

Secularization of Europe and the Rise of Nationalism

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Abstract : In recent decades, there has been continually growing concern amongst scholars and political leaders towards the global resurgence of nationalism, particularly in Europe, the United States, and China. However, very few studies have attempted to empirically examine the relationship between religion and nationalism at the level of the individual, and none are known to have done so quantitatively. Building on Tajfel's and Turner's (1978) Social Identity Theory (SIT), and Anderson (1991) and Marx (2003), this study will employ SIT and regression analysis to compare the sources and patterns of nationalistic sentiment among European respondents in eight countries to the average levels of self-reported religiosity, religious participation, age, education, and income levels. Survey reports from the International Social Survey Programme were the primary quantitative data sources. It was hypothesized that the increase in nationalism across Europe follows this same evolution as first identified by Anderson, and is positively correlated to the reduction in reported religiosity. However, this study failed to reject the null, there was no substantial ($< .035$) correlation between nationalistic sentiment and any of the measures of religiosity, nor were there any substantial correlations between nationalistic sentiment and either of the three control variables ($< .008$). Across all countries examined, it was discovered that inclusionary nationalism has slightly declined (-5.08%), while exclusionary nationalism had increased substantially (+17.25%). The combined trend reflected an overall rise in nationalism across the time period and a forecast that suggests the current levels are also elevated. The primary implications include the demand to readdress the notion of religion and nationalism, and the correlation between the two, as well as the current nationalism trends in terms of support or non-support for future political and social movements.

Keywords : European Union, secularization, nationalism, social identity theory

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