey France's secular laws and culture, are themselves categorised as victims of the 'bad' fundamentalist and radical Muslims, who do not privatise their faith, but rather bring it into the public sphere in a multitude of ways. It is possible, Le Pen appears to be suggesting, for some Muslims to live in France, but only insofar as they assimilate into French culture, and perform a schizophrenic splitting of their private and public selves, in which the private self is Islamic and the public self is culturally Christian-secular. Because this is inconceivable, it is perhaps best to admit that Le Pen finds little space for Muslims in France, and her opposition to Muslim immigration is based upon her belief that Islam is incompatible with secularism and a

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[782] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen Speech: Why she is running for President," 2012.
[783] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.
[784] Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.
[785] Ibid.
[786] Ibid.

threat to the culturally Christian secular culture of France. Thus while Christians and Jews are incorporated within the ingroup Le Pen has constructed – with Le Pen declaring her support for Israel, and suggesting that protecting Christians in Lebanon is part of France's mission in the world – Muslims always remain in the outgroup.

Islamic fundamentalism is thus constructed throughout the 2015 and 2017 texts as anti-freedom, illiberal, anti-woman, and a dangerous retrograde element within France which must be suppressed in order to prevent religious conflict. A public religion hostile to the Westphalian state, Islamic fundamentalism, according to Le Pen, is so dangerous that it may return France to the religious warfare which plagued Europe before 1648.[787]

Third, Le Pen constructs an ingroup and outgroups based partly – though not entirely – on religious identity. For Le Pen the "I" and "we" the make up the ingroup are secular but culturally Christian. The "globalist" and "Islamic fundamentalist" outgroups, however, do not belong to France because – according to Le Pen – they do not respect French culture and law. "Islamic fundamentalists" are claimed to be violating "our" secularism, and refusing to assimilate into "our" "Christian" based culture.[788] The key difference, then, between the ingroup and outgroup is not merely religious identity. Rather, Le Pen's worldview in the texts is built around a 'patriot' vs 'globalist dichotomy.' The ingroup therefore is first and foremost defined by its 'patiotism,' or its adherence to the National Front's conception of French culture and desire to preserve France's sovereignty and culture in an era of globalisation. Christian belief plays no role in defining the ingroup. Rather, observance of secular differentiation between religion and politics, and Church and state plays a large role in defining the difference between the ingroup and outgroup. At the same time, however, adherence to 'cultural' (i.e. secularised) Christianity also plays a role in defining the ingroup.

Christianity is thus used instrumentally by Le Pen to defend her party's intention to exclude Muslims from French society, on the basis that if France is culturally Christian yet secular, then Islam can have no place in France due to its incompatibility with both France's secular laws and Christian culture. Christianity is thus important to Le Pen because it is seen as an aspect of French culture, a defining element which brought to France its secular ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity. She frames Christianity as the progenitor of French values, though says nothing about the importance of Christian belief, or the salience of traditional

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[787] Ibid.
[788] Ibid.

Christian social values. Therefore Le Pen's use of Christianity is restricted to a tool with which she can help construct an ingroup or a 'people' which excludes Muslims and anyone who does not conform to her conception of French culture, including the 'globalists' who she claims seek to dilute French culture.

From this analysis it can be surmised that under Marine Le Pen's leadership the National Front altered its use of religion, and while doing so has achieved its greatest ever electoral success and political significance. A most significant change in the party's discourse in the 2012-2017 period was its decision to embrace of *laïcité* as an expression of authentic French values and France's Christian heritage. This marked a move away from the anti-secular, traditionalist Catholic rhetoric of policies of the Jean-Marie Le Pen era, and a move towards the centre of French politics – a move rewarded by improved polling and electoral success at the 2012 and 2017 elections.

Where once the FN opposed *laïcité* as inauthentically French, since 2011 the FN has embraced *laïcité* as a vital expression of what it means to be French, and a product of the nation's "very anciently Christian" culture.[789] Why, the, has this re-conceptualisation of *laïcité's* place in French culture occurred? Marine Le Pen is able to describe herself as a defender of both France's Christian heritage and *laïcité* because, my analysis suggests, Muslim immigration has altered some French people's sense of religious identity. This change has allowed the National Front to capitalise on the subsequent blurring of Christianity with *laïcité* by declaring France to be a culturally Christian yet secular state.

Moreover, the increasing electoral success of the National Front during the 2012-2017 period suggests that when faced with large-scale Muslim migration – as occurred during the 2015 migration crisis – a significant number of French switched their votes away from centrist parties and towards the National Front. This indicates that a growing number of French voters accept this close identification of Christianity with *laïcité,* and thus accept the party's blurring of religion and politics as part of a cultural defence of French culture from a perceived enemy in Muslim immigrants.

The National Front's use of religion varied during the 2012-2017. In Marine Le Pen's texts France is defined as a strongly secular nation, in which Christian culture – though not belief – is a defining element of national culture and identity. When Christianity is used by Le Pen, it

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[789] Marine Le Pen, "Has Marine Le Pen Already Won the Battle for the Soul of France?" 2014.

is always used in a manner in line with Brubaker's Christianist secular category. Post-2011, the party portrays itself as a defender of liberal society, freedom, secularism, women, Jews, and homosexuals from retrograde "Islamic fundamentalism." It uses Christianity as a tool to divide between the free and secular world from the unfree, fundamentalist world of Islam. Thus in the Christianist secular discourse of the National Front, Christianity is never referred to as a belief system, but as an identity and progenitor of peculiarly French values and culture.

The key to understanding the Nation Front's post-2011 use of Christian identity, then, is through Le Pen's 'patriot-globalist' dichotomy. Christian identity is useful to Le Pen, because it assists her in defining the particularities of France, which she seeks to defend from (1) globalists' alleged intention to make France an 'anywhere' dominated by neoliberalism and the market, and (2) Islamists' alleged intention to desecularise France. For Le Pen, to be a 'patriot' – and thus part of 'the people' or the ingroup – means to be a secularist who observes the Christian derived culture of France, and a defender of French culture and sovereignty. The 'patriot' wants France to retain its unique culture, and opposes mass immigration and neoliberalism because it dilutes and ultimately may destroy that which makes France unique.

Christian identity is thus used to exclude Muslims on the basis that France is culturally Christian and secular, whereas Muslims are non-Christian and non-secular. Equally, it is a device to exclude 'globalists,' who deny the existence of a single French culture and wish for France to become a more diverse, multicultural society.[790] By defining France as a culturally Christian nation, whose values and secular laws are a product of Christianity, Marine Le Pen's National Front has the means to exclude any group which appears to threaten France's secularised Christian culture. This type of Christianity, however, is not 'religious.' The National Front does not appear to be attempting to sacralise its political programme or France through its association of the two with Christianity. Rather, Marine Le Pen's National Front appears to perceive the French nation-state as a sacred object. Christianity becomes sacralised, in a curious way, through its association with French culture.

The party thus merges France, secularism, and Christianity together, though without drawing on Christian spirituality. Rather, the National Front's project is to replace the ideology of 'globalism' (multiculturalism and the market) with a secular nationalism which includes

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[790] Emmanuel Macron, quoted in "In Their Own Words: Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron," 2017.

within it Christian identitiarianism, but is absent of Christian beliefs and spiritually. Secularism nationalism, then, is the ideology with which Le Pen seeks to replace 'globalism.' Public religion – including unsecularised public Christianity – is forbidden in the French public sphere under this scheme. For example, Roy has discussed the post-2011 National Front's complex relationship with the Catholic Church. He notes that while the party and the Church converge on issues such as the importance of France's "Christian identity," the two are increasingly at odds over the role Christian social values play within French society.[791] Yet, he writes, while the National Front and the Church have open disagreements, as long as French Catholics remain sympathetic to the party the Church must be careful "follow its flock," rather than risk alienating Catholics by condemning the party.[792] For Le Pen, Christianity – like all religion – is to be tolerated only when it is secularised and privatised, and used to buttress the secular state and protect it from its 'globalist' and Islamic enemies.

Christian identity, and moreover the Christianist secular ideology promulgated in parts of the National Front's discourse, demonstrates the party's determination to move France beyond neoliberal economics, the dictatorship of the market, and to prevent France becoming an 'anywhere' rather than an expression of France's unique history and culture. Equally, the National Front's Christianist secularism betrays a fear of Islam, and a belief that Islam is a unique threat because it is particularly difficult to secularise and privatise, and thus a threat to France's Christian culture and secular laws. Yet the party's Christianist secularism does not orient the party towards, but rather away, from traditional Christian values and the Catholic church. The National Front's Christianist secularism orients the party towards secular nationalism, a key element of which is recognising and defending the secularised Christianity embedded in French culture, which the party has reconceptualised as authentically French in the wake of mass Muslim immigration.

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[791] Roy, "The French National Front: From Christian Identity to *Laïcité*," 92, 2016.
[792] Ibid.

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Chapter Eight: Comparing case studies

This chapter compares the data produced in the case study chapters. In particular it compares the findings of each chapter, including (1) The respective role played by Muslim immigration and Islam's visibility in altering the religious identity of France and the Netherlands; (2) Whether the Party for Freedom and National Front ought to be placed inside the Christianist secular category; (3) How the two parties construct Islam in their discourse; (4) How the two parties use Christianity and/or Judeo-Christianity to construct an ingroup and in doing so construct outgroups.

Building upon the comparison of the data produced in the case study chapters, this chapter makes three major arguments. First, it contends that Muslim immigration and the increased visibility of Islam have changed Dutch and French religious identity, and thus helped engender the rise of Christianist secular populist radical right movements in the Netherlands and France. Based upon this finding, the chapter further argues that it is very likely that these forces have helped engender the Christianism of other Western European populist radical right movements. Thus Western Europe's Christianist secularism can be understood as stemming primarily from the effects of Muslims immigrating into secular, post-Christian societies.

Second, the chapter contends that the Party for Freedom and National Front, despite certain differences, can both be placed inside the Christianist secular category. Having defined the boundaries of Christianist secularism, the chapter further contends that Christianist secularism can be contrasted with another form of Christian identity: 'traditionalist Christianism.' The chapter contends that neither form of Christianism is a religious movement, but rather both are motivated by political and social concerns, and graft a Christian identity onto their respective political programs in an effort to create an ingroup and outgroups based upon religious heritage and affiliation. The difference between the two Christianisms lies in their attitude towards the efficacy of secularism and liberalism: while Christianist secularists defending secularism and are ostensibly liberal, traditionalist Christianists are openly illiberal and view secular modernity as a threat to traditional 'Christian' values.

Finally, the chapter contends that, while the exclusion of Muslim immigrants from the Netherlands and France respectively is the primary purpose of the populist radical right's

Christianism, it is not the only purpose. The Christianism of the National Front and Party for Freedom is also used to exclude 'elites' and 'globalists,' who are alleged to threaten the Judeo-Christian values upon which the Netherlands and France were founded. Moreover, Christianist secularism is in part a response or backlash against the effects of globalisation, and an attempt to find a national identity which is able to protect and preserve contemporary culture and values from being swept away by the disruption engendered by neoliberalism capitalism, and the cultural relativism and multiculturalism of the centre-left (which is today often an ally of business.) Building on this observation, the chapter contends that Christianism is likely to remain an important element in European politics. The forces that gave rise to Christianism – Muslim immigration, globalisation in its cultural and economic forms, and the incoherence of mainstream centrist parties policies on immigration, multiculturalism, and economics, remain powerful throughout Europe. As long as this remains the case, the chapter contends, populist radical right parties will be able to exploit anger towards elites, fear of Islam, and a growing sense of a common European 'Christian' identity.

Is there a relationship between Muslim immigration and the rise of Christian identitarian populist radical right movements?

Both France and the Netherlands appear to have been impacted by Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe. Findings show that post-war secularisation had a profound effect on French and Dutch identity respectively. In each case, modernization led to secularisation in the manner described by Berger, with religious belief increasingly relegated to the private realm and removed from the public sphere. The entry of Muslims in large numbers into this post-Christian secular world had an increasingly profound effect on Dutch and French society respectively. As Muslim immigrants became increasingly perceived as unable to secularise and assimilate into Dutch and French society respectively, they became identified as a threat to the secular state and to national culture. At the same time, Muslim difference highlighted the secularised Christianity embedded in Western European culture, especially Christian holidays, symbols, and the presence of Churches across the country. In this way, Muslim difference made some Dutch and French people more aware of religion in general, and their

own religious (or secular) identity, heritage, and worldview.[793] Muslim difference thus engendered a new sense of identity among some Dutch and French, based upon this recognition of secularised Christianity forming the basis of Dutch culture. This altered sense of national and civilisational identity has been exploited by the populist radical right, which demonises Muslims as incompatible with the Judeo-Christian tradition to which France and the Netherlands belong, and thus demands Muslims' exclusion from European society.

What is most striking, however, is that the process has taken place in an almost identical manner across France and the Netherlands, despite the deep historical and cultural differences between the two nations. That the same anti-Muslim populist radical right politics should develop in these two very different nations suggests a more general Western European movement towards secular Christianist populism. The historical religious affiliation of a Western European nation, while not irrelevant, is not the most important factor; rather, Western European nations which have undergone secularisation appear to react to mass Muslim immigration – or even the threat of mass Muslim immigration – by turning towards secular Christian identitarianism.

For example, the entrance of Muslims into the Netherlands in large numbers, beginning in the 1970s, appears to have altered Dutch religious identity. The entrance of Muslims does not appear to have caused alarm at first. However, once it became clear that modernity would not have the same privatising and secularising effect on all Muslim immigrants to the Netherlands, the religiosity of Muslims and their overall cultural differences became, for some Dutch, something to be feared.[794] This new sense of identity, created in response to Muslim difference, reveals itself in the speeches of Frites Bolkestein, who in the early 1990s categorised Muslim immigrants as a unique threat to the Dutch people's Judeo-Christian heritage and values, alongside contemporary Dutch secular differentiation of Church and state.[795] The sudden increase in use of the term "Judeo-Christian" in Dutch parliament after 2001, perhaps due to the increased visibility and fear of Islam and Muslims after the

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[793] A point emphasised by Habermas and Brubaker. See Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," 17-29, 2008; Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1191-1226, 2017.
[794] See Bolkestein's comments on Islam's incompatibility with Judeo-Christian Western values in Hemel, "(Pro)claiming Tradition: The "Judeo-Christian" Roots of Dutch Society and the Rise of Conservative Nationalism,"53-55, 2014,.
[795] Ibid, 54-55.

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September 11, 2001 attacks, and the later murder of Theo Van Gogh, is further evidence of a change in Dutch religious self-identification.[796]

The electoral success of populism in the Netherlands throughout the 2000s and 2010s provides the strongest evidence of this phenomenon. Populist radical right leaders Pim Fortuyn, Geert Wilders, and Thierry Baudet, all defined Dutch culture as Judeo-Christian yet secular, and categorised Muslim immigrants as a dangerous element within the Netherlands and a threat to its future.[797] They claimed Muslims were dangerous because their religion was totalitarian, and incapable of allowing a secular space to develop within a society. In a sense, they were charging Muslim immigrants with being too religious to be Dutch. Yet this is not how they expressed their criticisms of Muslims' religiosity. Wilders, for example, claimed Islam was not really a religion at all. Religion is a private matter; Islam is political.[798] Muslims, then, were seen by Wilders as illegitimately religious due to their alleged inability to separate religion and politics. The immigration crisis of 2015 appears to have accelerated the growth of the populist radical right in the Netherlands, with the Party for Freedom capitalising on fears of an Islamic invasion and becoming – for a period of several months – the most widely supported party in the country.

In France, too, post-war modernisation engendered secularisation, including the privatisation of religious belief, and the differentiation of religion from other spheres of human activity. France became increasingly identified as a secular nation. Yet Catholic identity remained important to a number of French.[799] Under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the National Front sought to win the votes of traditionalist Catholics and the most socially conservative French voters. Secularisation thus engendered an environment in which secularism – often in the form of Gaullist nationalism – was pitted against the Catholic identity and ultra-conservativism of the National Front.

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[796] Ibid, 91.

[797] See Fortuyn's comments on the Judeo-Christian basis of Western/Dutch cultures in Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century 50, 2016; Journalist Sebastian Faber, profiling Baudet in an American magazine, describes him as "predictably" invoking the "Judeo-Christian" tradition and linking it to Dutch culture. Faber, "Is Dutch Bad Boy Baudet the New Face of the European Alt-Right?" 2018. See Baudet speaking of Christian values, despite not believing in the Christian God. Bas, "Thierry Baudet: Westerse wereld zit in identiteitcrisis, we hebben christelijke warden nodig," 2017.

[798] See Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015,"2015.

[799] Most French even today identify as Catholic – 53% according to a recent poll. The poll also found that only 5% of Catholics attend Mass, an indication that Catholic identity is stronger than Catholic belief. See Anne-Bénédicte Hoffner and Gauthier Vaillant, "The Sociology of French Catholics," *La Croix,* August 1, 2017. https://international.la-croix.com/news/the-sociology-of-french-catholics/4491.

The increasing number and visibility of Muslim immigrants in France began to change perceptions of the relationship between Christianity and secularism. Muslim immigrants, who often kept their own cultural and religious practices, were sometimes perceived to be a threat to French culture.[800] As Muslims became the 'other' in France, and the primary enemy of the National Front, the secularised Christianity embedded in French culture became more visible, breaking down the barrier between Christianity and secularism.

No longer was the triumph of secularism over religion in France assured. Equally, no longer was it possible to pretend that secular spaces in France were religiously neutral. Not when Christmas remained a national public holiday but Islamic holidays were considered too 'religious' to became secular holidays, or when the funding of some Christian and Jewish schools were acceptable within France's secular school system, but no funding of Islamic schools was permitted.[801] Recognition of the secularised Christianity in French culture made it possible for French politicians to declare France a 'Christian' nation, even as Church attendance and belief in God continued to decline.

It was not until the appointment of Marine Le Pen as National Front president that the party defined *laïcité* and Christianity – and sometimes Judeo-Christianity – as the foundation of contemporary French culture.[802] The National Front's turn under the leadership of Marine Le Pen's towards secularism, and moreover towards secular Christianism, helped improve the party's image. By orienting itself towards secular nationalism, though without disassociating itself from its roots in Christian/Catholic identity politics, the party cast away its associations with fascism and anti-Semitism. At the same time, it was able to exploit the growing recognition of the secularised Christianity in French culture, and present itself as a defender of France's secular laws and Christian culture. By doing so, Marine Le Pen was able to de-demonise the party, and win for the National Front the widespread support it had long desired at Presidential elections in 2012 and, especially, 2017. Adopting secular Christianism gave the National Front the ability to win support from secularists who saw France as 'culturally Christian' but secular, and who perceived Islam to be a threat to both secular differentiation of religion from politics, but also a threat to the elements of Chrisitianity which were secularised into 'culture'.

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[800] See Jean-Marie Le Pen's comments on the danger of Islam in Primor, "The Veil? It protects us from ugly women," 2002.

[801] See Fernando, "The French Myth of Secularism," 2015.

[802] See Jean-Marie Le Pen's remark that France is a Judeo-Christian culture in Primor, "The Veil? It protects us from ugly women," 2002.

My hypothesis, then, appears to be correct. As secularism and secular identity overcame religious identity and difference in post-war France and the Netherlands, the Christianity which remained in public life was secularised into 'culture.' Yet without a large non-Christian/post-Christian population in Europe this Christianity went largely unnoticed, and was perceived simply as 'culture.' Muslim difference thus revealed the secularised Christianity remaining in European public life, despite secularism's promise of a neutral public sphere. Equally, Muslims' resistance to the secularising effects of modernity showed secularism would not always overcome religion, and revealed European secularism as – in part – a specific product of European history and culture. Therefore Muslim immigration opened the door for populist radical right parties to exploit growing Christian identitarianism in Western Europe, and gave them grounds to merge, in their discourse, secularism, Christianity, 'the people' and their respective nation-state, and Western civilisation into a single religio-secular (Judeo-)Christian 'tradition.'

What is most significant is that the Netherlands and France both experienced this movement towards Christianist secularism, despite important differences in the two nations' religious and political histories. This suggests that secularism overcame Christian denominational differences, and subsequently secularised elements of Christianity into 'culture,' in a similar way in France and the Netherlands. It further suggests that Islam's presence affects secular Europeans in a similar way throughout the continent, challenging their understanding of secularism as a neutral space between religions, and ultimately pushing them towards Christianist secularism.

Is 'Christianist secularism' an appropriate description of the use of religion in the discourse of the Party for Freedom and National Front?

The Party for Freedom and National Front are examples of populist radical right parties which graft Christian identity onto a secular political platform, hallmarks of Christianist secularism. The parties do not always, however, adhere to the elements Brubaker identifies as belonging to secular Christian identitarian populism in Western/Northern Europe to the same degree. For example, the Party for Freedom is the paradigm of the populist radical right Christian identitarian party.[803] Wilders' discourse demonstrates all the elements Brubaker

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[803] As Brubaker suggested in Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

describes as being hallmarks of populist radical right secular Christian identitarianism. Christian identitarianism, for example, is very important to Wilders and the party for Freedom. The West and Judeo-Christianity and Humanism are, in Wilders' discourse, entirely synonymous. Though the programme of the Party for Freedom is deeply nativist, Wilders holds to a somewhat civilisationalist worldview based upon a religious classification of peoples, cultures, and nations, and identifies the West and by extension the Netherlands as part of 'Judeo-Christian' civilisation.

Wilders' discourse is secularist, and does not contain any genuinely religious arguments, language, or motivations. In he and his party's discourse 'humanism' is often used in place of 'secularism' to describe the non-Jewish and Christian cultural traditions of the West Wilders believes to be beneficial and intrinsic elements of Western – and thus Dutch – culture. In the texts I examined, he uses the word humanism to describe something apart from the religions Christianity and Judaism, which has joined the two to form a unique 'Western' cultural tradition. Humanism might mean the philosophic traditions of Ancient Greece and Rome, the scientific developments of the Enlightenment, and the rise of the modern secular state which attempts to be neutral on religious matters and demands a religion-free public sphere.

Wilders' discourse consists, superficially, of a defence of liberalism. Yet he is happy to use illiberal means to preserve this liberalism. Equally, though Wilders is unquestionably a democrat, he remains an illiberal democrat who argues liberty belongs only to those who agree with his conception of Dutch culture and identity. The liberalism Wilders' defends is the freedom to defy religious traditions in order to have sex with whomever one chooses, to dress how one chooses, and to abort unwanted children. He does not defend universal freedom of expression.[804] While Wilders rages against laws which make hate speech illegal or unlawful, of which is says he is a victim, he also demands that Muslims' freedom to express themselves be severely curtailed.[805] If liberty means the right to tell people, as George Orwell put it, what they do not want to hear, Wilders is not interested in liberty – not when it may means Muslims or 'cultural relativists' speaking their minds.[806]

Yet Wilders portrays his party as defenders of freedom from the tyranny of Islam, especially of the freedom of women, Jewish people, and gay people, to live and behave as they wish,

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[804] See Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.
[805] Ibid.
[806] A quote from George Orwell's proposed preface to *Animal Farm. See* http://orwell.ru/library/novels/Animal_Farm/english/efp_go.

something Wilders' claims Islam opposes.[807] Thus his pro-freedom stance appears to come from his opposition to Islam, rather than an especial interest in women's rights or gay rights. On the other hand, he is powerfully and noticeably philo-Semitic, and curiously so given how little support his party receives from Dutch Jews.[808] Wilders' philo-Semitism is powerful enough to ensure that he speaks of 'Judeo-Christianity' and almost never Christianity alone. Jews and Judaism – or whatever Wilders means by "Judeo," a term he never explains – are named as part of Western Civilisation in his discourse. Wilders' personal love of Israel notwithstanding, it is likely that his philo-Semitism – which doesn't appear to extend beyond admiration for Israeli society – stems from the same sources as the philo-Semitism of other populist radical right politicians: left-wing support for Palestine and hostility towards Israel. For some parts of the European left, anger at Israeli policies has turned into calls for boycotts and outright anti-Semitism.[809] The right thus reflexively supports Israel on the basis that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and perhaps in part because it approves of the supposedly 'Western' presence Israel brings to the Islam dominated Middle East.

While Wilders' discourse reveals his Party for Freedom to be the paradigm of a Christian identitarian party practicing Christianist secularism, Marine Le Pen's discourse reveals a more confusing picture. Christian identity continued to play an important role in National Front discourse after Marine Le Pen's assumption of party leadership. Yet her discourse is always first secularist, and does not always contain references to Christianity. Le Pen's discourse differs in several important ways from Wilders. First, she rarely speaks of "Judeo-Christianity," preferring to speak of France's dual Christian and *laïque* identity, heritage, and values.[810] Despite inconsistencies in her use of Christian identity, Le Pen has moved the National Front towards Christian identitarianism and Christianist secularism. In chapter 6 and 7 I showed how Marine Le Pen initiated a de-demonisation programme and attempted to re-orient the party towards the centre of French politics. As part of this programme, Le Pen gradually dropped any remaining opposition to *laïcité,* gay rights, and abortion. Instead, she pushed the party to embrace France's *laïque* identity alongside its Christian past, to condemn

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[807] Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.

[808] See Tamara Zieve, "How would Dutch Jews fare under extreme-right Geert Wilders?" *Jerusalem Post,* March 14, 2017. https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Is-pro-Israel-Geert-Wilders-good-for-the-Dutch-Jews-484121.

[809] See for example the British Labour Party's struggles with anti-Semitism, born from their hostility towards Israel, and particularly its right-wing government. See Benjamin Mueller, "U.K. Opens Hate Crime Inquiry into Anti-Semitism in Labour Party, *New York Times,* November 2, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/02/world/europe/uk-labour-party-anti-semitism.html

[810] Le Pen does not use the term "Judeo-Christian" in the texts I analysed, though she has used it in at least one interview: see Alduy, "Has Marine Le Pen already won the battle for the soul of France?" 2014.

anti-Semitism (and moreover to support Israel), and emphasise a pro-freedom agenda in opposition to the alleged "twin totalitarianisms" or Islamism and globalisation.[811]

Thus both parties fit into Brubaker's category, and can be described as Christian identitarian parties using Christianist secular discourse. Many of the key differences between the Christian identitarianism of the National Front and Party for Freedom are mostly differences of degree. While the Party for Freedom strongly emphasises the need for gay rights to be protected from Islam, the National Front tends to mention the threat homosexuals face from fundamentalist Islam only in passing, and perhaps in order to demonstrate the perceived incoherence of centre-left and centre-right politics, which attempts to defend Islam while also promoting gay rights. Moreover, the French party tends to be, overall, more socially conservative, reflecting the strong support it receives among conservative and traditionalist Catholics and other social conservatives.

Equally, the Party for Freedom does not oppose economic globalisation to the same degree as the National Front, owing perhaps to different economic conditions in each nation, and the need the Dutch have for foreign investment and European economic integration. The globalisation Wilders' perceives to be a threat to "Judeo-Christian civilisation" is the opening of borders and mass movement of peoples, and the unchecked spread of foreign ideas and cultures in the Netherlands which result from the teaching that all cultures are equal.[812] In Wilders' discourse, neoliberal economic policy is attacked for leaving older Dutch without the medical assistance required, but not for undermining Dutch manufacturing, or for disrupting the economy.[813] This is strikingly different from the anti-globalisation rhetoric of the National Front, which is designed to appeal to working class people concerned about job loss and wage stagnation.[814]

The key difference between the two parties' Christian identitarianism is the manner in which it is expressed. While Wilders generally prefers to use the formulation 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist,' which is sometimes shortened to 'Judeo-Christian,' Marine Le Pen uses a variety of terms. Sometimes France and French identity is described as simply secular. Sometimes it is 'Christian,' 'Christian and secular,' or 'Judeo-Christian.' Neither Le Pen nor Wilders has

[811] Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.
[812] Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[813] See Wilders, "Preliminary Election Program PVV 2017-2021," 2016.
[814] See Angelique Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen springs surprise visit on Macron during picket line campaign trip," *The Guardian*, April 27, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/26/marine-le-pen-springs-surprise-visit-on-macron-during-picket-line-campaign-trip.

ever, as far as I have found, discussed the meaning of these terms in depth. They appear to assume their audience understands the meaning. As Kluveld has noted, "Judeo-Christian" can be used to mean whatever the speaker wishes it to mean, and is most often a theologically empty term nationalists use to define an 'ingroup.'[815] This is how Wilders and Le Pen respectively appear to apply the term.

Wilders' emphasis on "Judeo" perhaps indicates a greater philo-Semitism, and an attempt to demonstrate his commitment to the Netherlands' tradition of religious tolerance, despite his opposition to and desire to repress Islam. His attachment to "humanism," rather than "secularism," may also be related to the Dutch humanist tradition related to figures such as renowned Dutch Humanist scholar Erasmus, who advocated tolerance and reason alongside Christianity – and saw them as perfectly compatible – though this may be intellectualising Wilders' rhetoric too much.

Le Pen's confused mix of terms, however, may demonstrate opportunism, and an attempt to use the most effective term in each appropriate context. Yet it appears to reflect the internal divisions affecting the National Front. For example, the rise of Catholic identity politics and social conservatism in the form of former National Front candidate Marion Maréchal, who quit the party in part due to disagreement with her aunt over the mainstreaming of the party, shows that there are multiple points of view on the religious identity of France within the party.

Importantly, the different conceptions of respective Dutch and French identity appears to be connected to the Wilders' and Le Pen's differing conceptions of the civilisation to which they belong. Le Pen speaks of a "French civilization,"[816] though she also acknowledges France's Judeo-Christian heritage, which is shared with other European nations. Wilders, however, does not claim that the Dutch have their own civilisation. He merely posits that the Netherlands is part of "Western" or "Judeo-Christian" civilisation.[817] For Wilders, Western civilisation – which includes Israel – is 'Judeo-Christian.' Thus 'Western' and 'Judeo-Christian' appear to be interchangeable names for the civilisation to which the Netherlands belongs. This is not the case for Le Pen, who separates France and French civilisation from

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[815] Kluveld, "Secular, Superior, and Desperately Search for its Soul: The Confusing Political-Cultural References to a Judeo-Christian Europe in the Twenty-First Century," 245, 2016.
[816] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen Speech: Why she is running for President,"2012.
[817] Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver, 30 June, 2012." 2012.

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other nations and civilisation, portraying it as something special and important.[818] Yet she also connects France to the Christians of the Middle East, particular Lebanese Christians, through France's colonial endeavours and shared Christian heritage and Christian influenced culture.[819] Substantially, then, Le Pen and Wilders mean the same thing while using different terms. "Judeo-Christianity" is not a religion. For Le Pen and Wilders terms such as "Judeo-Christian" and "Christian," and perhaps even "humanist," do not refer to coherent systems of belief, and cannot be understood as advocating religion. Christianity and Judaism are not, in their respective discourses, 'religious' terms, but terms used to differentiate different peoples according to their religious heritage and identity.

Comparing the construction of Islam in the National Front's and Party for Freedom's respective discourses

An important element of the discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom is the 'othering' of Muslims, one of the two outgroups (alongside 'globalists' or 'elites') defined by Le Pen and Wilders respectively. Wilders and Le Pen use similar tools to 'other' Muslims. They construct a strict dichotomy between "us" and "them," using these terms over and over so as to enforce the point to the audience. 'We' are not Muslims, they claim; Muslims are not 'us.'

The two major outgroups identified by Wilders and Le Pen are, in their respective discourses, connected to one another. They claim that the presence of Islam in their countries is the direct result of 'elites' (to use Wilders' preferred term) and 'globalists' (Le Pen) desire for mass immigration and a multicultural environment. In a sense, the real villains in Le Pen's and Wilders' respective discourses are the globalists and multiculturalists, not Muslims. Indeed, according to Le Pen and Wilders, Muslims are at once "evil" and "dangerous" adherents of a "totalitarian" ideology, but also victims of the same ideology which oppresses them.[820] Globalists and elites, however, are presented as the ultimate villains throughout the examined texts.

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[818] See Marine Le Pen's remarks on France's special connection with freedom in, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

[819] See Tarek Osman, "Lebanon's Maronites and Le Pen," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs,* Februrary 26, 2017. https://www.thecairoreview.com/tahrir-forum/lebanons-maronites-and-le-pen/.

[820] See Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015; Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.

It is important to note the different terminology used by the two leaders to refer to this 'enemy.' Wilders prefers 'elites' to 'globalists,' and in fact does not expand much energy attacking globalisation. This may be because he ultimately thinks globalisation is a good thing, as long as it spreads Western ideas, culture, and religion throughout the world. For this reason, perhaps, he praises Dutch colonial history which was itself a kind of globalisation, though certainly a very unwelcome kind to those 'globalised' by the Dutch.[821] Thus Wilders' attacks 'elites' for allowing and at times deliberately engendering a reverse globalisation in which the rest of the world globalises the West.[822] This is an important point. It is striking to observe how Wilders has, over time, altered his views on neoliberalism and globalisation. He of course is not alone in revising his opinion on the efficacy of globalisation.

Globalisation once appeared to be a process in which the West would ensure its hegemony would continue into the far future. Once it could be determined that globalisation actually meant the shifting of wealth away from the working and middle classes in the West, supporters of Western hegemony could no longer support globalisation. Wilders, no doubt, changed his views on the value of globalisation once he recognised that it had become a process in which the Netherlands – and indeed the West – would become both increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, and in which Western power and prestige would come under increasing challenge from non-Western societies.

According to Wilders, 'elites' who advocate for mass immigration and 'cultural relativism' inside the Netherlands, are seditious villains who are giving away their patrimony.[823] 'Elites' have committed two 'crimes' against the Netherlands and "Judeo-Christian civilisation," according to Wilders. First, they have allowed Islam to establish a large presence in the Netherlands and moreover throughout Europe, which is ever growing and becoming a greater threat to the future of the West's "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" culture and identity.[824] Second, 'elites' have destroyed their societies' self-confidence by promoting the idea that all cultures are equal. Combined, according to Wilders this has had the effect of allowing Islam to grow unchecked and ultimately 'Islamize' the Netherlands and other parts of Western

[821] Geert Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Ibid.
[824] Ibid.

Europe.[825] Islamisation is thus, for Wilders, the natural consequence of mass immigration and cultural relativism.

For Wilders, Islam itself is a cancer spreading through society, oppressing everyone – including and especially himself – to whom it draws close.[826] Yet he does not condemn all Muslims. Some Muslims are moderate people, he says.[827] Islam, then, is for Wilders the problem, not Muslims. Thus an individual Muslim can be a good member of Dutch society; a moderate, even a progressive, and a secularist. But there is no moderate Islam, let alone progressive Islam, and Islam is antithetical to secularism.[828] Thus according to Wilders Islam is a monolithic force, fundamentalist and totalitarian, which must be proscribed in the Netherlands in order to protect Dutch "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" culture and identity.[829] Moreover, "Judeo-Christianity and Humanism" must be made the leading culture of the Netherlands in order to prevent Islamisation and stop elites further eroding Dutch culture and identity by promoting cultural relativism.[830] In making this argument Wilders constructs a powerful dichotomy between the 'Judeo-Christian and Humanist' ingroup, and 'Muslims,' who by their very nature he alleges to be too dangerous to allow within Dutch society. 'Elites' might change their minds, drop their cultural relativism, and return to Judeo-Christianity and Humanism. They, after all, have a Judeo-Christian Dutch heritage. Muslims on the other hand constitute a foreign element following a religion which is antithetical to Dutch values, and seeks – Wilders claims – to conquer and enslave non-Muslims.[831]

While Le Pen described Islam as "not soluble in secularism" in 2011, in the texts analysed in this thesis she did not exactly claim – as Wilders does – that Islam itself is a problem.[832] In her 2012 address Le Pen did not name Islam or Muslims as a problem, though she implied – by complaining of religious minorities ignoring French law – that some Muslims were dangerous to French society.[833] Yet in her 2012 speech Le Pen, by implying that there were religious minorities who flouted "our" (France's) secular laws, 'others' Muslims, creating a

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[825] Ibid.

[826] See Wilders' remarks on the inherently dangerous nature of Islam in Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver, 30 June, 2012." 2012.

[827] Ibid.

[828] Ibid.

[829] Pauwels. *Populism in Western Europe: Comparing Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands,* 114, 2014.

[830] Ibid.

[831] Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.

[832] "Le Pen: Islam not compatible with secular society," 2011.

[833] Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen Speech: Why she is running for President," March 16, 2012.

sharp dichotomy between the secular French people and religious minorities who she alleged refused to assimilate into their host society.[834]

By 2015, however, Le Pen had grown bolder and more confident in her anti-immigration rhetoric, declaring "Islamic fundamentalism" the enemy of France, and by extension, the enemy of freedom. Islamic fundamentalism, according to Le Pen, is also the enemy of Muslims, who are have been enslaved by its totalitarian doctrine and require liberating.[835] If Muslims were to secularise, then they would not, Le Pen implies, pose a threat to France. But this secularisation appears to entail a degree of Christianisation – after all, according to the National Front leader France's secular values are secularised Christian values. Marine Le Pen, then, may not be entirely sincere when she claims that she opposes only Islamic fundamentalism, not Islam. For Le Pen, France belongs to an intellectual and cultural tradition which begins in Greece and Rome, was influenced by Christianity (which itself began as a form of Judaism), and was secularised during and after the Enlightenment and French revolution. Islam does not feature in this tradition. Thus to belong to the secular-Christian tradition Le Pen constructs in her discourse one cannot, it appears, be Muslim. Furthermore, Le Pen's manner of differentiating between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism appears to be through observing whether the Muslim individual or group differentiates between religion and politics. Yet Le Pen has charged Islam with being unable to make this differentiation, indicating that she – like Wilders – ultimately believes that while Muslims might make this distinction on an individual basis, Islam does not.

Yet like Wilders, Marine Le Pen's quarrel is not largely with Muslims, but with what Wilders calls 'elites' and she 'globalists.' 'Globalists' encourage mass immigration and multiculturalism, she argues, which when combined allows Islamic fundamentalism to flourish, ultimately undermining secular French law and "diluting" French culture and identity.[836] For Le Pen, it appears, the real problem in France is not Islam – it is the loss of confidence elites have engineered, through their neoliberal and multiculturalist policies, within French society. This loss of confidence allows fundamentalist Islam to grow undisturbed by the secular state, and ultimately, Le Pen believes, Islamise France.

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[834] Ibid.

[835] Wilders also calls Islam 'slavery:' [835] Geert Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.

[836] Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.

Le Pen and Wilders, though they use different terminology, both construct Islam in a monolithic fashion in their discourse, while leaving certain narrow caveats through which individual Muslims might win acceptance within Dutch and French society respectively. Both create in their discourse outgroups of 'elites/globalists' and Muslims, and a Judeo-Christian and humanist, or Christian and secular, ingroup. Both describe Islam as "totalitarian," antithetical to secularism, a form of slavery, and illegitimate insofar as it does not allow for secular public spaces, but instead tries to fill every space with itself, knowing no difference between religion and politics, or between church and state. Having constructed Islam in this way, there is no choice for Le Pen and Wilders but to demand the exclusion of practicing Muslims from French and Dutch society respectively, which – despite Le Pen's claim to only be demanding the removal of fundamentalist Muslims – is essentially what they do.

The Party for Freedom's and National Front's use of Christian identity in their respective discourses

Christian identity is a key aspect of National Front and Party for Freedom discourse, used to construct an ingroup based on a shared religious identity, and to exclude groups who are perceived to hold an identity at odds with that of the ingroup. However, it would not be correct to say that Le Pen and/or Wilders are demanding the exclusion of individuals and groups who cannot be included within the (Judeo-)Christian ingroup. Le Pen, for example, does not attack France's large Vietnamese and Chinese communities for largely failing to hold a Christian identity. She does not mention these groups of non-Christians at all, perhaps because she does not perceive their religious identities (which may be atheist, Christian, Buddhist, Confucian, syncretistic, etc...) as threatening *laïcité* and the separation of religion and politics in France. In a similar way, Wilders specifically says he does not care if the world is run by Buddhists, because Buddhism is not a totalitarian ideology – like Islam – hostile to freedom and bent on world domination.[837]

Furthermore, non-Muslim immigration -- while perhaps not to be encouraged – is for Le Pen and Wilders nowhere near as threatening as Muslim immigration, precisely because they perceive only Islam as threatening to secularism. The Party for Freedom's and National Front's use of Christian identity, therefore, can be understood as a specific reaction to the

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[837] Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.

perceived danger Muslims present to the secular law and culture and moreover the separation of religion and politics.

Yet due to the increased association of Christianity with secularism, which has occurred as a result of the growing presence of Islam in Western Europe and the religion based civilisationalist differentiation of peoples it engendered, any danger Muslims appear to pose to secularism may also be perceived as a threat to Christianity or the Judeo-Christian and Humanist/secular tradition. Thus we find Wilders claiming that Muslims immigrants to the Netherlands threaten the fruits of the Judeo-Christian tradition: democracy, freedom, prosperity, and separation of church and state.[838] Wilders' invoking of a Judeo-Christian tradition threatened by Muslims became increasingly dramatic during and after the 2015 immigration crisis. His warnings about the consequences of allowing Muslim refugees to settle in the Netherlands became apocalyptic, as he claimed that Muslim asylum seekers had the potential to destroy Dutch "Judeo-Christian and Humanist" culture and identity, and must therefore be forbidden from settling in the country.[839] In 2017, and despite a very modest number of Muslims -- just over 2000 refugees in the 2015-2017 period[840] -- Wilders declared his (or rather "our") country had been Islamised and thus "destroyed."[841]

In Wilders discourse 'we' and 'the people' are always Judeo-Christian and Humanist. 'They' are Muslim. Yet 'they' are can also be 'elites' – elites who no longer believe in the superiority of their own culture but have embraced "cultural relativism."[842] Thus Christian identity, though constructed as a response to the Muslim 'threat' to secularism in the Netherlands, is also used by Wilders to exclude his non-Muslim enemies from belonging to 'the people' and the Dutch nation-state. Curiously, other non-Christian communities – Buddhists, Hindus, and non-Muslim Asians etc... – may not exactly be included within this "we" or "us," but neither are they precisely the 'other.' In other words, in Party for Freedom discourse they are not explicitly placed within the ingroup, yet do not feature among outgroups either. Rather, such groups are simply non-threatening to "the people" so long –

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[838] According to Wilders "our heritage, our freedoms, our prosperity and our culture are in danger." See Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders at the Western Conservative Summit, Denver, 30 June, 2012." 2012.
[839] See Wilders, "Speech Geert Wilders, Bornholm, Denmark, June 13 2015," 2015.
[840] The Netherlands agreed to take 7000 refugees, but only settled 2100 by mid-2017. See *Refugees in the Netherlands*, Government of Netherlands website, https://www.government.nl/topics/asylum-policy/refugees-in-the-netherlands.; "The Netherlands has accepted 2100 refugees under EU quota scheme," *Dutch News,* July 27, 2017.
[841] See Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[842] Ibid.

perhaps – as they do not appear to challenge secularism and their numbers remain relatively low.

What, then, is Judeo-Christianity and Humanism for Wilders and the Party for Freedom? It is, in part, constructed out of Islam's mirror image. According to Wilders, Islam is totalitarian, unable to distinguish between the secular and sacred, creates poor and backward societies, and is bent on domination. In contrast, Judeo-Christianity and Humanism is secular, pro-freedom, engenders prosperity, and democratic. It is impossible, then, to understand Wilders' concept of Judeo-Christianity and Humanism without reference to his concept of Islam: one informs the other.

In another sense Judeo-Christianity and Humanism is a "sacred code" word that means whatever Wilders wishes it to mean.[843] It is certainly *not* Islam. It is, rather, anything Wilders understands as being positive: democracy, the nation-state, secularism, the patriotism, prosperity, Western supremacy, whatever Wilders understands as Dutch culture. Conversely, it excludes whatever Wilders understands as negative: Islam, totalitarianism, poverty, cultural relativism, anti-Western attitudes, hostility towards women, Jews, Christians, and homosexuals. This being so, Judeo-Christian and Humanist identity can be used to exclude not merely Muslims but the centre-left and centre-right parties whose politicians Wilders brands 'elites.' Thus anyone who advocates for open borders, multiculturalism, and what Wilders erroneously calls 'cultural relativism,' can be construed by Wilders to be attacking Judeo-Christian civilisation, identity, and values.

The National Front's use of Christian identity in their discourse in 2012-2017 mirrors in certain respects that of the Party for Freedom. Christian identity is, when invoked, used to define the boundaries of 'the people,' and thus to exclude the groups and individuals the party considers threatening to French identity and culture. However, Marine Le Pen invokes Christian identity far less often than Geert Wilders – not once in her 2012 address and 2015 *Time* article – and is less inclined to explicitly include Judaism inside her ingroup when she invokes religious identity. Yet these differences may be somewhat misleading. While Wilders' is more likely to describe Dutch and Western identity and culture as Judeo-Christian than Le Pen, he is no less a secularist than the National Front leader. Equally, Le Pen portrays herself as a defender of French Jews from Islam, has courted French-Jewish voters, and

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[843] See Vollard, "Re-emerging Christianity in West European Politics: The Case of the Netherlands," 94, 2013.

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vocally supports Israel's right to exist.[844] Bearing this in mind, we can see the remarkable similarities in Le Pen and Wilders' use of religious identity, despite their use of different terminology.

The best way of understanding the National Front's use of Christian identity in their discourse in 2012-2017 is within the larger context of Le Pen's patriot-globalist dichotomy, the defining theme of her run for President in 2017. For Le Pen, the patriot loves their country, and loves in particular that which makes it unique, and therefore defends it against forces of change. Patriotism thus, according to Le Pen, requires nationalism – support for the existence of nation-states, their inviolable sovereignty, and the security of their borders. Only the strong and secure nation state, Le Pen suggests, can ensure the freedom and prosperity of the individual.[845] Most importantly, according to Le Pen, only the nation state can ensure cultural continuity and the preservation of the uniqueness of each 'nation' of people. In other words, the strong and sovereign nation-state alone can prevent neoliberal globalisation from turning a 'somewhere' into an anywhere.[846]

Globalism, according to Le Pen, destroys this uniqueness, dilutes national culture and erases difference, by giving business and government the means to move people, money, and jobs around in an effort to maximise profits regardless of how it impacts their employees and the societies in which they operate. We might, then, understand Marine Le Pen as opposing what Zygmunt Bauman calls 'liquid modernity,' and as attempting to return France to a 'solid' state.[847]

For Le Pen, the problem with the politics of the mainstream French parties is that, no matter whether they designate themselves as conservative or progressive, they remain essentially globalist. Le Pen's criticisms of the centre-left and centre-right are summed up well by Mark Lilla, who notes that

"The left opposes the uncontrolled fluidity of the global economy and wants to rein it in on behalf of workers, while it celebrates immigration, multiculturalism, and fluid gender roles that large numbers of workers reject. The establishment right reverses those positions,

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[844] See Itay Lotem, "In a bid to detoxify the far right, Marine Le Pen wants to appeal to French Jews," *The Conversation,* March 22, 2017. http://theconversation.com/in-a-bid-to-detoxify-the-far-right-marine-le-pen-wants-to-appeal-to-french-jews-73993.

[845] See Marine Le Pen, "Marine Le Pen: How France will Conquer the Enemies of Liberty," 2015.

[846] According to Emmanuel Macron, France is already an 'anywhere' with no particular culture, but home to a diverse range of cultures. See "In Their Own Words: Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron," 2017.

[847] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity,* Polity: Cambridge, 2000.

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denouncing the free circulation of people for destabilizing society, while promoting the free circulation of capital, which does exactly that. These French conservatives criticize uncontrolled fluidity in both its neoliberal and cosmopolitan forms."[848]

Le Pen is aware of the incoherence of the centre-right and centre-left, and appears to be able to successfully exploit it. Indeed, her decision to change the name of the party to National Rally is a sign that she recognises that the party's association with fascism is holding prevents it from fully capitalising on the incoherence of the centre: some French people will simply not vote for a Le Pen or the National Front even though they may be aware of the contradictory and self-defeating politics of the centrist parties. Le Pen's position opposing, as Lilla notes, the fluid movement of both people and money is actually more coherent than her opponents' positions. It enables her to portray herself as a defender of that which makes France a unique 'somewhere,' avoiding the contradictions inherent in dogmatic left and right politics. Equally, this position allows her to portray centrist politicians as either hopelessly ignorant of the contradictions in the politics, or part of a self-serving elite which fails to take into consideration the voice or interests of 'the people' when making policy decisions.[849]

Le Pen's 'neither left nor right' discourse opposing "cultural" and "economic globalistation" is based upon identifying aspects of French culture which are authentically French, and attempting to preserve them against the forces of globalisation.[850] Thus Le Pen defends in her discourse the French language against the relentless rise of English as a 'global' language, and the rights of French workers from attempts to liberalise the economy.[851] For Le Pen, and unlike most mainstream conservatives, defending workers rights is perceived to be a conservative act intended to preserve working class ways of life and livelihoods. Thus when Le Pen claims to be a defender of Christianity, she is also attempting to defend an element of French culture and heritage from the forces of globalisation. When she refers to "Christianity" she is rarely discussing the organised religion, or the set of beliefs and principles that are called the Christian religion. Rather, she seeks to defend not this religious Christianity, but elements of the heritage and culture of France which she believes stem from or are Christian.

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[848] Mark Lilla, "Two Roads for the New French Right," *The New York Review of Books,* December 20, 2018. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2018/12/20/two-roads-for-the-new-french-right/.
[849] A similar argument to that made by Wilders, who claims 'elites' have engineered a situation in which it is "the native people who are losing their country". See Wilders, "Wilders Plan: Time for Liberation," 2016.
[850] Marine Le Pen, "Presidential Campaign Launch Speech," 2017.
[851] Ibid.

What Le Pen wishes to defend, then, is the Greco-Roman-Judeo-Christian-secular tradition to which she believes France belongs. This tradition appears to be constructed more or less from opposition to neoliberalism and an Islamic presence in France, rather than out of an especial love of anything belonging to these various cultural and religious traditions. Le Pen never, for example, praises anything especially Christian. Rather, under her leadership the party has moved away from defending traditional Catholic and Christian positions on abortion, homosexuality, and divorce. Christian identity and heritage is, then, primarily important to Le Pen because it assists in her efforts to define 'the people' in a manner which excludes Muslims and 'globalists.' An entirely secular identity might exclude observant Muslims, but it would fail to exclude Muslims who do not bring their religion into the public sphere in any respect. Equally, a secular identity is less useful in opposing neoliberalism or 'economic globalisation.' If neoliberalism is altering the foundational values of France, and these foundations are Christian or Judeo-Christian, then neoliberalism might be considered an assault on Christianity. Equally, if 'economic globalisation' is bringing many different peoples to France, each with their own group identity, then 'economic globalisation' is a threat to the hegemonic position Christian identity has historically enjoyed in France.

Christian identity is useful to Le Pen as a rhetorical shorthand for French identity. It is used in Le Pen's discourse to define French identity in such a way as to include secular French who practice 'cultural' Christianity, or at least who do not seek to challenge cultural Christian hegemony, and to exclude anyone who appears to challenge this hegemony. Her notion of Christian identity, however, is strikingly different from that of other members of her party. This contributes to some problems with party messaging on the issue. For example, Le Pen's niece Marion Maréchal – who dropped 'Le Pen' from her surname in 2018 – actively campaigned on a social conservative and Catholic identitarian platform in 2017.[852] Marechal shares her aunt's disdain for "elites," who she claims have "utterly ignored" the needs for the working class, and created a "crisis of respresentative democracy."[853] But Marechal does not support her aunt's moderate position on many social and ethical issues, and is stronger in her condemnation of 'Islam' rather than merely attacking 'Islamist radicals' and 'fundamentalists.' For example, according to Maréchal, France has gone "from the eldest

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[852] See for example Nick Miller, "Marion Marechal: the 29-year-old far-right favourite tipped to challenge Macron," *Sydney Morning Herald,* January 23, 2019. https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/marechal-no-longer-a-politician-but-most-likely-to-challenge-macron-20190123-p50t22.html.
[853] Ibid.

daughter of the Catholic Church to the little niece of Islam".[854] Unlike her aunt, who has adopted the mainstream secular consensus position on abortion, Maréchal wishes to lead a movement "protect ...children from eugenics, the elderly from euthanasia and humanity from transhumanism."[855]

Though she has left politics – for now at least – Marion Maréchal remains a well known and influential political figure, with a high enough profile that she was invited to speak at the CPAC conference in the United States.[856] Her social conservatism marks her Christian identitarian out as fundamentally different from her aunt's, falling more in line with the Christianism of Viktor Orban and Poland's Law and Justice Party insofar as it rejects secularism and progressivism in favour of traditional Catholic values. Her relative popularity and influence suggests that this traditionalist Christianism is an alternative to the Christianist secularism of Wilders and Le Pen, and may be more popular among Christians and social conservatives who may choose to adopt a 'Christian' identity – and in some cases Christian practices – in order to oppose not merely Islam and globalisation, but also secularism.[857] Thus we may be seeing two different types of Christianism developing in Europe. Each uses Christian identity to define an 'ingroup' and exclude Muslims and 'globalists.' However, they differ on the issue of the desirability of secularism. For this reason we see a 'Christianist secular' movement developing, which grafts Christian identity on a secular worldview and political programme, and a traditionalist Christianism developing, which opposes secularism and attempts to re-establish traditional Christian values within Europe.

Findings

This thesis began with a question: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe?

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[854] Ibid.
[855] Ibid.
[856] Maréchal's speech was recorded and can be viewed here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obHuTlTHMk8.
[857] British writer Peter Hitchens is an example of this phenomenon. He writes, "I concede to my atheist opponents that belief or unbelief is a choice. As a choice, it is based upon desire. I desire, and therefore choose to believe in, one kind of universe, one that has laws and purpose with justice woven into its very fabric. The unbeliever desires, and therefore chooses to believe in, a chaotic universe where the dead remain dead and actions have no effect beyond their immediately observable consequences." Peter Hitchens, "Why Modern Atheists Rage Against God," *Truth Revolt,* May 16, 2014. https://www.truthrevolt.org/commentary/peter-hitchens-why-modern-atheists-rage-against-god.

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To answer this question I studied the relevant literature and, based on my reading, hypothesised that Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' Recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture,' I further hypothesised, made it possible for secular Europeans to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian. This recognition made possible the previously implausible joining of Christian identity with a secular worldview: what Brubaker calls Christianist secularism, or a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' A number of populist radical right parties in Western Europe have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define their respective national identities in religio-civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.'

This hypothesis appears largely correct. I was able to confirm Brubaker's categorisation of the Party for Freedom and National Front as being among the populist radical right parties as Christian identitarian, and their discourse as conforming to a Christianist secular worldview. In this way, I was able to confirm the salience of these categorisations. Equally, my research suggests that the growth of Christian identity in Western Europe has occurred largely due to Muslim immigration to, and Islam's special visibility in, Europe. Furthermore, through the comparison of these two very different parties, my research suggests that it is likely other populist radical right parties in Western Europe may also be categorised as Christianist secular, with their worldview developing as a reaction to Muslim immigration and visibility. I make this assertion due to similar phenomena being observed in the two countries, despite the large differences in the religious history of the Netherlands and France, with the former being denominationally mixed and before the 1970s pillarised, and the latter largely Catholic yet with a strong secular state and system of laws. If the same type of Christianist secularism develops in these different cultures and political environment, it can be assumed that the same forces are behind the development of Christian secularism in other Western European nations. Therefore the Christianist secularism of the Alternative for Germany Party, or the UK Independence Party, or indeed that of the Danish People's Party, can also be attributed to the increasing visibility of Islam in Europe, and the immigration of Muslims into secular

post-Christian Germany, the United Kingdom, and Denmark – among other Western European nations – respectively.

In 2012-2017 the populist radical right moved from the fringes of Western European politics to the centre, disrupting the comfortable centrist consensus on the efficacy of immigration, the European Union, and multiculturalism. The 2015 immigration event played an important role in the rise of the populist right, allowing the populists to create a sense of existential crisis about the future of their respective national and European culture, as hundreds of thousands of non-Christian non-Europeans sought asylum in a number of Western European states. In an environment in which more than one million mostly Muslim people migrated to Europe in a single year, populist radical right parties were able to capitalise on European fears that Muslims would 'Islamise' their nations, reduce employment opportunities, and increase crime.

Yet the rise of the populist radical right, while in part the product of events such as the immigration 'crisis' of 2015, and the 2008 financial crisis, cannot be attributed to single causes. Rather, it is the culmination of decades of social change, particularly the secularisation of European societies in the aftermath of the Second World War, the arrival of millions of Muslim migrants from North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, and the adoption of neoliberal economic policies – to varying degrees – by Western European governments. To understand the rise of populist radical right politics, then, we must listen to the populists' complaints and consider why they might resonate so much with their supporters.

Despite their increasing power and presence in European public life, populist radical right parties rely upon rhetoric devices – discourse – to influence their societies and push their agenda. They frequently aim to re-shape national identities, and do this primarily by insisting that they speak for 'the people,' and are fighting for their interests. Equally, they claim that powerful 'elites' – particularly the centre-left and centre-right mainstream political parties, but also media, business, and academia – are pursuing a political agenda which has harmed 'the people,' and will inevitably result in their subjugation and eventual replacement with another people or peoples. Populists' fight against globalisation and Islam, then, is primarily discursive.

An important rhetorical weapon of the populist radical right was their Christianism, which they deployed in their discourse in order to 'other' Muslims, as well as the 'elites' and

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'globalists' who argued in favour of allowing Muslims to find asylum in Europe. European Christianism did not take one form. Rather, two major varieties developed: a traditionalist Christian identity movement which emphasised conservative values and opposed secularism and progressivism, but also a secular Christianism which was secular, ostensibly liberal and 'pro-freedom,' and emphasised the unity of Christian or Judeo-Christian heritage with secular differentiation of religion from other spheres of human activity. In both Christian identity movements opposition to Islam and globalisation was paramount, alongside the defence of the nation state and its ability to secure its borders. This is important, because – my findings suggest – the Christian identity movements growing in Europe are part of the populist radical right response to more than just Muslim immigration. Rather, they are a response to globalisation itself, in particular the decline of nation-states, and the loss of unique and local identities, and their replacement by commercial 'global' culture. In other words, populist radical right politics is often a response to the advent of an increasingly fluid global environment.

Beyond confirming my hypothesis, my research has further proven the existence of two major Christian identity movements in Europe: 'traditionalist Christianism' and Christianist secularism.' Brubaker's description of Christianist secularism being the preserve of Western/Northern European populist radical right parties has been confirmed in this research.[858] Equally, traditional Christianism can be found largely in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary and Poland. However, Western Europe is home to some traditionalist Christianism. The National Front, for example, is clearly divided between the supporters of Marine Le Pen's turn towards Christianist secularism, and those who would prefer a traditionalist Christianism, such as that espoused by Marion Maréchal. This suggests that some supporters of the National Front are uncomfortable with Le Pen's leadership, and in particular her re-orienting of the party towards secularism, liberalism, and her lack of interest in fighting for issues dear to social conservatives. The question for the National Front, then, is whether they believe *laïcité* is authentically French, and an ally in the fight against Islam and globalisation, or itself a step on the road towards multiculturalism and the loss of authentic French identity.

The populist radical right parties of the Netherlands, the most prominent and important of which is Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom, do not appear to suffer from internal divisions on

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[858] See Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective,"pp.1191-1226, 2017.

the issue of religious identity. The Party for Freedom is, as Brubaker has noted, the paradigm of the Christianist secular populist radical right party.[859] It is instructive, then, to consider why Wilders and his supporters have wedded Christian identity to a secularist – and ostensibly liberal and pro-freedom – worldview and political agenda. The turn towards Christian identitarianism in the Netherlands is not, obviously, related to an increase in relgiousity among the Dutch. This is not surprising, however, given that the Party for Freedom sets itself against any threats to the secular state. Indeed, for the party, mass immigration and multicultural is to be proscribed because it allows Muslims to settle in the country, practice their 'non-secular' religion freely, and increasingly threaten the secularity of the Dutch public sphere. Marine Le Pen's arguments against Muslim immigration take on a similar form.

The National Front under Marine Le Pen and the Party for Freedom can thus be understood as opposing globalisation, mass immigration, and Muslim immigration, because they believe secularism to be threatened on two fronts: indirectly by 'elites' and 'globalists,' and directly by the Muslim immigrants 'elites' and 'globalists' allow to settle in Western Europe. Their Christianism develops out of a desire to stop Muslim immigration, end multiculturalism, and to preserve contemporary secularism and the secularised Christian culture which provides – in their view – the basis for all contemporary Western European values and mores. In other words, Christianist secularism develops out of a desire to protect modernity from 'backward' religion.

The traditionalist Christianism Marion Maréchal, Viktor Orbán, and Poland's Law and Justice Party, differs in important ways from the secular Christianism of the aforementioned parties. It demands a return to traditional Christian social attitudes, and is sceptical about – if not deeply hostile towards – the supposed achievements of modernity, especially its most important product: secularism. For traditionalist Christian identitarians secular modernity is robbing contemporary Europe of its built, cultural, and intellectual heritage, destroying its morale, and making an Islamic takeover all but inevitable. Thus they desire a return to traditional values derived from Christianity so as to make their nations great again, or at least protect their cultures from being washed away by modernity's powerful tide.

Where is religion in this programme? Traditionalist Christianists appear to start with a political and ideological problem with modernity, and from there deduce that a return to

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[859] Ibid, 1197.

Christian values and identity will solve the problem. Thus for all Christianists, politics come first. Christianists who approve of the enlightenment project, secular modernity, and progressive (or mainstream) social values, yet oppose multiculturalism and Islam, will often become secular Christianists. On the other hand, people who see secular modernity as part of the problem, having opened the door to globalisation, multiculturalism, and mass immigration, will more often become traditionalist Christianists. In either case, it is the politics that comes first. One might object and argue that religion is a matter of private belief. This may be so – the point is contestable – yet the Christianity of even the traditionalist Christianists is primarily about identity and values, not personal belief. To identify as Christian and perform certain elements of Christian practice is enough for Orbán and Maréchal, neither of whom appear to care whether a 'Christian' goes to Church or holds genuine Christian beliefs. Thus we can only conclude that, in contemporary Europe, one may choose to become Christian due to political beliefs, and not merely a deeply held spiritual connection to the Christian religion.[860]

For the secular Christianists, religion is dangerous and must be kept out of the public sphere unless safely secularised into 'culture.' Yet religion remains highly important. Christianity or Judeo-Christianity is part of a sacred matrix incorporating nation, people, civilisation, and religion. There is no spiritual element to this (Judeo-)Christianity, yet there is a sacred element. If we accept that the world, as sociologist Martin E. Marty has argued, is not simply secular or religious, but most often religio-secular, then we must also accept that the populist radical right in Western Europe is meshing together the sacred and secular; secularising Christianity into 'culture' and making the secular state and its 'people' sacred.[861] The state, the 'people,' 'culture' and identity form a sacred matrix into which (Judeo-)Christianity performs an important role, defining the heritage of 'the people' and their culture. For secular Christianists, anyone who stands against these things violates their sacredness, and must be opposed. (Judeo-)Christianity is thus not merely a rhetorical tool used to exclude Muslims. It is part of the sacred matrix due to its role in creating the culture of 'the people' and thus shaping the values and identity of the nation-state. Invoking the Christian or Judeo-Christian tradition helps the populist radical right link contemporary culture and values to their respective nation's – and civilisation's – distant past. In doing so, they are able to point to a sacred tradition which has existed from ancient times to the present, and which ought to be

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[860] A point made by in Lilla, "Two Roads for the New French Right," 2018.
[861] See Martin E. Marty, "Our Religio-Secular World," pp. 42-48.

protected from those who would change or destroy it. While this sacred tradition might have its roots in pre-Westphalia Europe and the Middle East, for the populist radical right the Judeo-Christian tradition provides a basis for defending nationalism and the monocultural nation-state from 'globalists' of the left and right.

The populist radical right in Western Europe uses religion in its discourse, but it is not a religious movement. Rather, its discursive use of religion amounts to a secularist defence of European modernity, culture, and heritage – as defined by the various populist parties – against religion and the globalising forces that have allowed religion to return to prominence in Western Europe. As such its discourse is xenophobic and anti-Muslim, and mired in bigotry and scapegoating. But the populist radical right's discourse may also prove attractive to people attempting to hold on to traditions, identities, and cultures, which they perceive to be in a process of being swept away by the forces of globalisation. Thus populist radical right discourse may be understood by some as a defence of the particular, and an attempt to prevent a unique 'somewhere' becoming yet another 'anywhere.'

For these reasons the populist radical right is likely to continue to enjoy popular and electoral success across Western Europe. The issues that drive the growth of the movement are unlikely to disappear. Globalisation is likely to continue in its many forms; mass immigration to Europe is an economic necessity due to the very low number of births each year; the presence of Islam is very unlikely to diminish but will most likely grow year on year; markets will continue to disrupt economies and the lives of ordinary people. The centre-left and centre-right, though diminished in parts of Western Europe, will continue to exert their power by pushing a globalising agenda which itself engenders a populist backlash.

If Western Europe's left-wing parties hold contradictory political positions, championing on the one hand workers rights and demanding higher wages, but on the other hand calling for open borders and mass immigration, a populist backlash against these positions is inevitable. Equally, radical right populism will flourish as long as the mainstream right 'conservative' parties fail to comprehend that there is nothing remotely conservative about free market capitalism. Rather, the market's propensity for 'disruption' and 'creative destruction' engenders social change incompatible with conservatism. Of course, the populist radical right cannot provide solutions to Western Europe's problems. Their discourse is centred upon turning 'elites' and 'Muslims' into scapegoats, onto which the blame for declining Western

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European wages for workers, fertility, and changing demographics are blamed. Thus they do not attempt to address the deeper social and economic problems affecting Western Europe.

At the same time, it should not be difficult to imagine how the rapid immigration of hundreds of thousands of Muslims into a secular, post-Christian European nation might create conditions advantageous to Christianist secular populist radical right parties. A study, albeit conducted in the United States, suggests that political parties can easily encourage voting based on a group identity, by reminding a former majority that they are in danger of becoming or have become a minority.[862] Perhaps, in the Western European context, as white Christian and post-Christian Europeans decrease in number, they can be increasingly manipulated by populist radical right parties to identify as – and more importantly vote as – a Christian identity group. Given that Muslim immigration is likely to increase, and the white post-Christian share of the European population decrease into the foreseeable future, the future of Christian identity movements in Europe – secular and traditionalist – seems assured: Christianism is very likely to remain a prominent element in populist radical right politics, and perhaps beyond populism altogether.

Some final questions, some of which are difficult to answer without greater investigation, remain. This thesis has shown how populist radical right movement cannot be characterised – under the parameters I have delineated – as religious movements. Yet at the same time, it has described a blurring of the boundary between religion, secularism, nationalism, and what might be called civilisationalism, in the discourse of two populist radical right movements. Yet this blurring is not a post-secular blurring of the boundary between religion and the secular. Rather, in the mouths of the populist radical right in Western Europe, 'religion' has become a powerful identity tool, used to separate 'us' from 'them.' For the populist radical right, then, Christianity or Judeo-Christianity, effectively means 'secularism' and 'not Islam' – Islam being a 'religious' religion incapable of secularising.

The questions remaining, then, are how this information benefits our analysis and understanding of the relationship between religion and politics in Europe. For example, the thesis has discussed the apparent differences between the use of religion in the discourse of the populist radical right in Eastern and Western Europe, showing how a traditionalist Christianism is more common in the Central/Eastern (Hungary, Poland), while a secular

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[862] See Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2016, 232.

Christianism is more common in the West/North (Netherlands, France). Any discussion of this difference must be prefaced with a caveat reminding the reader that more study and analysis is required of Christianism in Hungary and Poland before a deep understanding can be reached. In a sense, the difference between traditionalist Christianism and secular Christianism is irrelevant: both use religion for political ends, and moreover in an attempt to exclude Muslims from immigrating to their nations and playing a role in public life. In doing so, we cannot automatically label either Christianism falsely religious. After all, religion can be, and is frequently, political. However, it is instructive to note how radical right populists in Eastern Europe appear to more typically view public religion as an antidote to liberalism, while radical right populists in Western Europe more typically view public religion as a hostile, anti-secular force brought to their nations' by Muslim immigrants. Thus the latter – perhaps counter-intuitively – wield religious identity as a shield against public religion, and especially against Islam when it is seen to be intruding into the public sphere. Making this distinction, we can see how – in this age of religious revivals and political populism – religion may be used by both secularists and religious groups to achieve political ends.

This is important. Religious identity is a powerful weapon in the hands of politicians, especially when used as a tool by the populist radical right to define their respective national identities (by way of a greater religion based 'Christian' civilisational identity). Deciding – for example – who can be counted inside Christianity or the Judeo-Christian tradition, and who is excluded, thus means being able to decide who is welcome and unwelcome in Western Europe. This phenomenon may not be entirely unique to Western Europe and European settler societies. For example, we might consider how a Hindu nationalist might conceive of themselves as secular, yet argue that only a Hindu can 'truly' be Indian, and thus that Muslims and Christians must be excluded from the Indian public sphere (or from India entirely). In this case, as with the secular Christianism of the populist radical right in Western Europe, secularism is not linked so much to religious belief and practice, but to religious identity – and thus to certain cultural practices which are linked rightly or wrongly to religion. Thus the power of religion remains even among the secular, if only as a form of identity. And the ability to define the boundaries of religion, and who may be counted as being inside a religious identity group, and who may not, is a powerful tool in the hands of politicians.

This is not to say that any particular group should have a monopoly on defining 'religion' and its boundaries. Understandings of 'religion' will always vary and shift in time and from place

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to place. Nor do I argue that Christianity is not an important part of European culture and identity, or that this should not be in some way recognised. Rather, I argue only that there is power in Christian identity – even after religious belief has largely left Europe – and that the power to define the religious identity of secular nations is dangerous when left in the hands of politicians who would use it to divide and demonise the already marginalised. To permit, then, the populist radical right in Western Europe to define itself as a protector of Christianity and Christians, is to allow a further religionising of identity in Western Europe, and a strengthening of religious categorisation of peoples, already too solid.

Conclusion: Religion and the populist radical right in Western Europe

This thesis opened with a puzzle: populist radical right parties in Western Europe have made religious identity a central aspect of their discourse. At the same time, they have achieved unprecedented electoral success and political influence within perhaps the most secularised part of the world: Western Europe. This is curious. If Western European politics is secular, why do we find populist radical right parties making appeals to religious identity -- and at the same time increasing in popularity? Moreover, how and why has this occurred, and what does it tell us about the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Western Europe?

In chapter one I began to answer this question by examining the literature on populism and the European populist radical right. Based on my review of this literature, I concluded that the most salient description of populism was Mudde and Kaltwasser's minimal definition: a "thin centred ideology" which divides society into "two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the 'pure' people and the 'corrupt elite.'"[863] Equally, I found that the most convincing characterisation of the populist radical right was Mudde's, that it is essentially nativist, authoritarian, and populist. Chapter one then proceeded to examine a gap in the literature on populist radical right parties in Western Europe: the use of religion in their discourse.

This question was further explored in chapter two, which examined explanations for populist radical right parties' discursive use of religion. First, the chapter examined whether the populist radical right's use of religion was related to growing post-secular consciousness in Europe of the persistence of religion and the beneficial aspects of religious ideas and

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[863] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 543. 2004.

language in the public sphere. Thus the chapter tested the post-secularity of the Western European populist radical right's discourse by comparing examples of their discourse against the post-secularism advocated by Habermas. I found that while populist radical right politicians spoke of the importance of Christianity or Judeo-Christianity in their discourse, they spoke of it only insofar as it related to national and civilisational identity, or as a description of the secular national and common Western culture to which they claim to belong – that is, the culture of 'the people.' Therefore I found that populist radical right parties in Western Europe were secular – sometimes aggressively secular – and that their discourse contained no references to Christian or Jewish spirituality, theology, philosophy, or language.

Having found that the populist radical right is a secularist movement, chapter two examined the literature on populism and religion, focusing on the work of scholars analysing Western European populist parties' use of religion. The chapter argued that Rogers Brubaker's observation of a 'Christianist' secularism emerging in Europe, and of its adoption by populist radical right parties was the most coherent description of what we see occurring when populist radical right parties invoke Judeo-Christian identity and/or culture in their discourse.[864]

The review of literature conducted in chapters one and two led to the formulation of a thesis question: Why is religion used as a tool with which to differentiate 'the people' from 'the other' in the discourse of the populist radical right in Western Europe? The review of literature also led me to formulate a hypothesis: Europeans' encounter with Islam in Europe has (1) revealed the non-universal nature of European secularism to Europeans, and (2) demonstrated the secularisation of Christianity into European 'culture.' This recognition that Christianity has been secularised into 'culture' has allowed secular Europeans to identify themselves – and their nation and ultimately Western civilisation – as Christian or Judeo-Christian. It has thus created Christianist secularism, a type of Christian identitarian politics which perceives contemporary European culture to be 'Christianity secularised.' A group of populist radical right parties in Western Europe have embraced Christianist secularism, which they use to define their respective national identities in religio-civilisational terms, i.e. as (Judeo-)Christian. In doing so, they are able to exclude Muslims from their society, on the

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[864] Brubaker, "A new 'Christianist' secularism in Europe," 2016.

grounds that Islam is an alien religion which – unlike Christianity and possibly Judaism – has not and cannot be secularised into 'culture.'

Chapter three discussed in detail my method for testing this hypothesis. My method involved case studies of the National Front and Party for Freedom, and – as part of the case studies – Critical Discourse Analysis of texts produced by respective party leaders Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders in the 2012-2017 period. This method was applied across chapter four to seven.

Chapters 4 and 6 respectively tested the first part of my hypothesis, by examining Dutch and French political history to determine the effects of Muslim immigration on French and Dutch religious self-identity. The purpose of this was to understand whether the presence of Islam in Europe made Europeans more likely to identify as, in one sense or another, 'Christian' or 'Judeo-Christian.'

Chapters 5 and 7 continued to test my hypothesis. In those two chapters I examined texts produced by Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders during three important events: 2012 French and Dutch elections, the 2015 immigration 'crisis,' and 2017 Dutch and French elections. The purpose of this examination was to determine whether the texts contained rhetoric which might allow us to categorised the parties' within Brubaker's Christian identitarian category, and the discourse used by the parties as Christianist secularism, the most important features of which include "identitarian Christianism, a secularist posture, a philosemitic stance, and an ostensibly liberal defence of gender equality, gay rights, and freedom of speech?"[865] To further help understand the parties' use of Christian identity and the role of Islam in their discourse, I asked two further questions: How is Islam constructed in the discourse? How is Christian identity used to exclude Muslims from European society?

I asked these questions in order to understand the Islam – (Judeo-)Christian binary constructed in the discourse of the National Front and Party for Freedom. The purpose of asking these questions was to comprehend how Le Pen and Wilders construct their version of 'Islam,' and therefore understand why National Front and Party for Freedom advocate for, and how they justify, Muslims' exclusion from the public sphere – if not from France and the Netherlands altogether respectively. Equally I asked these questions in order to uncover who qualifies as a (Judeo-)Christian in Le Pen's and Wilders' respective discourses, and how this

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[865] Brubaker, "Between nationalism and civilizationism: the European populist moment in comparative perspective," 1193, 2017.

constructed (Judeo-)Christian identity is used to further the political agenda of the two respective parties.

Chapter eight compared the data produced in my case studies. This chapter contained the results of the test of my hypothesis, and ultimately the answer to my thesis question. The chapter concluded that (1) there is evidence Muslim immigration to Western Europe engendered a sense among a number of French and Dutch that secularism is non-universal, but rather a product of Europe's (Judeo-)Christian heritage and values. (2) Evidence suggests exposure to Islam and Muslim difference has made visible the secularised Christianity embedded in French and Dutch culture respectively. Together, these effects have made it possible for French and Dutch to identify as secular and – in a civilisational sense – Christian. In other words, the development of Christianist secularism stems from these two factors.

(3) The respective discourses of Dutch Party for Freedom and National Front of France in the 2012-2017 suggest that the two parties are examples of 'Christian identitarianism' and 'Christianist secularism' in Western European politics. For both parties, Christianity or Judeo-Christianity is a tool used to differentiate an ingroup from outgroups. The outgroups, Muslims and 'globalist elites,' are categorised as a threat to the secularised Christian culture the parties' claim defines and sustains their culture and civilisation. But this Christianity is not a religion. Rather, it is an identity based on a shared connection to the secularised Christianity in 'culture,' which can be connected to politics, values, ideas, symbols, language, and behaviour.

(4) In the 2012-2017 period Islam is constructed in the discourse of both the National Front and Party for Freedom as a monolithic force dominating the lives of its adherents, making Muslim immigrants unique insofar as they alone cannot secularise by privatising their religious beliefs and practices. This being so, Islam is constructed as a threat to secular differentiation of religion and politics, church and state, and moreover to the 'cultural Christianity' which defines contemporary French and Dutch culture, values, and heritage. (5) Christianist secularism – or Christian identity grafted onto a secular worldview and political programme – is adopted by the National Front and Party for Freedom throughout 2012-2017 and used discursively to create a Judeo-Christian and Humanist or Christian and secular ingroup, which they designate as 'the people,' and to create two outgroups based upon people excluded from 'the people:' 'globalists/elites and Muslims/Islamic fundamentalists.'

Based on these findings, the chapter – and thus this thesis -- argued that populist radical right parties in Western Europe use religion as a tool to differentiate between 'the people' and 'others' in their discourse because the secularisation of Christianity into 'culture' has made it possible for secular people to adopt a Christian identity when faced with Muslim difference. The populist radical right has capitalised on a growing sense of Christian identity among Europeans by combining a secular political platform with Christian identity, allowing them to frame themselves as defenders of the authentic identity and culture of their respective societies and of Western civilisation. Playing on Europeans' deepest fears, the populist radical right claims they alone can save 'the people' from the fate that awaits them: a loss of culture due to the twin effects of mass immigration and economic disruption, and – worst of all – the undoing of secularisation and its replacement with an Islam dominated society.

It is possible that, as Habermas, has observed, Muslim immigration has played a role in creating a post-secular consciousness of religion.[866] The persistence of Muslim religiosity in secular Europe, and growing dissatisfaction with consumerism, may at times be encouraging Europeans to re-consider what Christianity and Judaism, as systems of thought and practice, can offer secular society. Yet the populist radical right do not use religion in a post-secular manner. Rather, we see two types of populist radical right discourse in Europe, both of which use Christianity or Judeo-Christianity primarily as a tool to create an ingroup and outgroups. 'Traditionalist' Christianists blame the secularist and multiculturalist policies of 'elites' for Europe's demographic spiral and growing political irrelevance, and seeks to solve these problems by enforcing a Christian identity upon citizens, and encouraging a return to conservative or 'traditional' social mores. Secular Christianists fear Muslim immigration is undoing the secular differentiation of religion and politics – which they believe to be the ultimate product of the Judeo-Christian tradition – and thus seek to stop Muslims arriving in Europe, and also remove from power 'elites' and 'globalists' who encourage Muslim immigration.

For the secular Christianists of the populist radical right in Western Europe, Judeo-Christianity and Christianity are terms used to describe the secular culture of contemporary Europe, which itself contains the secularised remains of European Christianity. Thus the populist radical right in Western Europe can rejects religion's presence in the public sphere unless it has been secularised into 'culture,' yet still claim to be protectors of the West's

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[866] See Habermas, "Notes on post-secular society," pp.17-29, 2008.

Christian heritage. Indeed, secular Christianist populist radical right parties are political movements grounded in a secular worldview, and often hostile towards religion, promising at times to protect the secular public sphere from religious – particularly Islamic – incursions.

What, then, does the success of the Christianist secular populist right tell us about the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Western Europe? It tells us that religion remains an influence in Western European political life, not despite secularisation, but because elements of Christianity has been secularised into culture to the degree that it is now possible for secular Europeans to adopt – in the face of Muslims difference –a Christian or Judeo-Christian identity.

Equally, it suggests that while the growth of Christianist secular populist radical right parties at first appears to indicates a growing civilisationalism in Western Europe, the role of (Judeo-)Christianity in populist radical right discourse serves only to bolster the power of the nation-state, and to attack internationalism and globalism. Christianist secular parties are in fact deeply nationalist and nativist, and claim the democratic and free nation-state to be a product of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus globalisation – and the 'elite' politicians, businesspeople, and activists who wish to eliminate borders and reduce the power of national governments – are framed by Christianist secular populist radical right parties as a threat to their nation's and civilisation's (Judeo-)Christian culture and identity. Thus (Judeo-)Christian identity, while most visibly weaponised against Muslim immigrants, can also be used to 'other' individuals or groups which appear to or can be framed as threatening (Judeo-)Christian and culture in Europe. 'Elites' and 'globalists' who encourage or allow Muslim immigration to Europe are thus framed by populist radical right politicians as threats to national culture, and betrayers of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Finally, the philo-Semitism in Christianist secular populist radical right discourse indicates the manner in which the Jewish people and Israel have become increasingly perceived by Europeans as belonging to Western (Judeo-Christian) civilisation. Both the political right and left often identify Israel as a Western state or outpost in a non-Western region. Yet while left-wing parties often label Israel a colonialist power, and condemn and/or Israeli policy towards the Palestinians, the Christianist secular populist radical right supports Israel. The populist radical right's philo-Semitisim, however, appears motivated by a perception of the Jewish state as a welcome outpost of Western Judeo-Christian freedom in the otherwise "totalitarian"

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Muslim world, and not by any genuine sympathy or admiration for Judaic thought, religion, or culture.

The rise and success of the populist radical right in Western Europe is the product of many forces. Secular Christianist discourse is an important part of populist radical right discourse, though by no means the reason behind the success of the Party for Freedom, National Front, or any other populist radical right party. Yet Christianist secularism plays a number of important roles in populist radical right politics. It helps the populist radical right create an identity which links Western Europe's religious Christian past with its secular present – despite the vast gulf in social and particularly sexual mores between the two – allowing populist radical right parties to other and exclude anyone who does not fit into its religio-secular Judeo-Christian conception of national and civilisational identity.

It allows populist radical right parties to incorporate Israel and the Jewish people within the civilisation of the West, despite the violence done to Jews by Christian Europeans, culminating in the Holocaust. Furthermore, it helps creates a solid identity and conception of Western civilisation which can be contrasted with and defended from neoliberal globalism, and the mass immigration and multiculturalism which results from globalisation. Adopting a (Judeo-)Christian identity is thus a means of opposing globalisation – and perhaps liquid modernity – by holding fast to a solid (if imagined and ultimately empty) identity. The Christianist secularism of the populist radical right is, then, not really about religion. Rather, it is created by Western Europeans' opposition to the presence of religion – especially Islam – in the public sphere, except when this religion has been safely secularised into culture. It is sustained by European fears of cultural and economic decline, which the populist radical right blames upon 'elites' and 'globalists' who have betrayed 'the people' and the Judeo-Christian tradition by weakening the nation-state, embracing multiculturalism/cultural relativism, and allowing Muslim immigrants to 'Islamise' Western Europe.

The populist radical right capitalise on the fears of Europeans who believe that globalisation and mass immigration will inevitably destroy their national cultures. Equally, they are uniquely able to capitalise on growing recognition, stemming from the visibility of Islam in Europe, that Christianity remains embedded in secular Western European culture, and secularism is not a totally neutral space between religions, but in the European context privileges Christianity above other religions due to the close relationship between European secularism and Christianity.

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