

National hope and conservative disappointment.

On the transformation of the conservative concept of nation in the context of the German reunification.

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The thesis investigates the transformation of German conservatism in the context of the German reunification. More specifically, the study examines the relation between conservatism and the concept of nation, or, in other words, it examines to what extent the conservative understanding of the nation has changed in the 1980s and 1990s. The research aim is to analyse the development of theoretical debates within the intellectual conservative spectrum by using the example of the conservative journal *Criticón* and selected conservative intellectuals such as Karlheinz Weißmann, Rainer Zitelmann, Heimo Schwilk and Günther Rohrmoser. After a detailed historical introduction to German conservatism and its dilemma in German history, the first part of the thesis investigates the development in theoretical debates in the 1980s, and thus prior to the historical changes that took place in 1989, while the second part mainly focuses on the 1990s. Through detailed analysis, the study shows that the concept of nation dominates increasingly all aspects of conservative thinking in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, it reveals that the concept of nation in German conservative thought has fundamentally shifted in light of the German reunification. Based on the assumption that the relation of conservatism and the concept of nation changes primarily through the hypostasis of the nation, the study retraces the process from approach and appropriation up to the complete adoption of the national category into conservative thinking. As a result of progressing secularization, the concept of nation increasingly replaces religion in conservative thought. The shift from religion towards nation not only represents a qualitative change for German conservatism, but is also symptomatic for its changing social conditions. The nation thus becomes the decisive point of reference for conservative self-legitimation and has lasting effects on conservatism as a political theory.