Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States

This book radically revises established knowledge in comparative welfare state studies and introduces a new perspective on how religion shaped modern social protection systems. The interplay of societal cleavage structures and electoral rules produced the different political class coalitions sustaining the three welfare regimes of the Western world. In countries with proportional electoral systems, the absence or presence of state–church conflicts decided whether class remained the dominant source of coalition building or whether a political logic not exclusively based on socioeconomic interests (e.g., religion) was introduced into politics, particularly social policy. The political class coalitions in countries with majoritarian systems, in contrast, allowed for the residual-liberal welfare state to emerge, as in the United States or the UK. This book also reconsiders the role of Protestantism. Reformed Protestantism substantially delayed and restricted modern social policy. The Lutheran state churches positively contributed to the introduction of social protection programs.

Kees van Kersbergen is a professor of political science at VU University Amsterdam. He served as director of the Centre for Comparative Social Studies until 2007 and has also been professor of political science at the Radboud University (Nijmegen). He is the author of Social Capitalism (1995), which won the Stein Rokkan Prize in Comparative Social Science. He has published widely in major journals and books, including the European Journal of Political Research, the Journal of Common Market Studies, the Journal of Theoretical Politics, The Politics of Post-Industrial Welfare States (2006), and Culture and the Welfare State (2008).

Philip Manow is a professor of political science at the University of Konstanz. Previously, he was a researcher at the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, and visiting Fellow at the Centre for European Studies, Harvard, and at the Centre d’Études Européennes, Sciences Po, Paris. His work has been published in numerous journals and collections, including European Journal of Political Research, West European Politics, Comparative Political Studies, The New Politics of the Welfare State (2001), and Federalism and the Welfare State (2008).
The most enduring and illuminating bodies of late-nineteenth-century social theory – by Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and others – emphasized the integration of religion, polity, and economy through time and place. Once a staple of classic social theory, however, religion gradually lost the interest of many social scientists during the twentieth century. The recent emergence of phenomena such as Solidarity in Poland; the dissolution of the Soviet empire; various South American, Southern African, and South Asian liberation movements; the Christian Right in the United States; and Al Qaeda have reawakened scholarly interest in religiously based political conflict. At the same time, fundamental questions are once again being asked about the role of religion in stable political regimes, public policies, and constitutional orders. The series Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics will produce volumes that study religion and politics by drawing upon classic social theory and more recent social scientific research traditions. Books in the series offer theoretically grounded, comparative, empirical studies that raise “big” questions about a timely subject that has long engaged the best minds in social science.

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Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States

Edited by

KEES VAN KERSBERGEN
VU University Amsterdam

PHILIP MANOW
University of Konstanz
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Preface

This book is the result of a joint project that began in 2001. After having collaborated on a paper on the problem of welfare without work in continental Europe (see Hemerijck, Van Kersbergen, and Manow 2000), we began discussing some intriguing and unresolved big issues in welfare state research, particularly the incomplete – and therefore unsatisfactory – manner in which the role of religion in welfare state development had been studied. Although early work on the history of the welfare state had included illuminating analyses of the pro-welfare role (e.g., via democratization) of Protestantism, later work had primarily focused on the positive impact of social Catholicism as politically represented by Christian democracy on the European continent. We started to consider the possibility that it had been an unfortunate omission not to consider the impact of (social) Protestantism on the development of the European and the American welfare state more generally.

We took as our example the German case, and we argued that in the beginning the German welfare state seemed to have been a Protestant project. This project was then ‘ursurped’ and expropriated by Social Democracy and social Catholicism, as a result of which the bourgeois Protestant middle class, the initial reform faction, was alienated from the welfare state venture. The Protestant middle class responded, among other things, with the development of a new ‘Sozialreform’ doctrine, ‘Ordoliberalism’. However, Ordoliberalism – despite the label – was not a simple embracing of the liberal doctrine but contained substantial elements of interventionism with a social reform purpose. Ordoliberalism was concerned with social equality, social harmony, and decent living. It
was against state redistributive programs, but not against a ‘caring state’ in the sense of caring for social peace and justice – even with the help of massive economic interventions and corrections of the free market. In other words, the renowned ‘soziale Marktwirtschaft’ could not – as it usually was – be understood as a compromise between Catholic social doctrine as embodied in the Bismarckian welfare state and economic liberalism. Rather, the soziale Marktwirtschaft should be seen as a compromise between Catholic and Protestant social doctrine. Philip Manow elaborated these theses in several articles on Germany (e.g., 2000, 2001, 2004).

This discussion and approach, taken as our point of departure, made us more sensitive to the impact of Protestantism on the trajectory of welfare state development in European countries other than Germany. The Protestant influence had often been ignored because Protestantism was usually not in favor of large-scale welfare expansion. But this did not imply that Protestantism had not been important. Especially where historically the sects and Protestant groups had been significant (e.g., Switzerland, Netherlands, the UK), we argued that one could notice a retarding (delaying) influence as well as a much stronger emphasis on individual responsibility and thrift (an aspect already noticed in the early literature; see Manow and van Kersbergen, Chapter 1, this volume). But how exactly had this worked in the relevant cases other than Germany? And why and how, as in the case of the Netherlands, could this retarded development be turned into a frontrunner expansion in the period after World War II? Moreover, and perhaps more disturbingly, if the underemphasized role of Protestantism had to be reinvestigated and reevaluated along the lines we suggested, did this not imply that the very mainstream view of welfare state development – the widely supported Social Democratic power resources and welfare regime model – was also in need of revision?

We decided to try and bring together researchers in the field working on these and related issues. With the financial and logistical help of the Max Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung (Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Society) in Cologne, we were able to organize two conferences (April/May 2004 and May 2006) to discuss our main conjecture about the role of Protestantism (and religion more generally) in welfare state development and the many other questions and issues that it inspired. We are extremely grateful to the directors of the Max-Planck Institute, Fritz W. Scharpf and Wolfgang Streeck, and later Jens Beckert,
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for their valuable support of our project. The papers and discussions at the first conference were of high value for further developing our own ideas. We then wrote a first version of a theoretical context paper to be used for the first drafts of the chapters that we discussed at the second conference. After this, we had several rounds of revisions in light of the chapters’ findings, making this enterprise a truly collaborative venture. We want to thank the contributors to the volume and other participants in the conferences for their much-needed and appreciated input.

Over several years, we have benefited substantially from critical comments and suggestions given at the many opportunities we had to present our work in progress. We want to thank our colleagues at the Center of European Studies (Harvard); the CEVIPOF (Centre de Recherches Politiques de Sciences Po) and the CEPREMAP (Centre pour la Recherche Economique et ses Applications) (Paris); the Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Society (Cologne); Korea University (Seoul); the Political Economy seminar at Oxford University; Cambridge University; VU University Amsterdam; Sichuan University (Chengdu); and the universities of Amsterdam, Bern, Münster, Berlin (Humboldt), Konstanz, Zürich, Helsinki, and St. Gallen. In particular, we want to express our thanks to Daniele Caramani, Peter Gourevitch, Silja Häussermann, Torben Iversen, Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, Hans Keman, Hans-Peter Kriesi, Gerhard Lehmannbruch, Andreas Nölke, Phillippe Schmitter, David Soskice, Peter van Roojen, and Barbara Vis.

We also want to thank the University of Konstanz’s Centre of Excellence, “Cultural Foundations of Integration,” and especially its Institute for Advanced Study, which hosted Kees van Kersbergen in 2008, for their generous hospitality and support for this project. The faculty of social sciences and the members of the Department of Political Science at the VU University Amsterdam were so generous and kind to grant Kees van Kersbergen a one-year leave of absence to finish the book manuscript. We are also grateful to two anonymous referees of Cambridge University Press for their thought-provoking comments. Finally, we acknowledge that the volume as a whole and every single chapter benefited greatly from the unusually stimulating comments and helpful suggestions from the editors of the Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics, David C. Leege and Kenneth D. Wald.

Kees van Kersbergen and Philip Manow
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List of Contributors

Karen M. Anderson is associate professor of political science in the Department of Political Science at the Radboud University (Nijmegen). Her research falls within the field of comparative politics, with a focus on the politics of welfare state change, the relationship between welfare states and labor markets, and trade unions as political actors. She is the coeditor (with Ellen M. Immergut and Isabelle Schulze) of The Handbook of West European Pension Politics (2009). She has published in journals, such as Comparative Politics, the Canadian Journal of Sociology, the Journal of Public Policy, and Comparative Political Studies, and in various edited volumes.

Thomas Ertman is associate professor of sociology in the Department of Sociology at New York University (NYU) and the director of NYU in Berlin. He is the author of the much-praised Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (1997). He is currently working on a sequel, tentatively titled Taming the Leviathan: Building Democratic Nation-States in 19th and 20th Century Western Europe. He has published in World Politics and was (with Jürg Steiner) editor of a special issue of Acta Politica on consociationalism (2002).

Sigrun Kahl is assistant professor of political science at Yale University. Her research interests include comparative welfare states and religion and politics. In particular, she is interested in how religious principles became embedded into the institutions of the modern (welfare) state. She has published on the religious roots of modern poverty policy in the European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie.
Julia Lynch is Janice and Julian Bers Assistant Professor in the Social Sciences in the Department of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. She holds a PhD in political science from the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Age in the Welfare State: The Origins of Social Spending on Pensioners, Workers and Children* (2006), which was co-winner of the prize for best book in European Politics and Society from the American Political Science Association in 2007. She has published articles in *Comparative Political Studies, Comparative Politics, Qualitative Sociology,* and the *Journal of Social Policy,* among others.

Philip Manow is professor of political science in the Department of Politics and Administration at the University of Konstanz. His research interests are in the fields of comparative welfare state research, European integration, comparative political economy, and political corruption. He has published in *Comparative Political Studies, West European Politics, Socio-Economic Review, Legislative Studies Quarterly,* and the *European Journal of Political Research,* among others.

Kimberly J. Morgan is associate professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University. Her research interests include child care and parental leave, health policy, taxaiton, and, more broadly, the politics of the welfare state. She has been a postdoctoral Fellow at New York University’s Institute of French Studies, a participant in Yale University’s Scholars in Health Policy Research program, and a visiting Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. She has received grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Investigators Award program and the National Science Foundation. Her articles have appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies,* and *World Politics,* among others. She is the author of *Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies* (2006).

Herbert Obinger is professor at the Center for Social Policy at the University of Bremen. He has published several books on various welfare state topics. He is coeditor (with Stephan Leibfried and Francis G. Castles) of *Federalism and the Welfare State: New World and European Experiences* (2005) and coeditor (with Francis G. Castles, Stephan Leibfried, Jane Lewis, and Chris Pierson) of the *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Welfare States* (2010). His articles have appeared in *West European Politics, Governance, Politische Vierteljahresschrift,* the *Journal of European*
List of Contributors

Social Policy, the Journal of Public Policy, and the Journal of European Public Policy.

Bruno Palier is a researcher at Sciences Po CEVIPOF (Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po). Trained in social science, he has a PhD in political science and is a former student of École Normale Supérieure. He is studying welfare reforms in Europe and is coauthor of several books on the welfare state, including (with Claude Martin) Reforming the Bismarckian Welfare Systems (2008) and (with Robert Sykes, Pauline M. Prior, and Jo Campling) Globalization and European Welfare States: Challenges and Change (2001). He has published widely, both in major French journals (Revue Française de Science Politique and Revue Française d’Administration Publique) and in international journals, including the Journal of European Social Policy, Social Policy and Administration, and West European Politics.

Jill Quadagno is professor of sociology at Florida State University, where she holds the Mildred and Claude Pepper Eminent Scholar Chair in Social Gerontology. She is past president of the American Sociological Association and the author of more than fifty articles and twelve books on aging and social policy issues. In 1994, she served as senior policy advisor on the President’s Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform. She has also been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and an American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship. In 2006, she received the Eliot Friedson Outstanding Publication Award from the section on medical sociology of the American Sociological Association and, in 2008, the Leo G. Reeder Award, also from the Medical Sociology Section. Her most recent book is One Nation, Uninsured: Why the US Has No National Health Insurance (2005).

Deana Rohlinger is a research associate at the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy and an assistant professor at Florida State University. Her current research explores how contemporary elder organizations build social capital within communities and affect cultural change. Her articles have appeared in Social Problems, Sociological Theory, American Behavioral Scientist, the Sociological Quarterly, and Sex Roles.

Kees van Kersbergen is professor of political science in the Department of Political Science at VU University Amsterdam. His main research interests lie in comparative political sociology, politics, and economy. He is the author of Social Capitalism: A Study of Christian Democracy and