

# Global Diversities

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Over the past decade, the concept of 'diversity' has gained a leading place in academic thought, business practice, politics and public policy across the world. However, local conditions and meanings of 'diversity' are highly dissimilar and changing. For these reasons, deeper and more comparative understandings of pertinent concepts, processes and phenomena are in great demand. This series will examine multiple forms and configurations of diversity, how these have been conceived, imagined, and represented, how they have been or could be regulated or governed, how different processes of inter-ethnic or inter-religious encounter unfold, how conflicts arise and how political solutions are negotiated and practiced, and what truly convivial societies might actually look like. By comparatively examining a range of conditions, processes and cases revealing the contemporary meanings and dynamics of 'diversity', this series will be a key resource for students and professional social scientists. It will represent a landmark within a field that has become, and will continue to be, one of the foremost topics of global concern throughout the twenty-first century. Reflecting this multi-disciplinary field, the series will include works from Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Law, Geography and Religious Studies. While drawing on an international field of scholarship, the series will include works by current and former staff members, by visiting fellows and from events of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Relevant manuscripts submitted from outside the Max Planck Institute network will also be considered.

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Irfan Ahmad • Jie Kang  
Editors

# The Nation Form in the Global Age

Ethnographic Perspectives

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# Essays in Honour of *Peter van der Veer*



A portrait of Peter van der Veer in 2010

As a borderless virus, if Covid-19 marks a form of globalization none had probably predicted, responses to it showed not only the persistence but also intensification of nationalism. Against the dominant views that stress nationalism unaffected by globalization or globalization undermining the nation-state, this volume argues that what characterizes the contemporary world is globalization of the nation form. Based on long-term fieldwork in China, Germany, India, Iran, Pakistan, South Africa and the Netherlands and drawing on multiple theoretical sources, notably Peter van der Veer's significant work on religion and nationalism, twelve chapters by anthropologists critically and variously dwell on tension-laden dynamics of nationalism in a comparative way. Attentive to politics, they historically discuss the nation form in relation to such diverse themes as urban migration, rituals of animal sacrifice and prayer, music, media, e-commerce, Islamophobia, bare life, secularism, literature, violence and atheism. By foregrounding the non-West as a conceptual rather than simply a geographical space, this volume offers new ways of understanding culture and politics of nation and nationalism in a broader perspective. It also charts arenas for future decolonial works on imaginings alternative to the nation form.

# Acknowledgements

In acknowledgement of his enormous contribution to scholarship and as an act of gratitude to him as our supervisor, we present this Festschrift to Professor Peter van der Veer to mark his formal retirement. We say ‘formal’ because it is unlikely that his commitment to scholarship and his rich contribution to the world of letters will come to a halt with his retirement. In many different ways, he has served as a source of intellectual inspiration, academic guidance and practical advice to all the contributors in this volume, as well as to other students whose doctoral dissertations he supervised but who are not represented here. In particular, he has enabled us to tread our own paths and helped us craft our own respective intellectual standpoints.

In addressing the central themes of nationalism and the formation of the nation, the chapters draw on a wide range of topics, ranging from film to fiction, moral labour to digital imagination, religious rituals to atheism, and race to migration. This thematic diversity serves as a window into Peter’s broad scholarly interests in culture, the nation, religion, migration, democracy, secularism and much more, all differently but inescapably informed by a historical and comparative approach. Most of the chapters are substantially revised versions of papers first presented at a two-day conference titled ‘Religion and Nationalism’, held from 17 to 18 June 2019 at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands (see Photo). We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for raising

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pertinent theoretical, methodological and editorial issues. Their suggestions and queries have helped us to improve the structure of the volume and to articulate our positions more sharply.



**Group photograph with participants of the conference, ‘Religion and Nationalism’, Utrecht, 2019**

We would also like to express our gratitude to the University of Utrecht for providing generous funding, a splendid venue and all the necessary facilities to make the conference an especially productive and pleasant event. Our special thanks go to Pieter van der Woude for his efficient, friendly assistance in organizing the conference. We are grateful to the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, for funds and support in the production of this book in open access. We thank Robert Parkin for his meticulous work in editing the manuscript. We express our appreciation to Patrice Ladwig and Dana Meyer who provided help in searching for a suitable photo for the book cover. Finally, we thank all the contributors for their invaluable time and efforts in attending to our various questions, suggestions and comments.

Preparation of *The Nation Form in the Global Age* began well before the outbreak of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. However, much significant work on it took place during the unusual period of the pandemic, when all of us, inhabiting diverse national spaces that were affected differently by the virus and the politics surrounding it, had to adapt to a 'new' world, one that brought with it, among other things, a new set of vocabulary. In some ways this volume bears the mark of that world, connecting it as it does to the world that went before and hopefully the one that awaits us.

Göttingen  
1 May 2021

Irfan Ahmad and Jie Kang

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