

***Religion and Identity. Political Conditions*, edited by Ryszard Michalak. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage, 2023, 284 pp.; ISBN 978-3-525-30220-0**

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Despite processes of secularization, religion remains an important element of human identity while in some cases self-identification based on religion can be quite complex. As it is also often stressed, not only does religion become an object of political influences, but it also continues to impact certain aspects of the political sphere. The authors who contribute to the volume edited by Ryszard Michalak analyze² the significance of political factors, including religious policy, in processes of shaping community identity, recognizing that “studying the relationship between religion, identity and politics has become an important and timely task faced by political scientists” (11). The Editor, Head of the International Relations Department and Professor at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Zielona Góra is one of the leading scholars who have been developing the political science of religion in Poland. He has previously published a number of works presenting research within this subdiscipline² and cooperated with scholars from various Polish universities. This time the authors contributing to his volume represent five academic institutions: the University of Zielona Góra, the University of Opole, Cracow University of Economics, Father Popiełuszko Academy of Democracy in Grudziądz, and the Jacob of Paradies University in Gorzów Wielkopolski.

The volume consists of fifteen chapters which discuss theoretical aspects as well as case studies, including global, regional, and country level analyses. It

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² Including: *Religijne determinanty polityki* (2014), *Polityka jako wyraz lub następstwo religijności* (2015), *Implementacja zasad religijnych w sferze politycznej* (2016), *History of Politology of Religion in Poland. A Research Overview* („Politics and Religion Journal” 2020).

opens with the preface provided by the Editor which explains the purpose of the study and introduces the topic of political factors in processes of forming religious identity. It also presents a discussion on religious policy as a political factor and the impact of various forms of the separation of church and state in Europe (and beyond). Declaring that the research perspective of the volume is guided by the determinants of the political science of religion, understood as a subdiscipline of political science, the Editor stresses that the essence of this approach is based on “the political analysis of the phenomenon of religion or any of its components (...) as well as the analysis of religion in relation to issues that are part of the political world” (12). The choice of such an approach and its application to the study of current intersections of religion, politics and identity issues in different geographical locations unquestionably contributes to the advancement of the politology of religion.

In the first chapter Rafał Proszak analyzes the concept of religious freedom, and compares the position of non-normative religious identity in a confessional state and in a secular state. While commenting on bans around Europe concerning face covering by female followers of Islam, he encourages readers to reflect on the condition of religious freedom in the contemporary world. He also discusses differences between *tolerance* and *toleration*. Then he moves on to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, commenting on the limits of tolerance for non-normative worldviews. In conclusion, he stresses that while religious freedom is a legal category, tolerance and toleration are political categories. This distinction, as he argues, has consequences for decisions concerning such cases as face covering.

The following chapters include case studies that concern various issues on the intersection of religion, politics, and identity in several European countries. The chapter written by Joanna Kulska is a comparative study in which she analyzes close relations between religion and politics in Poland and Hungary, and discusses the use of Christian identity as a political tool in both of them. Demonstrating similarities and differences between the countries, she stresses that in the “cultural turn” away from the liberal order, religious outlooks, in fact, often turn into pseudo-religious substitutes for religious doctrines they refer to, while a very selective use of religious-political ideas, symbols, and rituals serves mostly the political elites. In the next chapter Dorota Szaban analyzes the role of religion in the process of building social trust. She uses two editions of the European Social Survey (ESS) as the empirical basis of her study. As she explains, although Christian values may have played a role in the process of shaping normative order of a number of societies, her research results indicate that religiousness is not “a factor that is determining

the formation of a culture of trust that becomes a social fact (...)” (73). In the fourth chapter Stefan Dudra discusses the topic of the autocephalization of the Orthodox Church as an element of Ukraine’s identity. He presents the history of Orthodoxy in the Ukrainian lands and analyzes the steps taken by the authorities to make Ukrainian Orthodoxy independent from the influence of the Moscow Patriarchate, concluding that obtaining the autocephaly can be seen as an element of both religious and political independence from Russia as well as a factor that strengthens Ukrainian identity.

Two following chapters depart from European issues. Waldemar Rogowski touches upon global institutions and international movements, analyzing the traditionalist identity within the Society of Saint Pius X and its influence on the attitudes towards the Holy See and Pope Francis. After presenting the Society and its policies, he stresses that while Pope Francis was “trying to create a policy of openness to man” (109), he was criticized both by the conservatives, including the Lefebvrists, as well as the progressives. In the sixth chapter Arkadiusz Tyka concentrates on American issues. He analyzes political and social aspects of the relationship between religion and identity in the case of Orthodox believers in the United States, paying special attention to “Metropolia,” one of the most important Orthodox jurisdictions with its roots in Alaska. He stresses the importance of granting it an autocephalous status as well as the Americanization processes and ethnic divisions that influenced the community.

Ryszard Michalak in his chapter returns to European issues. He analyzes what he calls “a new phase of Sweden’s program to contain Islamism.” The major part of his chapter is a presentation of Swedish Islamosceptic groups and their arguments concerning a postulated “deshariatization.” He explains their aims, placing the discussion on religion and identity in the context of immigration – a complicated topic worth further debate. Chapters eighth and ninth concern religion and politics in another European country - Germany. Paweł Leszczyński discusses legal, political and ethical aspects of the Evangelical military ministry in the Bundeswehr, touching upon such issues as the role of peace movements and pacifism in the German context as well as pluralism of views within German Evangelicalism. In the ninth chapter Tytus Jaskułowski analyzes the image of the Catholic Church in the communist Poland which can be found in East German Stasi reports from 1981-1983. He stresses that the reports were dominated by the perception of the Church as an enemy to the communist regime - an enemy, however, which was not being fought sufficiently by the authorities.

The following six chapters touch upon various aspects of religion, identity

and politics in Poland. Anna Ratke-Majewska discusses religion and nationality as tools for constructing narratives of memory in politics after World War II. She stresses that the narratives were created to foster the fulfillment of the Polish People's Republic's domestic and foreign policy goals. In chapter eleventh Piotr Pochyły analyzes Christian identity of the Polish state as expressed in the content of the exposé of the foreign ministers of Poland in 2016-2019, indicating that ministers from Law and Justice (PiS) governments despite mentioning aspects related to Christianity, did not elaborate on them. In the following chapter Beata Springer presents the idea and model of support of religious identities by local government in the Republic of Poland. Referring to the constitutional framework as well as to detailed statutory regulations, she explains that "the catalog of forms and types of cooperation is very wide and diverse (...)" (235). Chapter thirteen authored by Stefan Dudra focuses on the role of the Polish autocephalous Orthodox Church in preserving the ethnic identity of the Lemkos. The author analyzes the activity of the hierarchy and clergy in various historical periods, pointing to the role of the Orthodox Church in the integration of the Lemkos and in the development of their language and cultural identity. Marcin Pisarski, on the other hand, discusses the presence and importance of the myth of the Pole-Catholic, especially for the contemporary Polish far right. He emphasizes that apart from groups that adopt the idea of Christian nationalism, there are also autonomous nationalist movements in which Catholicism becomes less visible, therefore the myth of Pole-Catholic might play a less important role among far-right groups than in the past. In the last chapter Ryszard Michalak explains the changes that are taking place in the Polish Lutheran identity. He analyzes new policies of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, including the decision to allow women to be ordained as priests and presbyters. Indicating that it moves towards a more liberal profile, the Author wonders whether Polish Lutheranism is moving toward the Swedish model. He also formulates several socio-political predictions of its future functioning.

It should be concluded that this volume edited by Ryszard Michalak makes a significant and timely contribution to the growing field of political science of religion. By combining theoretical discussions with a wide range of empirical case studies from various countries and religious traditions, the book demonstrates how religion remains a powerful political and identity-shaping force in contemporary societies. The contributors skillfully navigate topics such as religious policy, religious freedom, community identity and politics as well as the political instrumentalization of religious identity, highlighting both global trends and local specificities. Presenting thought-provoking perspectives, some

also touch upon controversial topics that engage ongoing debates and scholarly conversations, and remind of the importance of further engagement with diverse perspectives that can deepen the analysis. Importantly, the volume affirms the relevance of political science in analyzing religious phenomena as dynamic components of political life. As such, this collection not only enriches academic debate but also helps solidify the foundations of the political science of religion as a distinct and vital area of research.