

Abstract

Right-wing extremism, nationalism and populism are increasingly prominent in the global political landscape (Toscano, 2019: 1). This dissertation argues that these phenomena are partial products of discursively constructed identities conveyed to audiences using a variety of strategies. It critically examines how the South African Christian survivalist right-wing extremist organization, the Suidlanders, uses political communication to discursively construct identities. Using the discourse-historical approach (Wodak, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak, 2017) to analyse the 2018 and 2019 YouTube videos of the Suidlanders' spokesperson, Simon Roche, the argument is made that his discursive constructions of difference and sameness are the product of the complex socio-political history of the Afrikaner nation in South Africa as well as of contemporary transnational constructions of far-right identity. In Roche's construction of in-groups and out-groups, he conceives the Afrikaner in-group as deeply fractured by political difference, and the black South African Other as one component of a larger, transnational Other – the globalists. Departing from the history of nationalist identity in South Africa, the Suidlanders find “belonging” in a loosely defined transnational populist alliance engaged in a struggle for survival against globalism. The analysis shows how - through the frequent use of the various strategies, such as intensification, positive self-preservation, negative-other presentation, victim perpetrator reversal, and strategic ambiguity - Roche portrays the Suidlanders' identity as a product of historical Afrikaner nationalism rooted in colonialism and apartheid and post-apartheid victimhood. The analysis also shows the ways that allegiances can be formed by far-right groups in different countries as well as how ideology can be used for opportunistic purposes.