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“WE ARE FORTRESS EUROPE!”¹
NATIVISM AND RELIGION IN THE IDEOLOGY OF *PEGIDA*
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN CRISIS

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIVISM

This article deals with the movement known as “Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident,” typically known by its acronym, *Pegida*. The article points, first and foremost, to the significance of the nativist dimension found in *Pegida*’s ideology and its role in confronting a perceived Islamisation of Europe. It also makes the case that this resurgent nativist perspective may function either in a more narrow, German context, or perhaps even in that of a greater, Pan-European identity – with Christianity shaping a distinctive image of Europe and the West as a whole. This is contrasted with the three major threats that *Pegida* identifies on a political level, on a cultural level, and on a spiritual level, at times involving a combination of factors. These can range from internal moral collapse, population replacement especially via third world migration, and the growth of Islam and of Islam-friendly policies within Western states, which, *Pegida* asserts, constitutes a step in an unprecedentedly dangerous process of Islamisation.

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¹ This is a phrase spoken by the signatories of the “Prague Declaration.”

Whereas the debate on the existence of pre-modern nationalism has long been a complex and arduous one,² the concept of nativism itself is comparatively not faced with such issues. While the term “nativism” is typically associated with xenophobia and with an opposition to immigration, it may also be encountered in colonial contexts. Moreover, some of its most successful displays have often tended to be found in rural revolts against foreign domination or foreign presence.³ Such revolts often acquired a religious or even eschatological dimension, and it was this combination with a doctrinal core based on totalistic ideas that could occasionally lead to their transformations into full-fledged ideocratic polities. Smith has mainly used the term “ethnicism” in describing renovative movements, namely, movements focused on territorial restoration, genealogical restoration, and cultural renewal.⁴ One must also add here that enmity towards foreign presence and domination need not be a total rejection of its culture, even as it strives to degrade or destroy it politically.⁵

As the rise of European nativist movements has been fuelled by Europe’s own struggle with immigration and the wider effects of globalization, concepts such as “culture” and “homeland” are thus fundamental in importance for nativists, that is, individuals who claim to fight, first and foremost, for the primacy and the rights of the populations considered the autochthonous inhabitants of a certain territory. As a political position, it can be roughly understood as a way through which the interests of such populations are represented in comparison to immigrant groups, or in cases when confronted with foreign presence and influence. Moreover, a nativist perspective may be associated with renovative ultimate aims, that is, the goal of restoring an idealised version of a past state of affairs which is associated with ethnic and cultural

² See Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations. Hierarchy, Covenant and Republic* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 1-11.

³ Such revolts varied in size, as well as in scope and ideological consistency, but, at times, they had the strength to overturn empires. See Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran. Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 167.

⁴ See Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Malden: Blackwell, 1988), 51-57.

⁵ See Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran*, 168.

realities, as understood by the members of the nativist movement in question. Lastly, by making use of both essentialist and constructivist arguments, Best persuasively shows that the creation of mass identity is not an arbitrary process, but dominated by historical experiences, since history constrains the broad design of such constructed identities.⁶

With its intense focus on the “cultural replacement”⁷ allegedly planned by the political establishment in the West, *Pegida* may arguably be seen primarily as a nativist reaction to the changes taking place within German society. On the one hand, it is a reaction to the newfound visibility of Islam in Germany and Europe through immigration, yet also a reaction to social and cultural changes, determined, in *Pegida*’s view, by an assortment of actors which have “betrayed” their own people. Perhaps most importantly, it must be mentioned here that *Pegida* sees itself as part of a wider network of what it calls “citizen movements.” Writing after the war, Hannah Arendt was one of the first scholars to draw attention to the possibility of an ascendant Pan-European nationalism, yet mainly as a reaction to American dominance.⁸ Moreover, in the current context of conflict between globalism and nativism, the future development of a loose formation of Pan-European nativist movements should not necessarily be dismissed out of hand, even as Eurosceptic views have tended to be far more influential in the last decades.

Although its discourse does make repeated use of the “Christian-Jewish heritage” of the West,⁹ *Pegida*’s nativist perspective can often take centre stage. Indeed, such a focus is unsurprising in the context of the general decline in Western European religiosity over the second half of the 20th century. At the same time, the movement’s ideology may present current political events in a manner similar to that of totalist

⁶ Heinrich Best, “History Matters: Dimensions and Determinants of National Identities among European Populations and Elites,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61/6 (2009): 921-922.

⁷ Particularly in the wake of the migrant crisis of 2015, the phrase “cultural replacement” can be understood as an essential part of European anti-globalist and nativist discourse.

⁸ See Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 416.

⁹ In this respect, *Pegida*’s use of the term “West” (*Abendland*) seems to have been influenced by the German postwar movement known as the *Abendländische Bewegung*, suggesting, on the one hand the commitment to a certain vision of Christian values in Europe and resistance to what is seen as their diminishment. See Coury, “A Clash of Civilizations?,” 55.

movements – that is, depicting a conflict pitting internal and external enemies against a virtuous heterodoxy, whose action serves as a model to emulate at a time of great historical change. This does not mean that *Pegida* itself should be considered a veritable totalitarian movement, only that its doctrinal core may exhibit certain traits typically associated with such movements.¹⁰

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND NEW CIVIL SOCIETIES

A distinctive process of political transformation can be identified throughout Western Europe, and not only. Whereas the post-war political establishment has suffered setbacks due to this process, it has brought about a series of changes in favour of political parties or groups which are normally defined as extreme. Indeed, it can be argued that *Pegida*'s own emergence, expansion, and resilience are symptomatic of the acceleration of this process. At the same time, the primary ideological features of the movement represent, alongside other developments, a potentially paradigmatic change in the European political spectrum, with possible effects in this respect including the long-term strengthening of nativist movements in the West and the potential closing of Eastern Europe to the Western liberal democratic model. At least to an extent, *Pegida* can thus be considered a manifestation of a deepening commitment by European nativist factions, and of an increasing political polarisation. Appointing itself the defender of Western Civilization¹¹ and of its Christian legacy from what it sees as the perils of Islamisation, *Pegida* makes use of nativist, as well as religious arguments in a confrontation which, in the long term, may end up leading to a dramatic change of the current European political configuration. This being said, while research into the movement can

¹⁰ Other notable differences involve the lack of a strong charismatic leader and the movement's overall willingness to work within the existing German democratic system.

¹¹ *Pegida* has also been seen as being born from an essentially Huntingtonian perspective of civilizational clash. See David N. Coury, "A Clash of Civilizations? Pegida and the Rise of Cultural Nationalism," *German Politics and Society*, 34/4 (2016): 54-67.

be considered still in early stages, it has nevertheless made an impact in specialist literature.¹²

Since its beginning in 2014, the *Pegida* movement has shown itself to be resilient, despite external threats posed by political rivals, or internal turmoil. Rejuvenated by the migrant crisis and Islamist attacks which dominated European media and agendas throughout 2015, after having already established somewhat of a presence in several European countries, *Pegida* was also able to reach out to other like-minded groups. One of its most important gestures in its quest for far-reaching political changes can be linked to the “Prague Declaration,” which was signed on 23rd January 2016 by *Pegida*, together with offshoots and allies from other European countries. Motivating its existence through what the signatories understand as a potentially imminent Islamisation, the declaration exhorts resistance and opposition against “political Islam, extreme Islamic regimes and their European collaborators.”¹³ The major implication of this document can be found in the aim of networking the various groups of what it calls “European patriots.”

On 11th October 2014, a Facebook group called *Peaceful Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident*, was formed. The group, which was made up exclusively of Dresdeners and others from nearby areas, was not open to the public. According to Lutz Bachmann, the founder of the group, the catalyst for its creation was a protest involving PKK-affiliated Kurds, as well as clashes between Muslim Chechens and Yazidi Iraqis.¹⁴ The “evening strolls” of the group grew from 350 participants to over 25,000 in January 2015. Ultimately, the name of the group was quickly changed – the “peaceful” Europeans had become “patriotic.” This minor change represents an important transformation, namely, from an apparently fringe element in political discourse, which would need to approach the public under certain conditions – the defen-

¹² For a most recent analysis of the movement see Tino Heim, ed., *Pegida als Spiegel und Projektionsfläche. Wechselwirkungen und Abgrenzungen zwischen Pegida, Politik, Medien, Zivilgesellschaft und Sozialwissenschaften* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).

¹³ The “Prague Declaration”: <http://pi-news.net/wp/uploads/2016/01/pegida1.jpg> [accessed: 12.08.2016].

¹⁴ *Pegida*’s appeal to “no religious wars on German soil” can also be linked to this aspect.

sive, altogether passive idea of peace – to a more assertive, self-assured message, promoting the idea of patriotism without the need for any justifications. In a way, the change can be considered symbolic for the overall increase in visibility and effectiveness of movements and political parties which have a stake in countering the post-war political order and the liberal-democratic status quo.

As the European Union and NATO expanded their presence in Eastern European states, a distinct type of political factions have emerged as important or even dominant actors. Typically setting themselves against what they identify as a globalist, internationalist agenda which mixes to varying degrees free market reforms, cultural-religious pluralism and democratization, such movements and governments have been given various names, from “populism,” to “illiberal democracy,” or “authoritarianism.” In turn, such factions define themselves as part of a “conservative” trend that apparently derives its strength from the political and cultural traditions of their homelands, traditions which they claim to protect from the effects of globalisation.

Several reasons have been cited for the emergence and expansion of such political factions, such as elite-focussed democratization reforms,¹⁵ or even the way in which democracies can deteriorate due to a so-called “hollow core,” whereby political parties suffer from collapsing membership and an isolation from grassroots support or the overall civil society.¹⁶ Furthermore, the origins and implication of such political transformations have been associated with populist backlashes against an internationalising form of capitalism as well as against the greater integration project of a European Union which revolves primarily around a liberal, technocratic model.

It can be all too easy to associate the rise of nativist movements with the reduced influence, or even the collapse of a liberal-democratic civil society. Yet reality is more complex, in the sense that civil society itself

¹⁵ James Dawson and Seán Hanley, “What’s wrong with East-Central Europe? The Fading Mirage of the «Liberal Consensus»,” *Journal of Democracy*, 27/1 (2016): 20-34.

¹⁶ Bela Greskovits points to the combination of hollowing and backsliding which affected several postsocialist states. See Bela Greskovits, “The Hollowing and Backsliding of Democracy in Eastern Europe,” *Global Policy*, 6/1 (2015): 28-37.

may come to work to the benefit of nationalist groups.¹⁷ Indeed, the great totalist¹⁸ movements and ideocratic experiments of 20th century Europe were aided in their expansion by the existence of a relatively strong civic engagement by proponents and sympathizers to their cause.

For instance, as it has been shown in the case in parts of Central and Eastern Europe after the early 2000s, such civic associations can be “at the forefront of reinventing the symbolic vocabulary of nationalism, re-enchanting cultural membership by re-anchoring it in mythical (often premodern) traditions, and seeking social arrangements that are governed by a charismatic type of legitimacy. In other words, they emphasise particularistic and autochthonous values as a counterpoint to economic globalisation and European integration that are seen as root causes of diminishing economic and political sovereignty and the loss of cultural identity.”¹⁹ Thus, the very idea of civil society should not be seen as an automatic endorsement of liberal democratic principles and all that comes with it. Indeed, *Pegida* itself may potentially be seen as a stage in the creation of a new type of civil society which, while at the very least paying lip-service to the democratic process, is a rival to the current dominant ones, particular in their leftist or liberal variants.

To this, one may also add the importance played by several principles, which one may arguably encounter in the self-description of all “extremist” movements, whether on the left or right of the political spectrum, namely, totality and its twin pillars – truth and purity. This is essential if one is to understand the “radical,” totalistic potential of *Pegida* and of other openly ultra-nativist groups in confronting an unprecedented multiethnic and multiconfessional European context. At the same time, one cannot afford to ignore other factors in this endeavour.

In an ideal case, the aim of any militant totalist movement is the implementation of its soteriological-simplifying principles in the host

¹⁷ See Virág Molnár, “Civil society, radicalism and the rediscovery of mythic nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 22/1 (2016): 165-185.

¹⁸ On “totalism,” which one must distinguish from its more famous conceptual cousin, “totalitarianism,” see Mihai Murariu, *Totality, Charisma, Authority. The Origins and Transformations of Totalist Movements* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016), 13.

¹⁹ Molnár, “Civil society, radicalism and the rediscovery of mythic nationalism,” 180-181.

society, also including the re-writing of existing laws. Indeed, a common feature encountered in the totalist doctrinal core is the argument of superseding existing social norms and laws, by virtue of its claim to offer solutions to fundamental human problems and questions. This aspect gains considerable importance the more the movement manages to separate itself from its heterodox status and enter the mainstream as a mass phenomenon. The status of the existing laws is then also associated with the necessary institutionalisation of the totalist ultimate aims. Whereas this process has arguably always been part of the transformation from heterodoxy to ideocracy, the primacy of constitutionalism is, by comparison, a more recent development. With regards to non-democratic cases, Ran Hirschl has written on the expansion of the so-called “constitutional theocracy” as a counterpoint to the West.²⁰ The totalist vision through which such ideocratic projects would be implemented typically revolves around a set of soteriological-simplifying principles which may be either utopian or renovative in direction – with hybrid forms also being a possibility.²¹

While at present *Pegida* does not openly subscribe to a clear revolutionary path, preferring to integrate within the existing democratic system, its potential for totalizing socio-political undertakings will likely increase due to the increasing deterioration of the overall security environment, along with the apparent intensifying of tensions which are framed in ethnic and religious terms. Especially given the circumstances of its formation and expansion, it is perhaps no surprise that the fundamentals of precisely such a worldview – namely the mission of a group of elect to act as a vanguard safeguarding a present standing on the precipice – can be found in the self-portrayal of *Pegida* itself.

Perhaps most importantly in the context of falling political participation and general overall apathy for the current state of the democratic experiment within the EU, this feature has previously been essential for the development of movements outside of the democratic tradition, such as the major ideocratic experiments pursued in Central and

²⁰ See Ran Hirschl, *Constitutional Theocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²¹ See Murariu, *Totality, Charisma, Authority*, 93-94.

Eastern Europe during the 20th century. If, on the one hand, such groups tend to be dominated by a charismatic structure, they are also difficult to integrate institutionally. While *Pegida* seems to have so far resisted the temptations of its more “radical” branches, it nevertheless holds the potential – should the overall situation in Europe appear to continue its downward spiral – to evolve into an openly totalist movement.

The spread of social-media and of alternative news sources has, in some ways, profoundly changed the rules of the political game, since it enables small groups to consistently and directly reach out to sympathizers, as well as to the wider populace.²² For instance, its impact has been noticed during the convulsions of the Arab state system, where revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces clashed as extensively in online narratives as they did on the ground.²³ In this respect, despite its adversarial relationship with the German mainstream media and an overall hostile political environment, the ability to organise and propagate its ideas online has proven a boon to *Pegida*’s survivability. Moreover, the movement’s resilience has been aided by its ability to combine its online presence with a moderately effective ability to maintain a presence in public spaces. Indeed, *Pegida* has marked its continued existence through the celebration of 1000 days of “street struggles,” which have seen, it is then argued, a significant influencing of the political landscape through the movement’s *Position Paper* and *Dresden Theses*.²⁴

HOMELAND AND FOREIGNNESS

Two opposing forces stand at the centre of *Pegida*’s worldview, attachment to the homeland on the one hand, and the peril represented

²² For a typology of social movement communication see Laura Stein, “Social movement web use in theory and practice: a content analysis of social movement websites,” *New Media Society* 11 (2009): 752-756.

²³ See, for instance, Magdalena Karolak, “Social Media and the Arab Spring in Bahrain: From Mobilization to Confrontation,” in *The Arab Spring. Civil Society, and Innovative Activism*, ed. Cenap Çakmak (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

²⁴ <http://www.pegida.de/news/1000-tage-kampf-auf-der-strasse-pegida-dresden-zeigt-wies-geht.html> [accessed: 22.09.2017].

by foreignness on the other. These aspects are considered fundamental to the fate of Western civilization as a whole, as seen in *Pegida's* description of the Syrian family reunification policy. Thus, the fact that 390,000 individuals are eligible to bring their families to Germany in 2018 is turned into a matter of great significance, since, *Pegida* calculates, this will potentially lead to an influx of millions of newcomers.²⁵ It is argued that most of the new arrivals will be illiterate, untrained for the job market (especially in the case of women), and unwilling to work or integrate themselves.²⁶ The religious issue is also considered here, since, as *Pegida* states, bringing millions of strict Muslims in a land dominated by Christian-Jewish values is “an absolute madness and will destroy the Germany we know and love.”²⁷ For this reason, the elections on September 24th are seen as fundamental in confronting such an existential peril. The election is described as “the last change to protect the future of your children, to save our values and culture and to defend the Western world from a mediaeval, anti-woman, anti-gay, and violent ideology!” Thus, *Pegida* describes this as a struggle to protect hard won liberties such as women’s rights, sexual self-determination and even clothing choice.²⁸

It has already been noted that *Pegida* typically attracts men rather than women – and then from among those who are both educated and part of the German middle class, rather than having any particular appeal among the working class.²⁹ Moreover, as Thran and Boehnke point out, *Pegida* is not a local phenomenon born of those left behind by the post-communist order. In contrast to approaches which understand *Pegida* as a xenophobic movement born out of a sense of rootlessness – the authors believe that “*Pegida* is not a product of homelessness,

²⁵ <http://www.pegida.de/news/390000-syrer-holen-ihre-grossfamilien-nach---das-ender-westlichen-kultur.html> [accessed: 22.09.2010].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See Hans Vorländer, Maik Herold and Steven Schäller, “Wer geht zu PEGIDA und warum? Eine empirische Untersuchung von PEGIDA-Demonstranten in Dresden,” in *Schriften zur Verfassungs- und Demokratieforschung*. Zentrum für Verfassungs- und Demokratieforschung (Dresden: TU Dresden, 2015).

but rather of a nationalist construction that establishes a homeland Germany which is threatened by a constructed «Islamisation», asylum seekers, and by foreigners in general.”³⁰ In any case, *Pegida* considers an asylum application as illegitimate from a moral standpoint if the application itself does not entail a number of important factors, such as the impossibility for the individual in question to remain inside the country of origin. As the authors conclude:

Every single foreigner has a “natural” identity that is determined by the national group of which he/she is a part. This “natural” identity determines a foreigner to live in their ‘own’ community; an essentialist division of people into national categories is presupposed in the imaginations of *Pegida* and functions as a basis of their demands regarding all national questions of asylum and migration.³¹

In itself such a position is not revolutionary, if anything it arguably represents an echo of 19th and 20th century organicism, a point of view which understands the national community – and by extension, its citizens – as an intertwining of ethnicity and culture, rather than an abstract, legalistic construction. Yet this does not mean that *Pegida* and other like-minded groups are merely copies or echoes of such traditions. However, in light of the current situation throughout Europe, *Pegida* is a group that – like many others before it – views the struggle in absolute, existential terms, a total cultural war that, ultimately, must necessarily engulf the entirety of Europe and involve all individuals, regardless of affiliation. One’s own indigenous culture is ultimately associated with an ideal of purity which overlaps with a political dimension.

A *Position Paper* released by *Pegida* describes in some detail its take on Islamism and Islamisation. Thus, *Pegida* sets itself against a form of Islam that leads to the practice of alternative values on German territories, namely “parallel societies/parallel jurisdictions,” such as “Sharia-courts, Sharia-police, peace-judges.”³² It is interesting to note that

³⁰ Malte Thran and Lukas Boehnk, “The value-based Nationalism of *Pegida*,” *Journal for Deradicalization*, 15/3 (2015): 182.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

³² *Pegida Positionspapier* 16, <http://www.i-finger.de/pegida-positionspapier.pdf>.

Pegida – at least initially – described itself as a non-ideological political movement which is focussed on finding solutions to the problems plaguing contemporary society as its *Dresden Theses* proclaim.³³ The problems identified here are, firstly, political and religious fanaticism, Islamisation, the German gender politics and “premature sexual education in schools.” Perhaps most importantly, *Pegida* argues for the “promotion of a strong and sustainable family policy (...) in order to achieve a stop and even reverse the effects of demographic changes.”³⁴ In keeping with its openly non-revolutionary stance, *Pegida* also argues for a strengthening of direct democracy through referendums on a federal level, based on the Swiss model.

Moreover, *Pegida* claims to represent a widespread anger and distrust towards elites, and experts such as politicians, opinion formers and academics – who are seen as bought and sold to globalist interests rather than taking a stand for their own, native culture. This is manifested through its oft-repeated claim: “We are the people!” (*Wir sind das Volk!*). According to an important former leader of *Pegida*, Tatjana Festerling, Germany is seen as facing “catastrophic circumstances” and “disintegration,” with a deeply split society and a social system “on the brink of collapse,” perils which are not only ignored, but encouraged by “the spin cartel in politics, media and among the profiteers of Merkel’s asylum policy,” which, she believes, are introducing “totalitarian structures in the country.”³⁵ Faced with what is seen as an overwhelming situation, *Pegida* can thus promote itself as the spearhead of resistance towards the globalist ideals in Germany today, fighting – alongside allies in other countries – for the entirety of Europe, for its values and for its freedom.

This brings one to the “Prague Declaration,” a text which was signed by participants from a number of countries in Western and Eastern Europe and which aims to represent a strengthened coalition of nativ-

³³ See *Pegida and Legida, Dresden Theses – Gemeinsam für Deutschland* (2015), https://legida.eu/images/legida/Dresdner_Thesen_15_02.pdf [accessed: 14.08.2016].

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Tatjana Festerling’s speech: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcobKq-kqeo> [accessed: 14.08.2016].

ist factions across the continent. Its content aptly summarizes *Pegida*'s overall view, including that of a number of allied movements – and, as such, it deserves to be looked at in some detail. The declaration begins with a clear depiction of Europe as the centre of a thousand-year-old Western civilization which is in deadly peril due to external threats – the expanding political presence of Islam – and internal ones – the political elites which have betrayed their own people.³⁶ Thus, Europe is portrayed as beset on all sides by “enemies,” including “political Islam,” “extreme Islamic regimes” and “European collaborators.”³⁷ Unsurprisingly, the members of *Pegida* and their allies in other countries are described as not only willing to risk life, limb, and liberty in pursuit of their ideals, but also as carrying the torch of previous generations in a battle against “the Central European government” and against global elites which “have brought only poverty, unemployment, corruption, chaos and moral collapse.”³⁸ The call to action can thus only be seen as a natural consequence:

It is about time to end this. We fully respect the sovereignty of European nations and the right of the people of every European country to govern their matters as they see fit. We esteem the right of the citizens of every European country to protect the borders of their country and their right to decide which immigrants to accept and which not to accept into their country. We refer to our common European roots, traditions and values as well as the historic alliances of our nations. We are determined to protect Europe, the freedom of speech and other civic freedoms as well as our way of life together.³⁹

As a result, a number of essential themes are distinguishable from the declaration, reinforcing their importance in *Pegida*'s ideological outlook and that of many other allied or sympathetic movements in Europe. The very idea of Western Civilization – a clearly definable

³⁶ The “Prague Declaration”: <http://www.pi-news.org/2016/01/europe-fortress-text-of-the-prague-declaration/> [accessed: 12.08.2016].

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

whole, separate from non-Western cultures and values – is faced by a double threat, namely by the political, economic and cultural elites which have “betrayed” their own heritage on the one hand, and by the increased presence of Islamic populations and Islamic culture in Europe, on the other. Moreover, in a manner similar to other totalistic projects of social reconstruction, the movement perceives an accelerated degeneration in its host society – a degeneration which is akin to a spiritual and moral sickness.

CONCLUSION

It remains to be seen if *Pegida* will find its way to greater political influence as the liberal consensus of the post-war era seems to continue its decline across the continent. Yet its true importance lies less in its fortunes as a movement, but in the symbol it represents for the wider cause of European ultra-nativism as a whole. As the traditional parties throughout Europe are either splintering or facing dwindling grassroots support, renewed challenges to this consensus arise both from the right and the left. Moreover, as the more experienced populist factions move – to an extent – towards the mainstream, it opens new opportunities for ever more radical factions.⁴⁰ Such challenges will ultimately contribute to the increasing legitimacy deficit which marks the painful, but increasingly uncertain development of the European Union from an economic union to a political one.

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⁴⁰ This is seen, for instance, in the case of the Hungary, where a newly formed movement, “Force and Determination” stands poised to ideologically overtake Jobbik as the most radical nativist faction on the local political spectrum.

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W KONTEKŚCIE EUROPEJSKIEGO KRYZYSU

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem artykułu jest ruch znany jako “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident” (*Patriotyczni Europejczycy Przeciwko Islamizacji Zachodu*) lub *Pegida*, przy czym akcent położony jest na kwestie związane z natywizmem, które często zajmują centralne miejsce w dyskursie ideologicznym. *Pegida* definiuje się jako obrońca zachodniej cywilizacji i jej chrześcijańskiego dziedzictwa przed tym, co jest przez nią określane jako niebezpieczeństwo islamizacji z jednej strony, oraz zagrożenie ze strony globalistycznych elit politycznych z drugiej. W kontekście dokonujących się zmian politycznych i tworzenia alternatywnych wizji społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, zwłaszcza w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej, *Pegida* może być postrzegana jako przedstawiciel rosnącej europejskiej fali natywistycznej. Na koniec artykuł odnosi się do tzw. Deklaracji Praskiej (*Prague Declaration*), która została przyjęta w 2016 r. przez *Pegidę* i kilka powiązanych z nią ruchów spoza Niemiec.

Słowa kluczowe: *Pegida*; natywizm; religia; kryzys; ideologia; wolność religijna

Key words: *Pegida*; nativism; religion; crisis; ideology; religious freedom

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