

A Preliminary Survey on the Emergence of Christian Democratic Ideology

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Abstract

The relationship between Christianity and Democracy is quite interesting, as it shows how historically contested concepts and ideologies can be merged in line with contemporary societal demands -at least- in some European countries. The fundamental objective of Christian Democracy is to maintain a novel societal order and repair the deep injuries inflicted on societies by wars and political regimes in Europe. This has grown since at least the mid-19th century, peaking during the World Wars in the first part of the 20th century, particularly amid new forms of political regimes such as fascism and communism in Europe. Through its revival and the unification of its political dimensions in the context of *Zero Hour*, Christian Democracy is regarded as “Western Europe’s most successful political movement since 1945” (Hegstad, 2023). The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany reflects that political movement well from 1945 to today. This paper revisits key elements of this movement, using a historical-political approach and documentary methods. This qualitative study employs library research and analyses of historical and epistemological perspectives to examine the ideological principles of Christian Democracy, including a theoretical critique of relevant concepts and the paradigm of Christian political culture. This revisit is timely amid global uncertainties, particularly in the Western sphere.

Keywords: Christian Democracy, Germany, Konrad Adenauer, European Union, Zero Hour, Ordoliberalism



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INTRODUCTION

As this longue durée process shows, Europe's religio-political history reveals fundamental divisions and compartmentalization through various revolutionary and intellectual events. We consider this process to have occurred because of modernity in the general sense. In other words, whatever happened could be associated with the crisis of modernity. This unfolded through the interplay of various dynamic dimensions of modernity, including politics, economics, and culture. This process led some leading figures from religious, intellectual, and political circles to reinterpret the Catholic religious belief system. In line with this, we understand that dialogical relationships have existed between promoters of modernity and religious revivalism within the context of Catholic values on contemporary European stages.

Without disregarding the ongoing discussions of the content and scope of Christian Democracy and whether it is in line with a movement, religious ideology, or a political system, we assume that it has become one of the crucial political establishments in almost the last one-and-a-half centuries (Darabos, 2021: 2). It is obvious in the political discourses which take into consideration of political developments and societal changes which became dynamics for the further developments through the Western revolutions. Those include the French Revolution, the post-Napoleonic stages, and the Industrial Revolution, whose effects were real for emerging and growing classes such as the working and middle classes (Sturzo, 1947: 3). In addition, it is important to remind the concept of 'Christian democracy' was suggested by Bishop Lamourette of Lyon as a 'political' reaction to the French Revolution in 1791 (Grabow, et al., 2011: 13). Christian parties were established as significant not only political but also economic and moral actors in response to the increasing appearance -and also threats- of modern forces such as urbanization and the rise of the middle class, which emerged from the Industrial Revolution. These developments were perceived as social challenges and prompted new demands from emerging social classes, ultimately leading to the formation of the parties in the second part of the 19th century, particularly after the 1870s (Grabow, et al., 2011: 14).

The Center Party (*the Zentrum of Germany*), a pioneering political force of 20th-century Catholic Democracy in Germany, came to the fore because of structural changes in German politics in the late 19th century. The above-mentioned dimensions of modernity were no doubt very crucial in the growing interest in politics among the Catholic circles (Grabow et al., 2011: 14). As observed, not only secularization but also all the social and political diversifications caused the rethinking process of Christian values and the transformation of theological scope into concrete contemporary political philosophy. Nevertheless, socio-political dynamics complicated the process. On the one hand Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) "*barred the Catholics of Italy from any form of political activity*" in 1874, on the other hand, as exemplified in the outset of the establishments of the Catholic political parties, then the Pope, Leo XIII (1873-1903) developed a doctrine on the ground both theological and pragmatic approaches (Grabow, et al., 2011: 15, 16).

A similar but accommodative engagement occurred among the diverse Catholic branches, including conservatives, *the Konservative Volkspartei*, *the Katholische Volkspartei*, and between Catholics in Austria and Germany and Calvinists in the Netherlands. One consequence of this process was the emergence of new concepts, such as Christian Democracy, in Western Europe. And as observed, it was formulated as a political schema in the form of *Abendländische* -occidental- principles suggested by a group of political ideologues, extensively and directly by Konrad Adenauer (d. 1967), philosophically by Ludwig Erhard (d. 1977), Alcide de Gasperi (d. 1954), and Robert Schuman (d. 1963) (Schuman as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France with Adenauer are known to have dedicated campaigners for the integration process of Europe (Kallweit; Beckmann, 2011: 35).) to rebuild the moral foundation of European Integration primarily through the values of Western civilization. However, the idea of Catholic democracy is not limited to that period; it has undergone a lengthy developmental process, at least since the mid-19th century.

OVERCOMING THE BURDEN

After the initial stages of modernity in the form of revolutions and societal changes that caused drastic transformations in the European politico-religious landscape, it is also true that the same dimensions, though having been reshaped via novel ideas and ideologies, have been able to reemerge in the forms of political ideologies and their reflections in political parties in line with historical and traditional but evolved religious ideas. In this regard, we focus on the politico-religious phenomenal changes through the decades in pre-WWII and just after it. These two distinct periods are associated, on the one hand, with the decadence of European civilization and, on the other, with its revival based on the reinterpretation of Catholic values.

This religio-intellectual venture reflects the politicization of Catholicism, and its efforts found echoes in national political environments through established political parties across diverse European countries. Briefly, we argue that Catholic Democracy emerged from the *longue durée* engagements and bargaining processes of European integration observed since the 1950s. Nevertheless, in this short article, we focus mostly on developments in Germany, particularly those just after WW2. This is important because the restructuring and restoration of post-war European universal policies would not be completed “unless the revival of Germany” (Nekrylova, 2018: 48).

The above-mentioned process cannot be argued to be an adaptation of Catholicism to modernity. While modernity includes elements that invite direct criticism of the belief system, Catholicism also helps temper its extreme dimensions. It is also salient to observe that the revival process of Catholicism not only happened in the purely political domain but also had influences or starting points in the fields of diverse religious ideologies and cultural segments, encompassing all smaller and bigger daily issues that appeared in a society to overcome the societal burden of the *Socialist-Nationalist* regime, namely, Nazism.

Indeed, these evolving and reviving processes have witnessed multiple paradigmatic shifts as strong undercurrents that naturally manifest themselves at all societal levels, in general, in secularism and de-secularization or sacralization, which, historically, no doubt, accompany modernity. One of the latest and enduring forms blossomed in politico-cultural spheres grounded in a significant reinterpretation of Christian Democracy. This concept is based on a re-evaluation of the Catholic tradition, encompassing elements that reflect the societal demands of contemporary German society and of European society in general in the post-war era. The authors regard it as an advanced model of Christian political and social movements. What is striking here is that the CDU, as a political proposal for societal cohesion in Germany and, later, in continental Europe -in the form of the European Union- more broadly, emerged during a particularly difficult era for religiosity. That was the growing secularism, which had intentionally labelled religious institutions and values in Europe after WW2, implicitly or explicitly. Without detailing the major paradigmatic stages of secularism, this paper briefly examines this process in the context of the Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) emergence as a political reference point in Western Europe immediately after WW2 (Since the post-World War II era, Catholic politics in continental Europe have experienced substantial transformation, influenced by anti-materialist and anti-Marxist perspectives. This evolution has resulted in the

rise of Christian democracy, a European model of religion and politics marked by inter-confessional cooperation and the implementation of social capitalism, especially through the social market economy.).

POST-WAR ERA

The post-WW2 recovery process was not purely the consequence of the Marshall Plan proposed by the U.S. and its allies. Nor was it the Basic Law suggested by the winning party of the war. Rather, it was closely tied to internal German political dynamics. That is observed in a statement by Konrad Adenauer stating that "... the main desire of the Germans was to achieve the unity of all Germany ..." (Nekrylova, 2018: 48).

Europe's recovery after World War II involved substantial physical and intellectual challenges. Germany witnessed wartime destruction, military defeat, national humiliation, and so forth during the war. The political ideology that had operated since the 1930s, just after the dissolution of the Weimar Republic and the full destructive process of the National Socialist regime, caused an existential crisis for the Germans themselves at the end of the war. During this period, the Center Party, one of the internal segments of German political establishments since 1870, was also banned (Grabow et al., 2011: 14, 17, 19) (Similarly, other Christian parties in the Western European political context were founded by respective leaders in this decade to overcome societal changes such as "the Industrial Revolution and its accompanying societal challenges" (Kallweit; Beckmann, 2011: 35).

Germany was, no doubt, at a crossroads in deciding how to shape its future. There is no doubt that in the early post-WW2 period, the future of Germany's democracy appeared pessimistic (Ford, 2007: 277-297). It encompassed not only the reindustrialization process but also efforts to reshape the societal sphere, including family, education, social space, etc., by empowering individuals as "*person*" to take strong positions in an emerging, growing public ecosystem. Peace was signed on paper, but societal peace and reconstruction were awaiting responses from the responsible circles. At that stage, Konrad Adenauer, one of the founding fathers of post-war German reconstruction, paved the way for the deinstitutionalization of German society through a transition to democracy associated with Catholic ideology, moving away from the old regime, including its political environment. Adenauer's framework was comprehensive enough, encompassing both German and European dimensions, including "... the creation of Germany's independence and self-determination, the reunification of the nation, and finally the unification of free Europe and the inclusion of Germany into the European community..." (20 October 1953) ("*Nun, meine Damen und Herren, lassen Sie mich zu außenpolitischen Ausführungen übergehen. Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik wird sich auch weiterhin mit den folgenden zentralen Problemen zu beschäftigen haben: der Herstellung ihrer eigenen Unabhängigkeit, der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands, dem Zusammenschluß des freien Europas und der Integration Deutschlands in die europäische Gemeinschaft.*" 20 October 1953, 'Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzler in der 3. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages Teil 1- Government Statement of the Federal Chancellor in the Third Session of the German Bundestag Part I', <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/02/02003.pdf>).

Two conceptual tools emerge: 'Zero Hour' and 'ordoliberalism'. Here, 'Zero Hour' (*Stunde Null*) was crucial to reconstructing political ideology, reinstituting society and its

politics, and reindustrializing Germany for economic survival in post-war Germany. Within the framework of this study, *Zero Hour* is identified as a pivotal moment for confronting the Nazi past and facilitating the removal of the remnants of the Hitler regime while also dealing with its political failures; more importantly, with the destruction of Christian ethics by creating a 'new' democracy, namely Christian Democracy. In that sense, the *Abendland*-Christian West tradition served as a foundational element, particularly in the immediate post-war period, in overcoming the totalitarian regime that emerged from modernity.

As a period of political realignment, *Zero Hour* is fundamental to German political culture, and *interconfessional* Christian reconstruction helped shape the Christian Democratic Union. In addition, *ordoliberalism* was another instrumental factor, in line with the aim of this paper, in shaping post-war political life in Germany, especially during *Zero Hour*, by promoting socio-economic revival. This approach contributed to the restoration of democracy and offered an alternative ideological agenda to both socialism and capitalism within the *social market economy*.

CDU VS. SECULARIZATION

A brief overview of the CDU's foundational principles will also help clarify the fundamentals. This is also important to see which socio-political actions the CDU would take against the opposing ideology of secularization. Its basic components were "Christian and Occidental ethics and culture". This very general concept was converted into sub-themes aligned with the demands of daily life, leading to the creation of policies across diverse democratic institutions in the country. The core issue is "personalized Christian essentials". The latter encompasses personal and societal realities and scopes from individual rights -without disregarding "political, economic and religious" (Grabow et al., 2011: 19).

As studies of the country's political culture have shown, Germany emerged as a 'success story' in the socio-economic sphere. Although the surface cause of providing a successful transition to democracy and becoming a Model Germany '*Modell Deutschland*' were due to the circumstances of 1945 which were the moral and material traumas caused by Nazism, the war, and Germany's defeat- the occupation and partition of the country, however, the religious or confessional issue, a central component of Germany's distinctive historical path-*Sonderweg*- is even another secret critical line (Cary, 1996: 1). The historical root of these dimensions could be found in the religio-political narratives of Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler who is known the father of 'liberal Catholicism' since his proposal shared with public with a book entitled "*Freiheit, Autorität und Kirche*" (1862) (Grabow, et al., 2011: 13). It is rightfully arguable that during the 1945 process, Konrad Adenauer, Andreas Hermes, Jakob Kaiser (These latter two names were known for their constant challenges to National Socialism in the early period and held the position of chairmanship of the CUD successively since 1945 (Grabow et al., 2011: 18).). and other leaders' realignment of Catholic values with contemporary political narratives as a solution to major problems had powerful historical and intellectual foundations. Interestingly, the successful transition was also evident at the continental level through the maintenance of unity among diverse national and religious groups.

Although this latter issue is not a major focus of this article, a brief explanation will help readers understand the expansion of CDU values and practices. In this regard, the expansion of

Catholic democracy from the German political context to the continental European context aligns with St. Thomas's ideas. He defines social-political units through stratification based on needs or purposes. For instance, "perfect the household may be for certain purposes, the city for other purposes; there are still other, and more inclusive, purposes that neither can fulfil. The most important of these is peace" (Hutchins, 1949: 6). We may argue that the European Union is built through the extension of the idea of Catholic democracy and reflects St. Aquinas's above-mentioned stratified political units. That includes, as the authors state, "*preservation of political stability and peace, economic and social progress, and the respect for Europe's Christian heritage and individual rights*" (Morisi, 2004: 45).

REUNION PROCESS VIA CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

The Christian Democratic movement has two salient poles. The first dates to the earlier centuries, namely the 13th century in Europe, and was shaped by the ideas of St. Thomas. The second relates to Konrad Adenauer's novel approach, which involved revisiting the historical, traditional dimension of Christianity considering the emerging realities of the mid-20th century. It would not be wrong to argue that the latter dimension was quite crucial to the political history of Christianity in Europe, particularly after the Holy Roman Empire's failure. Adenauer's new proposal objected not to external enemies but to European-centric crises, such as secularization, totalitarianization, and nationalization in general.

The fundamental element of this process -since 1945- Konrad Adenauer proposed was the revisiting of Christian values, which were considered to counter the destructiveness of fascism and communism, as their importance and scope grew in the first half of the 20th century. In other words, this linked contemporary politics to historical Catholic values. Indeed, this was a response to the reshaping of Germany's political landscape in line with a novel political view that the unification of German Christianity provided a vital theoretical foundation for the post-war Christian Democratic program first in the German context, then in the continental European one in the context of reshaping the nation-state establishments in Europe, along with the contribution of similar political establishments in other nation-states in Europe. The process in Europe was not merely a political rearrangement; it was more than that. Namely, it included socio-cultural units within supranational European states.

In one sense, this view ensured democratic transition, anti-Communism, social market development, compliance with international law, and the fusion of national sovereignty among Western European governments. Unquestionably, the reasons for this transformation were diverse. One of them is the striking political idea of the post-war German Christian Democracy, specific to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), in bringing together large numbers of Catholics -and also Protestants- distinguished parties, including both from previous Christian parties in Germany and from Christian Democratic parties abroad.

The emergence of Christian Democratic movements and their major proposal, in the form of institutionalized measures to mould the political landscape and resolve multiple societal problems in Germany, is no doubt meaningful in its own context. Not only its emergence but also its continuity and sustainability make it deserving of study. The fundamental cause of the emergence of these movements is again based on the inherent religio-cultural and political dimensions of Germans and, to some extent European's own historical experiences and

exercises in Christianity. These dimensions were able to revive themselves, as evidenced by Christian values that prioritize the '*persona*' concept in a secular societal and political environment. This concept is a core element drawn from the Christian humanist perspective (Grabow, 2011: 7). We argue that there is a strong relationship between *person* and *self-responsibility* (Zolleis, 2008: 39). In this regard, while individuals' rights are preserved, they are also charged with greater responsibilities to mold their own and communal lives.

As stated earlier, efforts of this magnitude translated into meaningful actions within institutional frameworks, alongside demands at both the societal and political levels. It should also be noted that, while the literature refers to democracy, the latter is shaped by Catholic values. That appears in the conceptualization of '*social capital*'. We may clarify it very briefly. The 'Christian Democratic welfare state regime' under social capitalist ideology is distinct from social or liberal democratic regimes and a pure capitalist idea (Van Kersbergen, 1995: 1). Key elements of this welfare-state understanding have been clarified through comparative analysis of the social policies of Christian Democracy and other welfare-state regimes, with particular emphasis on their relationship to the transformation of Catholic social ideology.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY RESHAPED MODERN EUROPE

We argue that relations between politics and religion within secular, post-secular, and democratic regimes are essential to understanding Christian Democracy. No single socio-political reference defines the latter term. Rather, it consists of complex components of socio-political realities (Fogarty, 1957: xvii) and religious revival -Christian revival-.

Christian democracy's significance also lies in its ability to address political dilemmas. In other words, in particular, the historical context of the European integration process: *Catholic Social Doctrines* of the Vatican to reconstruct a democratic ideology on the grounds of Christianity or Christian values, on the one hand, and democratic revolutions starting from the end of the eighteenth century to form a modern democracy, on the other. This democratic inclination seems to have followed the steps of the American Republicans' experience in a sense to figure out democracy in line with novel societal conditions (Stapelbroek, 2016: 4). Thus, in accordance with the ideological tradition of Christian democracy, from an internal perspective to an external one, social liberalism and a democratic approach make their conceptual framework more understandable. Regarding the transformation of Catholic Politics since World War 2, rooted in anti-materialism and anti-Marxism, Christian democracy's policies have been shaped by interconfessionalism and social capitalism, as in social market economics (Mitchell, 2012: 7; Accetti, 2019: 29-52).

In fact, Christian democracy, in other words, the European model of the relationship between religion and politics, is one of the problematic issues in political science. It needs to be clarified whether this conceptual category has a theoretical basis. Over the past decades, the ideas and actors of Christian democracy in the Integration process (in Europe since the 1950s onwards) have brought this conception into Christian democratic thought. Simply put, the Christian democratic movement has, in the grand scheme of things, emerged ideologically with the collapse of communist and fascist regimes, situating itself in the center-right against the left (Rutan, 1997: 1105). For this reason, it is identified as Christian democracy as an advanced model of Christian political and social movements, which was declared at the first World

Congress of Christian Democratic Political Movements, convened by exiled European parties under communist regimes. The idea was thus universally evaluated as a religious observance zone, a kind of *heartland of European Christianity*, and its approaches were built on *Anglo-Saxon* and *continental* principles. It is even pointedly emphasized that the essence of Christian Democracy draws on a deep-rooted Christian tradition, dating back to the Reformation and confessional separation (Fogarty, 2018: 3-11).

Even the ability to communicate among distinct Christian denominations in Europe reflects the learning and application of democratic values. However, the initial stage of this communication appears to be between modernity and Catholic doctrine. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that Catholic authorities also played a role in revisiting their historical and traditional religious content and concepts. This consensus-building between modernity and Catholic doctrine was reached mainly through the recovery of St. Augustine's historical theology as a civilizational identity that reflected mutual interaction and forged a link between '*the City of Man*' and '*the City of God*'.

Thus, under the anti-materialism roof, a religio-political front, namely, the Christian democratic philosophy, has been particularly shaped by the Augustinian dual perspective, pointing toward modern democracy, which, in essence, arises from Christianity (Accetti, 2019: 36-39). On the other hand, the historicization strategy of Catholic doctrines has hermeneutically opened a new door to reinterpreting official doctrines of the Vatican through the idea that 'tradition means at the same time interpretation', in consideration of the fact that reinterpretation is inherently a part of its nature (Ratzinger, 1977: 40-41), to incorporate a modern democratic form into traditional Catholic doctrines. This perspective helped address objections that Christian Democratic ideology is uncanonical (Accetti, 2019: 35-36). Even so, this approach falls far short of adapting the Christian faith to modernity and its threats (Ratzinger, 2010: 28-30). On the contrary, theology in the modern sense safeguards the Christian faith against the adverse effects of modernity (Boeve, 2010: 257-66).

COMPONENTS OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

On the other hand, Christianity represents the ideational roots of human dignity in modern democracy: the man as a creature made in the *image of God*, who is both a person in the state and, spiritually, a person in *freedom*. Moreover, the *human dignity* of Catholic social teaching, as articulated by the Second Vatican Council, holds that the human person, made in the *image of God*, is derived from Biblical sources, Catholic tradition, and the encyclical letters of the Pope, to be drawn on in the idea of social capitalism. Hence, in Christian democratic theory, individuals are primarily members of social organs and have rights that support their status in various areas (Van Kersbergen, 1995: 191).

Equality and *justice* are likewise considered essentials of Christian universalism, both in labor and in rights. To this framework, the best-known principle, that is, the sense of church and state relations, or *separation of church and state*, in modern politics, is also directly associated with evangelical inspiration as "... *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's* (Matthew, 22: 21). As a result, *human dignity*, *freedom*, and Jacques Maritain evaluates church-state relations as an *inner renewal* to create a cooperative way under Christian democratic ideology in the modern world through opening new approaches to all Catholics and

non-Catholics (Maritain, 2012: 28-31). This reflects what we call the dialogical relationship between modernity and Catholicism. It is also clear that this includes a bargaining process between Catholic and non-Catholic belief systems in the European context, beyond the relationships mentioned.

Indeed, modern, democratic political philosophy is understood as rooted in Christian doctrines from an 'anti-materialist' perspective in the post-war period. The purpose of this essence in the context of Christian Democrats is, more particularly, to avoid the materialist ignorance of the religious *nature of man* and God. Therefore, materialist philosophy has historically been associated with oppressive and totalitarian regimes, such as Nazism (Adenauer, 1946), Marxism, and communism (Accetti, 2019: 45).

Another emphasized doctrine, assumed as a conception of human nature stated by Konrad Adenauer for Christian democracy, is the 'person'. "Personalist philosophy," which is the extended concept of this word, shapes the idea of a person who does not compete in a marketplace but has "a relationship of solidarity with others as a member of various communities" (Hanley, 2002: 464).

The concept has therefore been centered on the human dignity of Christian ethics and interpreted as a solidaristic form of individualism, shaped as an anti-fascist approach that stresses social justice. This concept encompasses principles such as "subsidiarity, solidarity, the social market economy, and popularism", all of which are understood as shaping societal spheres accordingly (Hegstad, 2023). These are indeed an extension of the core concept of 'person' and are rooted in Christian values, liberalist and social democratic elements, and consequently named 'personalist socialism' or 'social Catholicism', particularly in the Netherlands (Van Kersbergen, 1995: 72). Here, it is evident that individuality and personality emerge as novel components of believers due to the influence of modernity.

The idea followed a central path between liberalism and socialism with the intent of creating a 'well-ordered society' dissimilar from social democracy through *solidarity*, *social justice*, and the relationship between different economic and social classes in a plural social structure (Fogarty, 2018: 29). The orderly structure proposes reviving personalism in areas such as family life. In other words, *personalism* was simply in compliance with family policy, a cornerstone of the community, in direct proportion to the socio-political ideas of the Christian Democratic *Weltanschauung*, to create an ideal model of personalities for individuals (Van Kersbergen, 1995: 185-6).

Christian democracy has emerged from social capitalism as an alternative to social democratic and liberal regimes. In that sense, it combines and harmonizes social integration, although it varies across state regimes. While this phenomenon became more popular after the Second World War, socio-political Catholicism attempted to integrate the Catholic population under the umbrella of a union of welfare states, starting in the 1870s (Van Kersbergen, 1995: 31). So, as a Catholic version of the welfare state, Christian democracy has been criticized for its development, whether from a social-democratic or Christian-democratic perspective.

Nevertheless, the Catholic version, based on the social doctrines of Christian democracy, has been considered a characteristic attribute, unlike conservatism. Therefore, Van Kersbergen identifies it as a religiously inspired element whose essential principles rest on pluralism, social integration-class reconciliation, and cooperative accommodation "to be the embodiment of the building of social and political consensus" and "to restore the natural and

organic harmony of society”, and a catch-all term, beyond political conflicts (Van Kersbergen, 1995: 28-30). The restoration of societal conflicts and the combination of various organizations and institutions have thus provided a distinctive European model of Christian democracy, characterized by cross-national identification. While various ideologies play different roles, the main function of an integrated Union is clearly grounded in the socio-economic practice of Christian democracy, specifically in post-war European politics.

REFORMULATION OF THE POLITICS

The main characteristic of the approach to mobilizing Catholic politics during the interwar period was its accommodation of Catholic organizations to various parties and institutions (Sturzo, 1947: 3). In a way, the evolution of organizational consensus toward political and denominational unity and integration among various social classes readily opens the door to the social justice principle in Christian Democracy. At this point, the French People’s Democratic Party (*French Parti Démocratique Populaire-PDP*), German Centralist Party (*German Zentrumsartei*), Italian People’s Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano-PPI*) (As the other similar political organizations, PPI was also the reflection of the societal demands in the growing modernization processes leaning on the Catholic thought and values which were believed to be relevant historically and culturally to creation of “politics and society in a socially just manner” (Grabow, et al., 2011: 16).), Austrian Christian Socialist Party (*Austrian Christlich Soziale Partei-CSP*), or Dutch Rooms Catholic State Party (*Dutch Rooms Katholieke Staatspartij-RKSP*) have shown similarities during the 1850s-1950s as parallel Catholic mobilization despite some facts of conflicts between states and church with respect to parties and Catholic social movements relations to advance the integration of various social groups and the extension of *closed Catholicism* (The term ‘closed Catholicism’ was conceptualized by John Henry Whyte as a symbol to identify the role of clerical movements in the Catholic socio-political organizations in particular through the trade unions and Establishing Catholic parties (Whyte, 1981: 7-9, 48-49).). The development of cross-class mobilization concerning *political Catholicism* has thus paved the way for a future of Christian democracy (Fogarty, 2018: 296-335). The form of *political Catholicism*-centric Christian democratic parties has directly affected the progress of European integration so much so that Christian democracy has been figured as a ‘*dominant political organization of the Catholic populations of Western Europe*’ (Almond, 1948: 33).

Another idea was the *transnationalisation of Catholicism*, which was interpreted as both a religious revival and a catalyst for cooperation through *Catholic mobilization* against anticlerical forces and liberal-secular ideologies, mainly in the nineteenth century. Pope Pius IX (1792-1878) played a significant role in spreading the Catholic revival on a continental scale and advancing bureaucratically centralized doctrinal policy across Europe. Through successive declarations such as *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus of Errors*, it functioned as an opposing decree against modern ideologies of continental de-Christianization and the impairment of the Church’s institutional rights due to secularization and nationalism (Kaiser, 2007: 13-14).

The Zentrum of Germany, the Center Party, founded a Catholic Trade Union in 1869 (Bachem, 1968) and, in Lower Austria, in 1892, to link Christian social movements with the State, to represent Catholics’ rights, and to take a step against socialist trade unions. However,

the union was under par (Leisching, 1985). On the other hand, antisemitic and antiliberal-based Christian Social Parties, established by Catholics, had achieved remarkable success among German-speaking territories despite some opposition from bishops against these political movements. Over time, the Zentrum, mainly, shifted from denominational to interdenominational politics, taking a further step by unifying Catholic, Protestant, and agnostic electorates in the age of socialization, albeit amid existing conflict dynamics. A similar trend emerged among Italian Catholics, as a politicized idea was expressed through strike rights, giving the Catholic working class a place in both religious influence and social struggle (In the earlier stages of joining social and political movements or cooperating with socialists was considered a false, even a destructive move. However, this argument has been in time replaced with a further expansion of 'Christian Democracy'. For more information, see Chadwick, 1998: 317-22.).

Therefore, considering this and related challenges in Christian trade unions under the leadership of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) (Bachem, 1968), 'Christian democracy' became a widespread idea after the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (Chadwick, 1998: 322). Moreover, it attracted considerable attention among Catholics without tolerating unions' previous political views. Democracy was thus associated with *Christian socialism*, and Karl Lueger established the Christian Social Party, which made a strong contribution to Catholic movements in Austria (Kalyvas, 1996: 202). Furthermore, the party has progressively won landslide victories in the Reichsrat elections while simultaneously absorbing the Katholische Konservative Volkspartei (Catholic Conservative Party, 1930-1933). By contrast, Catholics and Calvinists formed a pact in the Netherlands to increase participation and create Catholic schools, though it violated school law. Later, Catholics first established the Popular Catholic Union. Then the Catholic party, a church-based party, was formed to promote electoral participation, and it became an instant success in the state (Verhoef, 1974: 215). Other similar organizations, youth associations, and, lastly, parties were created in Germany under the control of Catholic churches to play a crucial role in the political arena. Over time, Catholics and conservatives formed a coalition around support for the church as the *Katholische Volkspartei* (Kalyvas, 1996: 207).

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OCCURRENCE OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY, ZERO HOUR (*STUNDE NULL*) AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

After the interwar rise of *political Catholicism* in continental Europe, the West German party system primarily reflected this development, shaped further by the decline of the Hitler regime, through two main avenues: an interconfessional Christian 'Union' party, which emerged as affiliated local associations, and the refreshed Center party. These alternatives encompassed a spectrum of ideological perspectives within the *Sammelpartei* (Gathering party) framework (Cary, 1996: 154). The core idea of this 'gathering' was to promote a Christian *Weltanschauung* that integrated cultural, economic, and political dimensions, thereby establishing a foundation for a 'new' democratic order distinct from the moral failures of National Socialism.

Stunde Null-Zero Hour provided a moral justification for this new order by replacing Nazi materialism with an emphasis on *human dignity*, arguing that Nazism emerged from modern materialism and the erosion of Christian ethics. By incorporating the *Zero Hour* hypothesis, under the new Abendland-Christian West myth, into its first official party

manifesto, the Kölner Leitsätze-Cologne Guiding Principles (1 July 1945), the CDU maintained that state authority must be subordinate to *human dignity*, a principle protected exclusively by the values of the Christian West. Thus, Christian Democracy, together with the concept of the Abendland, was established at the milestone of *Zero Hour* to distinguish the formation of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) from the collapse that followed the Second World War and was shaped by the National Socialist regime. This approach mainly aimed to facilitate an ideological and cultural transformation from the defeat of the Nazi era toward a new beginning. (Borchard, 2023: 80). This concept functioned as a protective mechanism that promoted restoration within German political culture and, more specifically, distanced the nation from the legacy of the Holocaust during the post-1945 crisis.

Moreover, *Zero Hour* removes traces of World War 2 from Germany's post-war restoration. At this point, the Christian revival notably enabled the emergence of the Christian Democratic Union within the political sphere. *Rechristianization* further paved the way for the Christian Democrats by invoking core *Abendländische* (Occidental) principles (Brockmann, 2004: 217), and by seeking to reconstruct Christian tradition through the restoration of the original political perspective with 'zero'. For this reason, a new beginning began by rejecting all dishonored German heritage and its destroyed civilization, and by existing entirely, so to speak, as another Germany through the concept of *Zero Hour*. To overthrow the failed past of Adolf Hitler appeared possible on the other side (Brockmann, 1996: 11-16), through the use of multiple internal measures against the Nazi regime in the political age of post-war Germany. This political and ideological innovation was particularly aimed at regaining previous religious identities, which had gradually been lost within the community by returning from national *difference* typically to a "restoration of the German tradition" (Herf, 1996: 98). However, some government policies of the Nazi years were, regardless, continued in the West Zone by Christian democrats instead of understanding and accepting the realities of the past. In this case, post-war reconstruction could not entirely escape the influence of the former regime and the Third Reich, even in the face of the Nazi past's failure. Nevertheless, Day X marked the removal of the Nazi regime (Cary, 1996: 155, 156), commonly referred to as *Zero Hour*, which represented a significant political shift despite its indeterminate formation. Therefore, Andreas Hermes in the East Zone, Adam Stegerwald in the South, and Leo Schwing and Wilhelm Hamacher in the West opposed Hitler by organizing 'Sammlung' (gathering) and revitalizing Centrist Catholic identity and thought. This effort included Protestant groups in the Rhineland through an interdenominational approach. (Cary, 1996: 156-178).

Particularly, during the early phase of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) founding process, Adam Stegerwald conceptualized Christian democracy for that purpose as a movement that transcended narrow Catholic minority politics by promoting interconfessional cooperation. His core understanding was more focused on moving German Catholicism beyond its self-inflicted political isolation to establish a broad-based, interconfessional national party. On the other hand, Theodor Scharmitzel promoted institutional rechristianization by rejecting both secular materialism and totalitarianism, specifically collectivist Marxism and individualist capitalism. Scharmitzel presented this approach as a distinct path for Western Christian civilization, rooted in *Christian social teaching* (Cary, 1996: 155-178) as a *Third Way*.

This new beginning -*Zero Hour*- includes social, political, economic, and agricultural domains, first by the Düsseldorfer Leitsätze- Düsseldorf Guidelines (15 July 1949)- as a

program of economic and social order in German society (Hemmelmann, 2017, 196. The Guiding Principles represent a significant development in the institutionalization of German *political Catholicism*, facilitating its transformation into a broad, interconfessional party. At the same time, these principles provided the programmatic framework needed to address and resolve longstanding historical division. Additionally, the *Düsseldorfer Leitsätze* formally replaced common socialist rhetoric with the concept of the *social market economy*.

In short, this ideological domain had significant effects across all dimensions of society. This combination of these components also led to the revival of German socio-economic advancement. In other words, a new economic system grounded in social ethics and the doctrines of Christian social teaching, aimed at promoting Christian values, opened the door to the German socio-economic miracle. The framework of a new program has been, in this way, promoted by both the reconstruction of social justice and the political tradition of Catholics after the catastrophe of the Nazi era. Unlike classical liberalism or socialism, this new democratic regime was shaped by a combination of a market economy, a socio-political orientation, and Christian socialism, in accordance with the ethical demands of Christianity (Lingen, Markus. ‘Verabschiedung der “Düsseldorfer Leitsätze” zur “Verwirklichung der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft”’, <https://www.kas.de/en/web/geschichte-der-cdu/calendar-detail/-/content/verabschiedung-der-duesseldorfer-leitsaetze-zur-verwirklichung-der-sozialen-marktwirtschaft> (access September 2024).

Consequently, *Zero Hour* resulted from the fundamental social and economic needs that emerged during an urgent renewal process aimed at removing the wholly negative image of the recent past (Hemmelmann, 2017: 208). Thanks to certain moral and military restorations under Adenauer for Germany’s sovereignty, the reformed internal and external socio-political policies substantially enhanced the effectiveness of the Christian Democratic administration in the early days of the German Federal Republic. This development seems to be in line with the assumed role of the Church, whose role in “politically molding of Europe” and “the moral authority, which is everywhere recognized as being hers, to the salvation of our threatened civilization, to the social shaping of the world and the advent of a new order” (quotation in the book Hutchins, 1949).

Thus, not only the *Düsseldorf Guidelines* but also the *Ahlener Program* of this new Christian social doctrine-based democratic state have played key roles in drawing a strict line between new Germany and other politico-economic ideologies, including Marxist and capitalist ideas in business and social life. While the *Düsseldorf Guidelines* were the first self-contained economic order, the *Ahlener Program* offered an alternative to capitalism by emphasizing personal freedom in the economic sphere. Within this context, the *Düsseldorf Guidelines* and the *Ahlener Program* include anti-capitalist economic policies and principles of the social market economy. The *Kölner Leitsätze*, by contrast, present a new political manifesto and call for moral reconstruction based on human dignity and personal and religious freedom, within a *Christian image of man*.

ORDOLIBERALISM DURING THE ZERO HOUR ERA

The solution of transforming the socio-economic order from ideal capitalism and liberalism into a German understanding of neoliberalism is *Ordoliberalismus-ordoliberalism*. In this

respect, the term was key to post-war political life in Germany, particularly during the years of *Zero Hour*. Starting from the *Freiburger Schule*-Freiburg School of Walter Eucken and Franz Böhm, Alexander Rüstow, Wilhelm Röpke, and Alfred Müller- a new socialization strategy of Christian Democrats was one of the multiple restorations in shaping a new policy for German society at large. A new version of liberalism has left a lasting impression on the *social market economy* of post-1945 Germany, first with *the neoliberalism of the post-Weimar Republic and then with ordoliberalism, which played an active role* in the post-Nazi period.

Subsequently, the economic and political crisis of the ‘Great Depression’ helped reveal *ordoliberalism*, which developed from ideas of the German neo-liberal school into a practical strategy for implementing the *social market economy*. To form a social welfare state, with reference to notable *ordoliberalism* and the social market economy, the concepts of evolutionary socio-economic strategies held a prominent place in the German version of *neoliberalism* (Ptak, 2009: 119-25). Thus, *Zero Hour* appeared to be a great opportunity to be able to get up without the consequences of this ‘Great Depression’ for the Federal Republic, the occupied West Zone in particular. A new beginning via the ‘Third Way’ was, in a sense, a response to the political and socio-economic crisis of Germany; furthermore, a bridge of hope for the administrative devastation of the post-period of Nazi rule (Fulbrook, 2000: 13-17).

Thus, in response to the power of the capitalist cartel system, the ordoliberalism of the Freiburg school eventually adopted Keynesian theory through a new ‘policy paradigm’ (Remington, 2022). As an instrument for serving *the common good*, *ordoliberalism has laid the foundation for the ‘Third Way’ as an inseparable part of conservative neoliberal thought through the social market economy* (Dyson, 2021: 27). That was, at the same time, an alternative ideology to socialism and capitalism within a social market economy, inspired by *ordoliberalism* (Ptak, 2009: 120). As a political objective, the German variant of policy eventually originated from the ideals of ordoliberal theory, a neoliberal concept worldwide (Ptak, 2009: 125).

The social market economy, a new political concept during the Zero Hour, has, on the other hand, involved an evolutionary process in which ordoliberal ideas were transformed from an institutionalist doctrine into practical implementation in West German post-war society. Order policy-based *ordoliberalism* has its origin in the relationship between neoliberalism and neoconservatism, which substantially encompassed religious rights in harmony with the order of society. However, over time this has tended toward the interdependence of political, social, and economic orders under *Ordnungstheorie*, and then toward the Anglo-Saxon version of neoliberalism (Ptak, 2009: 126) (When examined closely, however, it is obvious that the influence of ordoliberal ideas has lost its effectiveness under certain circumstances due to conflicts with the sharp welfare-state understanding and the social-market economy, rather than the pure-market economy of the Christian Democrats (Hien, 2024). Even so, the German model of *ordoliberalism* is, theoretically, a gospel truth regarding the contribution of Germany’s economic miracle after the post-war period (Lechevalier, 2017).

Furthermore, to promote a different form of liberalism from collectivism and antidemocratic movements, ordoliberalism was a guiding principle of the policymaking center. At the same time, it goes beyond the conceptual dilemma of whether an alternative to neoliberalism or socialism exists, and it is a variant of conservative liberalism of the Freiburg School that combines Catholic social teaching and social-democratic thought (Dyson, 2021:

242). The impact of *ordoliberalism*, with the *Wirtschaftsverfassung*-economic constitution as an economic order, was thus regarded as necessary for the *social market economy* in an attempt to achieve economic liberalization. Based on this impact, the economic miracle and its role have been derived in the early post-war period distinctively from the *formierte Gesellschaft*-formed society that is aiming economically at a civilized moral order and liberating individuals under the significance of *ordoliberalism* (Dyson, 2021: 353-359).

After Catholic social thought gained prominence over collectivist ideas, ordoliberalism likewise gained traction not only in Germany's political sphere but also -as seen in the above-mentioned statements- in the economy (Dyson, 2021: 405-490). As a fundamental part of early Christian Democratic ideology, this concept has centered on both a triple harmony among law, state, and economic theories and a diversity of conservative-ordo liberalist patterns, playing a crucial role in the resurgence of German power in the post-war period. In short, ordoliberal identity has, as an instrumental and normative value for a new beginning for Germany amid political uncertainties, shaped both economic and socio-cultural policies in the Federal Republic in favor of social cohesion and norms such as individual responsibility, self-financial constraint, and prudence. In doing so, conservative liberalism also played an active role in every phase of social and political improvement (Dyson, 2021: x-xii).

CONCLUSION

Modernity, expressed through revolutions and societal changes, led to profound transformations in the European politico-religious landscape. Although these transformations introduced new ideas and ideologies, the underlying dimensions have reemerged as political ideologies within political parties, maintaining alignment with both historical and evolving religious traditions. The decline and subsequent revival of European civilization, particularly through the reinterpretation of Catholic values and the ideological tenets of Christian Democracy, have fostered theoretical critiques of foundational concepts and the paradigm of Christian political culture. As a result, the European model of the relationship between religion and politics remains central to political science.

For this reason, Catholicism's adaptation to modernity as a political domain has moderated its more extreme aspects. In contrast, modernity, in this aspect, contains elements that directly challenge the belief system in response to the societal legacy of Nazism. At this stage, Christian Democracy, fundamentally rooted in a re-evaluation of the Catholic tradition amid the dilemma between modernity and Nazism, incorporates elements that address the societal needs of post-war Germany in particular and of European society more broadly. *Interconfessional*-based German *political Catholicism* provided a crucial theoretical foundation for the post-war Christian Democratic program, which responded to the transformation of Germany's political landscape.

Catholic doctrines contributed to the revisiting of historical and traditional religious concepts by bridging modernity and Christian Democracy, primarily through renewed engagement with St. Augustine's historical theology as a marker of civilizational identity. These doctrines have enabled the hermeneutic reinterpretation of Vatican declarations, as 'tradition means at the same time interpretation', which is integral to incorporating modern democratic forms into traditional Catholic doctrines. Furthermore, the *transnationalization* of Catholicism

was interpreted as a religious revival that promoted cooperation through *Catholic mobilization* against anticlerical forces and liberal-secular ideologies. Pope Pius IX played a significant role in advancing this Catholic revival throughout Europe at this juncture.

Consequently, *human dignity, freedom*, and church-state relations have been reconsidered as part of an internal renewal aimed at encouraging cooperation under Christian democratic ideology in the modern era. This approach introduces new perspectives for both Catholics and non-Catholics. In this respect, cross-class mobilization within *political Catholicism* has facilitated the emergence of Christian Democracy. On the other hand, *the Sammelpartei-gathering-party idea* served as a unifying framework to advocate a *Christian Weltanschauung* that integrated cultural, economic, and political dimensions. This approach established the foundation for a new democratic order in German politics, distinct from the moral failures of National Socialism.

The concept of Zero Hour (*Stunde Null*) provided moral justification for this new order by replacing Nazi materialism with an emphasis on moral justification through *human dignity*, asserting that Nazism resulted from modern materialism and the decline of Christian ethics. This concept served as a protective mechanism, promoting restoration within German political culture and specifically distancing the nation from the legacy of the Holocaust during the post-1945 crisis.

To conclude, *Zero Hour* aimed to eliminate the remnants of World War II from Germany's postwar restoration. During this period, the Christian revival helped the Christian Democratic Union emerge in the political arena. *Rechristianization* further supported the Christian Democrats by invoking core *Abendländische (Occidental)* principles. The transformation of the socio-economic order from ideal capitalism and liberalism to the German form of neoliberalism, known as *Ordoliberalismus (Ordoliberalism)*, on the other hand, paved the way for the post-war economic philosophy. *Zero Hour*, in short, serves as a foundational period for Ordoliberalism, which provided the theoretical framework for reconstructing the West German economy and subsequently enabled *the Wirtschaftswunder*- the West German 'Economic Miracle'.

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