

Abstract

Aron Kerpel-Fronius

**Constructing Civic Religion
Through Sites of Memory. The Case
Study of Hungary and Poland**

The recent democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland has attracted significant attention from scholars. Despite introducing controversial policies and laws, both Fidesz and PiS enjoys mass support amongst their respective electorate. As most contentious policies are justified on an ideological basis by the two parties, this paper aims to analyse the ideology of Fidesz and PiS through the framework of Bellah's civil religion. In particular, the paper it will show how the respective civil religions of the two parties are propagated through public spaces and spaces of memory. Three areas of analysis will include changes of street names, state funded statues and monuments, and memory politics in state-funded Museums. This three-fold analysis will be carried out with regards to the effect of tourism on memory politics and analysing the display of the aforementioned projects in the media (with a strong focus on state-funded/affiliated outlets). The paper aims to prove that sites of memory constitute a focal point of both Fidesz's and PiS' symbolic politics, forming a fundamental part of the two parties' continuous effort of rewriting Hungarian and Polish history. This rewritten history constitutes the basic ideology of the civil religion in the two parties' religious nationalism. Therefore, as this paper claims, observing and understanding the system of

symbolic politics of the two parties in spaces of memory is crucial, since it is the direct facilitator of democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland.