**Part B2: The project proposal**

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| **a. State of the Art and Objectives** |

***Points of Departure: Confessional Governance and Politico-Religious Conflicts***

Post-9/11 scholarship vigorously renewed efforts to understand the link between religious ideology, social polarization, and political conflict (Hᴇʏᴅᴇɴ/Mᴏɴᴀ 2021). One salient scheme of mutual interdependence between societal disintegration and politico-religious conflict strikingly recurs in various cultural and historical settings. It emerges when public authorities are drawn into contentions over religious orthodoxy—a subject under particularly intense investigation regarding contemporary forms of religious violence and terrorism (Dɪɴɢʟᴇʏ/Mᴏʟʟɪᴄᴀ 2018), but also concerning the discourse and practice of ‘Holy War’ in other periods (Kᴏᴛᴇᴄᴋɪ et al. 2021), as well as in the field of early modern confessionalization (Pᴀʟᴀᴠᴇʀ et al. 2016). In all these historical settings, the legitimacy of political authority is woven into a fabric of politico-religious normativity that encompasses all key societal sectors, standardizing specific religious beliefs, observances, and practices, while fostering conflicts with adherents of diverging religious doctrines.

As a pervasive phenomenon of supra-regional and transcultural significance, forms of governance that predicate political authority on religious orthodoxy—with a corresponding potential for driving specific forms of politico-religious conflict—first developed in the era of late antiquity, originating from increasingly frequent and substantial interventions by Roman public authorities in intra-Christian doctrinal disputes. Within this wider field, various aspects, singular conflicts, and individual strands of development have received scholarly attention. The interpretive models established to date, however, do not yield a sufficiently powerful theory (in terms of analytical depth, conceptual rigor, and explanatory reach) to comprehensively understand the deep historic transformations in the politico-religious fabric of late antiquity.

The conceptual difficulties pertain to the following areas in particular:

* the political praxeology of late-antique political conflicts over questions of religious orthodoxy;
* their structural conditions within the late-antique socio-political domain more broadly; and
* their role in the cultural transformation between antiquity and the Middle Ages at large.

Key questions regarding these major areas of inquiry remain unresolved, complicating a comprehensive understanding of how late-antique political culture was increasingly geared toward quests for religious orthodoxy. Through conceptual refinement, analytic precision, and methodological rigor, RISE aims to unlock the full potential that is inherent in research but that has not been harnessed to date. The key lies in how we conceptualize political authority.

Essentially, two major research strands have evolved for approaching the interdependencies between political authority and quests for religious orthodoxy in late antiquity. As will be outlined in more detail below, one strand links the explanatory models to research on religious violence and various forms of politico-military conflict (especially usurpation and civil war), while the other strand, more prominently championed in church history, focuses on ‘confessionalization’ and related notions. To date, the two research strands remain largely disconnected and methodologically incompatible, and no comprehensive attempt has been made to reconcile their explanatory models and concepts. As will be shown below, the methodologies on both sides suffer from specific conceptual problems that make it difficult to render their models mutually supporting. This has the effect that neither side achieves a sufficiently substantive understanding of what triggered and what conditioned the profound realignment processes within the politico-religious domain in late antiquity, thus failing to show how the phenomena in question affects, on a more fundamental level, the constitution of political authority—the core of any powerful theory of pre-modern political culture.

We need to resolve these methodological and conceptual problems if we are to break new ground in understanding late-antique political culture. The following sections describe in more detail the problems I see within existing scholarship, the potential ways to address and solve them, and the new scientific horizons that we can open with a novel approach to late-antique governance. Mapping the state of research will thus expose the open questions and corresponding objectives of this project and lay the foundation for the methodology of RISE.

***Religious Violence and Polarization: Current State and Prospects of Conceptualization, I***

There is a rich scholarship on late-antique religious violence on the one hand, and on usurpation, civil war, and related types of politico-military conflict (such as palace revolts, throne rebellions, and military unrest) on the other. Scholarship on usurpations, civil wars, and related forms of conflict in late antiquity has repeatedly shown that, though these phenomena were typically superimposed in various ways with elements of religious discourse, the decisive dynamics that triggered the loss of political legitimacy in such conflicts were mostly *not* initiated by religious determinants (Sᴢɪᴅᴀᴛ 2010 collected the evidence on usurpation and civil war in late antiquity; Oᴍɪssɪ 2018 offers wider contextualization; for early conceptual considerations see Fʟᴀɪɢ 1997). For RISE, the distinction is crucial. Usurpations, civil wars, and related forms of conflict are clearly symptomatic of political crises; they cannot, however, serve as the pivotal object of inquiry if we aim to understand the impact of quests for religious orthodoxy on the transformation of political authority in late antiquity.

My own research supports this observation. In my PhD dissertation and a string of other publications, I have dealt intensively with usurpation and civil war in late antiquity (Wɪᴇɴᴀɴᴅ 2011, 2012, 2015; Bᴏ̈ʀᴍ/Mᴀᴛᴛʜᴇɪs/Wɪᴇɴᴀɴᴅ 2016; Gᴏʟᴅʙᴇᴄᴋ/Wɪᴇɴᴀɴᴅ 2017). Over the last years, I have condensed this work in the ongoing international network project ‘Internal War: Society, Social Order and Political Conflict in Antiquity’ (German Research Council DFG), which I have flanked by the short-term project ‘The Rise of Politico-Religious Conflict’ (Ministry of Science and Culture, State of Niedersachsen MWK). Following findings made by other scholars, a striking result is that the explanatory value of usurpation and civil war changes considerably from the imperial period to late antiquity. While usurpations and civil wars have conclusively served as pivotal points of reference for historical studies into the political legitimacy of Roman rule in the first and second centuries (Fʟᴀɪɢ 1992, 2nd ed. 2019, Mɪᴄʜᴇʟs 2018; Wɪᴇɴᴀɴᴅ 2012; Sᴇᴇʟᴇɴᴛᴀɢ 2004), they do not provide comparably viable access points for approaching late-antique political legitimacy. This loss in explanatory value is contingent on a number of factors, such as the changing nature of the status of Roman citizenship (Aɴᴅᴏ 2016); modifications in the social structure of the Roman army (####) and in imperial administration (####); the impact of breakaway empires and divisions of power (Haake forthcoming; ####); the end of the Roman emperor’s active role as military commander and the rise of the *magistri militum* (####; on the Roman emperor’s return to the battlefield in the seventh century, however, see Vɪᴇʀᴍᴀɴɴ 2021); the novel constellation of a capital-based monarchy (Pғᴇɪʟsᴄʜɪғᴛᴇʀ ####; Mᴀɪᴇʀ 2019; ####); and the end of the Roman monarchy in the West (Mᴇɪᴇʀ 2020; Bᴏ̈ʀᴍ 2nd ed. 2018).

The network project, in particular, has shown that in order to break new ground in identifying and understanding religious impact on political authority in late antiquity we need to shift our focus from usurpation and civil war closer to those nodal points where erosion of political legitimacy was genuinely linked to quests for religious orthodoxy. One prominent strand of scholarship that investigates religious violence more broadly seems to offer a more promising avenue for understanding the changes in late-antique political authority. But in this field of research, as well, we face significant hurdles. Earlier approaches to religious violence in late antiquity (for instance, Sʜᴀᴡ 2011; Hᴀʜɴ 2015; Gᴀᴅᴅɪs 2005; or the articles by Aɴᴅᴏ, Cᴏɴʏʙᴇᴀʀᴇ, Lᴇɴsᴋɪ, and Dʀᴀᴋᴇ in *JLA* 6 [2013]) have recently been forcefully challenged on methodological and empirical grounds (most notably by the contributions to Dɪᴊᴋsᴛʀᴀ/Rᴀsᴄʜʟᴇ 2020, esp. Kɪᴘᴘᴇɴʙᴇʀɢ 2020, and by Vᴀɴ Nᴜғғᴇʟᴇɴ 2020). Critics argue that, since we lack a reliable method for measuring factual quantitative change in violence, the uptick in reports of such instances might well be due to shifts in the cultures of discourse and literary transmission. Additionally, the scholarly assessments were mostly based on a rather small selection of exceptionally spectacular instances (for instance, violent Jewish-Christian conflicts like in the Callinicum affair of 388, or Christian-pagan hostilities and temple destructions as in the case of the Serapeion in 391), largely bypassing the wider cultural settings of violence and discourse on violence. Furthermore, there is often no trenchant conceptual distinction between Christian-pagan and inner-Christian violence—even though the underlying polarization processes rely on distinct conflict dynamics.

Finally, the analysis of religious violence in late antiquity is often linked to the idea that Christianity, as a monotheistic religion, lacks the ‘technique of translation’ characteristic of ancient polytheism and is, thus, inherently intolerant, consequentially spawning violent action against adherents of deviating creeds or other religions. This view (most forcefully expressed by Assᴍᴀɴɴ 2009, but also included in a large body of other scholarship) has done a particular disservice to the study of political authority in late antiquity. Not only does the approach bypass crucial distinctions between different causes and forms of religious violence, but it even aims past the rationale of ancient discourses on religious tolerance and intolerance themselves. The most forceful attempt, to date, to put tolerance/intolerance at the center of a conceptually reflected social-historical analysis of late-antique political interaction was made by Harold A. Dʀᴀᴋᴇ, who sees Roman emperors as brokers of an irenic consensus designed to undermine the mechanisms of religious intolerance that were catalyzed by the dynamics of schismatic conflicts (Dʀᴀᴋᴇ ####). As I have argued in Wɪᴇɴᴀɴᴅ 2016b, Dʀᴀᴋᴇ solves a number of substantial problems in earlier scholarship, but his approach still cannot fully explain why and to what purpose the state began and continued to adopt partisan positions in religious quests for orthodoxy. Further, it cannot explain why late-antique Christian rulers (even when they often took pragmatic decisions regarding Christian-pagan and Christian-Jewish relations) unmistakably advertised their uncompromising rejection of deviating religious creeds, thereby portraying themselves as intolerant, with the aim of claiming authentic religious authority.

In conclusion, the various forms of politico-military conflict and religious violence need to be carefully embedded in any ambitious theory of late-antique political legitimacy, but they cannot serve as the pivotal access points for understanding how quests for religious orthodoxy transformed political authority. We thus need to take a closer look at another promising avenue, which has been pursued with increasing intensity in recent research, that focuses on the role of imperial power in processes of normalization of faith, or ‘confessionalization’.

***Confession and Political Authority: Current State and Prospects of Conceptualization, II***

Scholarship on late antiquity has not yet fully operationalized the conceptual tools that might help us to understand the peculiar evolution of forms of governance that predicate the legitimacy of political rule on religious orthodoxy. Expressions such as ‘creedal standardization,’ ‘normalization of faith,’ or ‘confessionalization,’ pervade the scholarly literature on late antiquity, but largely lack conceptual clarification (a problem that also affects the terminology surrounding ‘caesaropapism,’ ‘hierocracy,’ and ‘theocracy’; on that last notion, however, see the comparative approaches in Tʀᴀᴍᴘᴇᴅᴀᴄʜ/Pᴇᴄ̌ᴀʀ 2013). While church history and historical theology have provided thorough investigations of the institutional and organizational histories of the wide spectrum of various ‘Christianities’ (see, for instance, the synthetic account of Gʀɪʟʟᴍᴇɪᴇʀ 1979–2002; and Wɪɴᴋᴇʟᴍᴀɴɴ 2nd ed. 1983) as well as trenchant analyses of theological discourse (e.g., Bʀᴇɴɴᴇᴄᴋᴇ ####; ####), the interconnections and mutual influences with political authority remain significantly underexplored—even though political interventions into the formation of religious doctrine obviously rose to become one of the most salient, and most contested, fields of governance in late antiquity.

More recently, a number of valuable suggestions for conceptual refinement have been made. Hanns Christof Bʀᴇɴɴᴇᴄᴋᴇ (2015) offers important preliminary thoughts about how the notion of ‘confessionalization’ might be used as an analytical tool for exploring the impact of religion on late-antique governance, even though the notion is, of course, anachronistic and requires specific adaptations. Wolfram Kɪɴᴢɪɢ (2016) examines how the standardization of creed was increasingly presented as a reflection of the emperor’s personal religious beliefs, and how this put the monarch in direct competition with the ecclesiastical councils in the definition of credal formulae. Based on a rigorous prosopographical analysis, Christoph Bᴇɢᴀss (forthcoming, elaborating on Bᴇɢᴀss 2018) provides important preliminary considerations on the intensifying impact of orthodoxy on the career paths of members of the Roman imperial elite in the fifth and sixth centuries. And Jan-Markus Kᴏ̈ᴛᴛᴇʀ (forthcoming, elaborating on Kᴏ̈ᴛᴛᴇʀ 2013) follows a methodological approach rooted in Lᴜʜᴍᴀɴɴ’s social systems theory to investigate the effects of political interventions in questions of religious orthodoxy.

None of these approaches, however, is comprehensive enough in theoretical scope and explanatory power to provide a sufficiently profound theory of how quests for religious orthodoxy shaped late-antique governance at large. The decisive breakthrough can only be achieved by pursuing novel avenues of research that transcend the boundaries of current conceptualization and understanding. As I read the present state of scholarship, the time is ripe to conceptually link the impact of quests for religious orthodoxy on late-antique governance to the notion of political authority in the Weberian sense. This renders fruitful Bʀᴇɴɴᴇᴄᴋᴇ’s suggestion to apply the concept of ‘confessionalization’ to late antiquity, leading to a *working definition* of *confessional governance* as *a political system in which political authority is seen as legitimate by key societal sectors only insofar as it is considered consonant with religious orthodoxy*.

This working definition of confessional governance has its roots in Max Wᴇʙᴇʀ’s concept of political authority (‘Herrschaft’: Wᴇʙᴇʀ 1922: 122–176, 603–612) in that it characterizes a given political system based upon socio-political conditions of legitimacy, and understands legitimacy as submission of the ruled to the prevailing patterns of domination. Put differently, political authority is legitimate rule, where legitimacy depends on the facticity of acceptance by the ruled (on Weber’s notion of political authority in historical scholarship, see ####). This definition effectively eliminates a major point of scholarly critique of ‘confessionalization,’ which was often (if only implicitly) unconvincingly construed as a top-down model (Lᴏᴛᴢ-Hᴇᴜᴍᴀɴɴ 2001, 2013 gives an overview of the debates). In order to fully operationalize the notion of confessional governance, in view of the late-antique historical horizon, a number of connected conceptual devices need to be refined. Three steps in particular are to be taken:

*First –* we need a viable path to identify the *key societal sectors* on which the legitimacy of political authority depends. For late antiquity, the key societal groups have variously been identified with the ruling elites, municipal elites, the capital’s populace, church representatives, the military leadership, and soldiers (preliminary attempts at defining political authority in relation to these key societal groups of late antiquity, or ‘Akzeptanzgruppen’ in the German academic literature, were made by Pғᴇɪʟsᴄʜɪғᴛᴇʀ 2014: 28–38; Mᴀɪᴇʀ 2019: 49–67). The suggestions made so far are too static to cover the different political systems and their complex developments throughout late antiquity. Thus, we need to replace the essentialist definitions with a functionalist approach, identifying the key societal sectors with those social groups among the ruled who, in a given situation, possess the power to bring about a political crisis. This leads us directly to the next decisive step: refining the notion of ‘political crisis.’

*Second –* we need to find a reliable way to detect *political crises* in order to be able to identify potential erosions of political legitimacy in late antiquity as entry points for a historical exploration into the rise of confessional governance. Scholarship typically tries to pinpoint political crises by looking out for symptoms like outbreaks of open violence or civil war (see the preceding section), but these indicators, as argued above, are too imprecise when it comes to addressing the disintegration potential unleashed by quests for religious orthodoxy. In order to develop a more sensitive conceptual apparatus, I suggest that we speak of a political crisis when the state is forced to adjust its strategies for claiming and maintaining political authority. This notion of a political crisis has the double advantage of being connected to the Weberian concept of political authority and offering low-threshold responses for identifying situations in which losses of legitimacy threaten political rule.

*Third –* as the *key determinant* that brought about the characteristic changes in late-antique governance will become the core object of any substantive investigation into the rise of confessional governance, we need to identify the mechanism that entangled political authority with religious orthodoxy. As far as I can see, the question of what triggered and conditioned the increased gearing of political authority toward religious orthodoxy is largely unexplored, even if various specific aspects of the process have received scholarly attention. One of the decisive presumptions of this project is that the rise of confessional governance in late antiquity was led by political interventions in confrontations over questions of religious doctrine. These interventions, which I denote as *doctrinal commitments*, were neither the sheer consequence of a ruler’s religious convictions nor a self-evident side effect of religious policy. They were complex governance operations that, as such, have never been properly conceptualized nor systematically analyzed. These doctrinal commitments were typically adopted by the state in the wider contexts of adaptations to strategies deployed for maintaining political authority—doctrinal commitments themselves are thus indicative of political crises. This, again, means that the conceptual reflections presented here come full circle, in that the crises to which doctrinal commitments reacted, and the crises triggered by doctrinal commitments, forced adjustments to the construction of political authority that gradually gave rise to *confessional governance*. The core field of conceptualization for this project thus lies in a precise definition of doctrinal commitments.

***Doctrinal Commitments: Current State and Prospects of Conceptualization, III***

Doctrinal commitments have not been conceptualized so far, so it is crucial to lay out a *working definition* that precisely delineates what this critical term means. I suggest understanding doctrinal commitments as *governance operations that privilege adherents of specific religious beliefs, observances, and practices over those of competing doctrines*. For the state, making a doctrinal commitment typically meant that public authorities proclaimed their support for a particular group among conflicting Christian parties by endorsing that group’s doctrinal position—most commonly, by jointly subscribing to a particular formula of faith that served as a benchmark for inclusion (orthodoxy) and exclusion (heresy, or heterodoxy). As such, doctrinal commitments were complex governance operations that at the level of political praxeology consisted of implementation policies, schemes of justification, and measures to control undesired side effects. I refer to these sets of operational options as (a) strategies of implementation, (b) strategies of justification, and (c) strategies of delimitation.

Doctrinal commitments—vastly underexplored in scholarship—were a highly versatile and demanding policy tool used by public authorities to intervene in intra-Christian disagreements regarding fundamental religious beliefs, observances, and practices. Doctrinal commitments by the state were thus, not merely private professions of faith by individual political actors (even if they were presented and perceived as such, and even in the case of the Roman emperor), but normative interventions by the state in situations of latent or overt conflict within or among specific subgroups of the population. Following the recognition of Christianity, doctrinal commitments were thus introduced by the state in the context of political attempts to solve questions of accountability when dealing with representatives of Christian communities; they provided public authorities with a wide range of options for establishing and shaping alliances with Christian communities and for interacting with Christian representatives. Such interventions were not an end in themselves, as scholarship often implicitly assumes (####). Rather, they were meant to facilitate the build-up of an integrated organizational structure on the Christian side, which, again, was seen as a prerequisite to forming a functioning alliance between the imperial administration and Christian communities (####).

Sociologically, political attempts to integrate Christian communities begin from the same baseline as attempts to suppress them, namely from recognizing their growing effect on the legitimacy of political authority. In analogy with how the Roman state had previously fostered the rise and integration of urban elites, aiming to share the exercise of dominion over the provinces with civil elites, the Roman state now tried to foster the rise of an elite of representatives for Christian communities as reliable partners for sharing responsibility in the exercise of power over the growing network of Christians throughout the empire’s population. This goal of integrating the Christian communities under the umbrella of Roman governance forced the Roman state to contend with the factors that impeded the establishment of a functioning hierarchy on the Christian side and the factors with the highest potential for conflict were disagreements regarding the proper religious beliefs, observances, and practices.

Initially, the state embraced the novel decision to adopt doctrinal commitments as a means for fostering integration and hierarchy formation in Christian communities. As broader and broader segments of society and governance were increasingly affected by conflicting quests for Christian orthodoxy and creedal standardization, doctrinal commitments (ever more closely associated with the emperor’s religious disposition) geared political loyalty toward questions of creed with increasing intensity. As a result, it became harder for the state to control the momentum of change that was triggered by doctrinal commitments. We can speak of confessional governance when the strategies of implementation eventually evolved into a core area of policy action for all key societal sectors of late-antique monarchies, when the strategies of justification became a central pillar of political legitimacy, and when the strategies of delimitation were no longer applied to shield specific societal sectors from the operational effects of doctrinal commitments. The rise of confessional governance—understood as a societal system that predicates political authority on religious orthodoxy—is thus a gradual transition, characterized by how doctrinal commitments themselves changed their structure, their functions, and their impact.

Following the definition of confessional governance proposed above, the Roman Empire was obviously not a confessional state when, in the fourth century, public authorities began and continued to intervene in intra-Christian quests for orthodoxy, by making doctrinal commitments. In the beginning, the sharp containment strategies implemented by the state effectively confined the operational reach of doctrinal commitments and shielded other areas of governance and society from the impact of state partisanship in matters of religious doctrine. However, over time, the boundaries shifted markedly, and ever broader areas of governance and society were affected by religious quests for orthodoxy (####). In the process, the legitimacy of political authority became more closely linked to questions of religious doctrine, and orthodoxy played an increasingly important role in safeguarding loyalty to the emperor (####). This dynamic, not only transformed the Roman political system, but had profound consequences far beyond the borders of the vast empire, deeply impacting also the post-Roman successor states in the West, the Sasanian kingdom, and the early Islamic empires. Proceeding from this assessment of scholarship, the open questions that arise from the current state and prospects of conceptualization and, consequentially, the objectives of this project will now be outlined.

***Open Questions and Objectives: Explaining the Rise of the Confessional State in Late Antiquity***

Scholarship has recently made significant progress in the fields of conceptualization discussed above. Nevertheless, RISE proceeds from the strong presumption that we need to push the boundaries of knowledge and comprehension much further if we are to gain a truly powerful theory of political authority in late antiquity. The *main objective* of this project is to achieve a significant scholarly breakthrough by developing a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the rise of confessional governance in late antiquity and carving out the implications for how we read late-antique political culture at large.

This main objective is geared toward the project’s core working hypothesis. The *working hypothesis* holds that integrating into late-antique political systems a religion that conditioned religious authority on orthodoxy, and construed it independently of political authority, led to a new logic of politico-religious conflict, which triggered substantive socio-cultural realignments, and eventually shaped the contours of what can best be described as an early form of confessional governance. Furthermore, we can pinpoint the essential determinants of this world-historic transformation to a specific policy device introduced in the early fourth century AD, namely, doctrinal commitments by the state.

Proceeding from the project’s main objective and from this working hypothesis, the state of research as laid out above brings us to the more specific subsidiary aims of RISE, which can be defined as follows:

**1.** Conceptual refinement. The powerful theory of political authority in late antiquity that RISE aims to develop requires a solid conceptual foundation. In order to achieve this aim, RISE needs to conceptually refine our understanding of political legitimacy in view of the complex prerequisites that we encounter when studying a transitional period in which the political field was increasingly intertwined with quests for religious orthodoxy. In this regard, the project needs to establish historical entry points for exploring the constitution of political legitimacy in late antiquity, and explore the implications for how religious violence, intolerance, and confessionalization can be embedded into the theoretical framework of this project.

**2.** Political praxeology (micro-level of inquiry). The main aim at the micro-level of inquiry (in the sense of the empirical groundwork) is to explore how precisely doctrinal commitments by the state operated at the level of political praxeology. This aim can only be achieved by investigating the three sets of strategies by which doctrinal commitments operated. Specific subprojects must therefore examine (2.1) how doctrinal commitments were implemented, (2.2) how they were justified, and (2.3) what measures were taken to limit their operational reach. To gain a comprehensive picture, we need to understand how and to what effect each of these three sets of measures was met with corresponding counterstrategies.

**3.** Structural analysis and comparison (meso-level of inquiry). The main aim at the meso-level of inquiry (in the sense of a historical structural analysis) is to characterize how state interventions into quests for religious orthodoxy were structurally embedded in late-antique political systems more broadly, and how different late-antique political systems compare in this respect. This aim can only be reached by investigating (3.1) precisely how the deployment and impact of doctrinal commitments were contingent on specific structural framework conditions; (3.2) which parameters influenced the ways in which politico-religious conflicts triggered by doctrinal commitments could develop; (3.3) which factors defined the trajectories of historical change in the deployment and effects of doctrinal commitments; and (3.4) what insights into the specific cultural settings can be gained through comparative explorations into different late-antique cultural settings.

**4.** Synthesis (macro-level of inquiry). The main aim at the macro-level of inquiry (in the sense of a synthetic historical investigation) is to establish an overall picture of how and to what extent doctrinal partisanship by the state contributed to the large-scale cultural transformations between antiquity and the early Middle Ages. To properly assess the impact that doctrinal commitments had on the various domains of politico-religious interaction at large, RISE needs to understand how they relate to and how they affected (4.1) the modes of human interaction and communication; (4.2) the processes of societal integration and disintegration; (4.3) the dynamics of socio-political adaptation and transformation; and (4.4) the conditions and effects of cultural entanglement and diversification.

The methodology of RISE, discussed in the next section, is designed to successfully tackle the considerable complexity of the historical development in question and to achieve the goals of this project as laid out above.

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| **b. Methodology** |

***The Methodological Approach: Using Doctrinal Commitments as an Analytical Tool***

The questions that drive this project cannot be answered by computational linguistics or artificial intelligence, nor will statistical analyses or big data investigations advance our understanding of the historical processes in question. The novelty of this project’s methodological approach lies not in applying new technologies, but in a particular analytical configuration grounded in empirical meticulousness, conceptual clarity, and coordinated interdisciplinary research. Ultimately, RISE is a project of fundamental pioneer research on the history of human coexistence. The project shares a keen interest in the grandest scientific quest of political and historical theory: to comprehend the inner workings of human culture. Given the strong centrifugal forces within complex human populations—and the limited options for holding a community together through coercion alone—societal cohesion is never self-explanatory. The mechanisms of human interaction and communication that bring about the fabric of social and cultural integration against all odds are therefore fascinating historical phenomena. Religion exerts powers that can work in both directions. Religion can integrate, and it can divide. In addressing the intriguing processes of historical change through the complex tensions between political authority and doctrinal dissent in late antiquity, the project contributes to how we understand one of the most profound transformations of politico-religious cultures in human history.

For RISE, the crucial point of analytical leverage is a particular phenomenon in late-antique political culture that has so far eluded scholarly understanding: doctrinal commitments by the state. The phenomenon, while easy to label, has complex and far-reaching implications for the political system, which are difficult to pin down precisely. In seeking to understand these implications, RISE addresses the historical complexity at hand with an analytical matrix that interlocks empirical investigations at the *micro-level* with comparative structural inquiries at the *meso-level*, thus gaining solid pillars of empirical and conceptual understanding that, in turn, support the overarching synthesis at the *macro-level* of investigation. The analytical matrix of RISE comprises four work packages that are outlined in more detail in the following (see also figure on page 4 of B1).

***WP* *1: Conceptual refinement (transversal layer of inquiry) – one task | team project***

Since methodological and conceptual refinement is continuously required at all levels of investigation, this first and most basic work package, devoted to conceptualization, will be addressed by the entire team over the entire project duration. This task optimizes the theoretical foundation RISE needs to address political authority in late antiquity. The task comprises various measures designed to conceptually refine our understanding of political legitimacy in view of the complex prerequisites of a transitional period in which the political field was increasingly intertwined with quests for religious orthodoxy. The project needs to establish historical entry points to explore the constitution of political legitimacy in late antiquity and the implications for our understanding of religious violence, intolerance, and confessionalization.

***WP* *2: The micro-level of inquiry (empirical groundwork) – three tasks | PhD projects***

Comprising three tasks, the micro-level investigation (i.e., WP 2) pursues precisely calibrated and coordinated explorations into the political praxeology of doctrinal commitments (my theoretical understanding of praxeological political analysis is informed by Jᴏɴᴀs/Lɪᴛᴛɪɢ 2017; Sᴄʜᴀᴛᴢᴋɪ et al. 2001). RISE identifies three distinct (yet interconnected) sets of strategies as the three areas of relevant schemes of interaction and communication between public authorities and Christian communities that together constitute the phenomenon of doctrinal commitments. These three sets of strategies, with which the three complementary tasks are aligned, are (2.1) strategies of implementation, (2.2) strategies of justification, and (2.3) strategies of delimitation. Each of these sets of strategies is embedded in a multifaceted bundle of interactions between public authorities and Christian communities (and/or their representatives), and each set of strategies is contested in multiple ways. All three sets of strategies (and counterstrategies) operate in a field of tension between political authority and doctrinal dissent.

Taken together, the in-depth investigations into the three sets of strategies provide a solid understanding of (a) how the goal of building and managing alliances between the state and Christian communities required the state to make doctrinal commitments; (b) how these commitments aggravated doctrinal dissent and fueled new specific forms of politico-religious conflict; (c) how these novel conflict dynamics affected the legitimacy of political authority and triggered responses by the state to control and contain the inherent potential for disintegration; and (d) how doctrinal commitments contributed to the gradually intensifying impact of quests for religious orthodoxy on the various aspects of late-Roman governance and society.

Hence, the micro-level analysis (= WP 2) provides the empirical groundwork for RISE, in that it shows how doctrinal commitments by the state emerged, how they worked as a novel instrument of power, and how they put pressure on both the Christian communities and the political system. Denoting the schemes of interaction and communication that constituted doctrinal commitments as ‘strategies’ does not mean they were always deployed ‘strategically.’ The meso-level of inquiry will show how doctrinal commitments, even if they were made deliberately, depended on structural framework conditions and were defined by various internal and external factors that have, at least partially, eluded state control.

The following discussion presents, in more detail, how the three tasks approach the three sets of strategies that constitute doctrinal commitments.

***2.1*** *Strategies of implementation.* Strategies of implementation aimed to overcome factors that impeded compliance with doctrinal commitments made by the state. Public authorities continuously experimented with a wide variety of enforcement measures, ranging from appeals to goodwill, fiscal incentives, and marginalization attempts, over various consensus-building efforts and legislative approaches, to harsher actions such as deposition or exile of recalcitrant bishops and even outright persecution. Commendable investigations of individual measures exist (e.g., the exile of bishops: Hɪʟʟɴᴇʀ et al. 2016; persecution: Fᴏᴜʀɴɪᴇʀ/Mᴀʏᴇʀ 2020), but they do not provide a full picture of (a) how this wide spectrum of measures formed an integrated matrix of policy options; (b) how, in different circumstances, public authorities chose to make use of the available options; (c) how the deployment and efficiency of individual measures within this matrix changed over time; and (d) how those affected by doctrinal commitments reacted to these governance actions.

A wide range of sources—from imperial rescripts to Donatist sermons—show that the entire spectrum of measures unfolded with remarkable swiftness already under Constantine, during the incipient ‘Donatist controversy’ (on this wide-ranging conflict, see ####). Within just a few years, the administration ran out of nonviolent options for uniting the Christian communities in North Africa—among the fruitless approaches were an episcopal arbitration court (####) and a concerted consensus universorum at a synod convened by the emperor (####)—as a result, the authorities even resorted to the deployment of military force against a large Donatist congregation in Carthage (PL 8,752–758; crit. ed.: Dᴏʟʙᴇᴀᴜ 1992). Notably, the deployment of military force against Christians was an established regulatory technique, but, under Constantine, it sharply changed its purpose and impact, and came to be considered a legitimate means for supporting the integration of Christian communities (see my preliminary considerations in Wɪᴇɴᴀɴᴅ 2016b), with the seemingly paradoxical (but in fact consequential) effect that only under the Christian emperors could persecution of Christians truly flourish (the chapters in Fᴏᴜʀɴɪᴇʀ/Mᴀʏᴇʀ 2020 explore the extensive record of persecutions in late antiquity).

***2.2*** *Strategies of justification.* Strategies of justification were deployed to vindicate state interventions in intra-Christian doctrinal disputes (see Rᴇʏᴇs 2011 for conceptual considerations on strategies of justification in political discourse, and Mᴀʏᴇʀ 2001 for a political theory of justification strategies in authoritarian regimes). Most notably, these justification strategies generally aimed to bolster the emperor’s claim to exercise the authority necessary to judge matters of religious doctrine. Regarding political interventions in intra-Christian doctrinal disputes, strategies of justification were typically responsive, counteracting attempts by opposing agents to challenge the emperor’s jurisdictional prerogative in the religious sphere. Strategies of justification were, thus, embedded in a wide field of antimonarchic discourse primarily addressing the role of the emperor (see Bᴏ̈ʀᴍ/Hᴀᴠᴇɴᴇʀ 2015 on antimonarchic discourse in antiquity and how dangerous it could become for individual rulers), and as far as doctrinal commitments were concerned, imperial strategies of justification were specifically directed at the emperor’s claim of being entitled and authorized to intervene in the intra-Christian quest for orthodoxy.

***2.3*** *Strategies of delimitation.* Strategies of delimitation were used to deploy doctrinal commitments in as targeted a way as possible, to confine their impact to the intended domains of politico-religious interaction, and to shield other areas of governance from the potentially destabilizing effects of state interventions into intra-Christian disputes. From the start, public authorities took the utmost care to contain the conflict potential resulting from their doctrinal interventions in intra-Christian affairs. While the state adopted firm positions in doctrinal disputes to solve questions of accountability when dealing with church representatives, it was equally important (not only initially) to avoid such determinations when dealing with members of other social groups such as the imperial elite, municipal aristocracies, and military leadership. Strategies of delimitation thus brought about a conspicuous ‘synchronicity of the nonsynchronous,’ unleashing considerable forces of politico-religious innovation in clearly delineated areas of interaction, while in other social arenas the momentum of change remained low. Strategies of delimitation thus account for the varying intensity and pace at which state institutions were affected by religious quests for orthodoxy.

Innovations in politico-religious interaction were most pronounced where public authorities implemented and justified state intervention in intra-Christian doctrinal confrontation. There are a number of obvious indications for how effectively the state managed to shield off other areas of governance. In the fields of ceremonial appearance, military representation, public monuments, and coinage, the emperors’ religious representation remained conspicuously ambiguous for a long time and they were adjusted far more cautiously than fields involving direct interaction between public authorities and Christian communities (art and ceremony: Aʟғᴏ̈ʟᴅɪ 1970; MᴀᴄCᴏʀᴍᴀᴄᴋ 1981; military representation: MᴄCᴏʀᴍɪᴄᴋ 1986; monuments and urban space: Bᴀssᴇᴛᴛ 2004; coinage: Lᴏ́ᴘᴇᴢ Sᴀ́ɴᴄʜᴇᴢ 2004). The imperial panegyrics, as our most telling source for the highest level of interactions between emperors and members of the imperial and provincial elites, largely retained a religiously ambivalent or religiously neutral language for more than three centuries (Oᴍɪssɪ/Rᴏss 2020). It even maintained the option of pagan discourse for quite some time (with orators like Libanius, Themistius, or Claudian: ####), whereas genuinely Christian semantics did not enter the genre until very late, and controversial doctrinal questions remain almost completely absent.

Prosopographical analyses of the imperial elite, and the imperial court in particular, show that the number of Christian officials began to rise significantly only from the early fifth century onwards (Bᴇɢᴀss 2018; Sᴀʟᴢᴍᴀɴ 2002; Hᴇᴀᴛʜᴇʀ 1994; ᴠᴏɴ Hᴀᴇʜʟɪɴɢ 1978, Dᴀɢʀᴏɴ 1974). In the 470s, the emperor expected a candidate for the praetorian prefecture to become Christian (Severianus under Zeno: Bᴇɢᴀss 2018: 231f. no. 191), but questions of orthodoxy still played no role, and even in the early sixth century, the *magister officiorum* Celer (ᴘʟʀᴇ ɪɪ s.v. Celer 2) could act as a power broker at the emperor’s side without taking a clear stand in doctrinal disputes.

The fact that public authorities worked hard to confine, as closely as possible, the operational reach of doctrinal commitments highlights the stark contrast between, on the on hand, the exigencies of imperial rule as resulting from the recognition of Christianity, and earlier forms of religious expressions of political authority, on the other. The Tetrarchs, for instance, saw no need to differentiate their religious messaging according to the various groups they addressed, the simple reason being that, under the Tetrarchs, imperial religious ideology did not serve the purpose of building and managing an alliance with a particular religious subgroup of the population (this difference between the Tetrarchs and Constantine is often overlooked in scholarship).

This inquiry into the strategies of delimitation will thus be able to explain why doctrinal commitments initially required strict measures to confine their impact to the intended fields of politico-religious interaction and to shield other areas of governance from the potentially destabilizing effects of state interventions into intra-Christian disputes. Furthermore, it will be able to identify the counterstrategies that were used to overcome the firewall put in place by the state and to expose how, over time, broader and broader fields of governance and society were affected by the doctrinal commitments.

Taken together, the three in-depth probes into the sets of strategies discussed above provide the empirical groundwork for the project. Pursuing a vertical vector of inquiry, the three subprojects are limited in scope: Each task is (a) designed to understand the origins and the effects of one specific set of strategies and counterstrategies that together constitute doctrinal commitments; each task is (b) guided by specific research questions, particular investigative logics, and distinctive analytic concepts; and each task is (c) largely confined to the late-antique Roman political landscape (4th–7th centuries). Due to their clear outline and focused scope, the three subprojects at the micro-level of inquiry (= WP 2) are particularly suitable for young researchers and will therefore be conducted by three PhD students. Taken together, they provide a solid understanding of how precisely doctrinal commitments lay at the heart of those decisive recalibrations in politico-religious interactions that in turn enabled and shaped the larger-scale transformations in late-antique political cultures that RISE then investigates at the more advanced layers of inquiry.

***WP 3: The meso-level of inquiry (advanced tier of investigation) – four tasks | Postdoc projects***

At the meso-level of inquiry (i.e., WP 3), four tasks pursue precisely calibrated historical explorations into the political anthropology of doctrinal commitments (my understanding of political anthropology is based on Wʏᴅʀᴀ/Tʜᴏᴍᴀssᴇɴ 2018, Sʜᴀʀᴍᴀ/Gᴜᴘᴛᴀ 2006, Kᴜʀᴛᴢ 2001, Sʜᴏʀᴇ/Wʀɪɢʜᴛ 1997). These four distinct, yet interconnected, tasks are aligned with four strategic fields of investigation that provide the broader lens for studying how doctrinal commitments were embedded in the socio-cultural systems of late antiquity more broadly. These four fields to which the four tasks relate are: (2.1) the structural framework conditions that define the workings and the effects of doctrinal commitments; (2.2) the parameters that govern the configuration of conflicts arising from doctrinal commitments; (2.3) the internal and external factors that drive the dynamics of how doctrinal commitments operate in a changing socio-cultural environment; and (2.4) comparative investigations of different socio-political settings that help us better understand the cultural specifics of how doctrinal commitments worked under specific circumstances.

At the meso-level of inquiry, both postdocs will work on all four tasks, one postdoc focusing more on the western Mediterranean (West-Roman empire, post-Roman successor states in the West), the other postdoc focusing more on the eastern Mediterranean (Sasanian and early Islamic empires). Within RISE, the work done in WP 3 (which can also be described as a horizontal vector of investigation) connects the empirical groundwork of WP 2 to the more conceptually elevated layers of comparative structural analysis (on historical structural analysis, see Eʟᴡᴇʟʟ 2013; on comparative historical analysis, see ####). This step is necessary for understanding what defined the potential trajectories and impact of doctrinal commitments within their socio-cultural settings of late antiquity more broadly. The following discussion of the four meso-level fields of investigation presents the four tasks and their methodological approaches in more detail.

***3.1*** *Structural framework conditions.* Structural framework conditions are supra-personal ecological, social, and cultural factors that place constraints on the choices actors make—for example, the demographic structure; the requirements for mobility, interaction, and communication; the organizational culture of the administration; and the availability of resources, technologies, and instruments of power. The emergence, development and effects of doctrinal commitments as political instruments can only be understood in their embeddedness in a wider framework of such ecological, social, and cultural prerequisites.

// More specific aspects are also relevant: the absence of police forces trained to deal with public unrest, for instance, played a role in how conflicts could unfold and develop in the imperial capital. Public order was often brutally enforced by military means (for the first three centuries: Fᴜʜʀᴍᴀɴɴ 2012; we lack a systematic analysis for the late-antique horizon, but see Al. Cᴀᴍᴇʀᴏɴ 1973, 237 and Hᴀᴀs 2nd ed. 2006, 76).

// This analysis into the structural framework conditions at the meso-level also provides the backdrop for the cultural anthropological analysis of the role of interaction and communication at the synthesizing level of inquiry (= WP 4.1).

***3.2*** *Parameters of conflict.* Parameters of conflict are those more specific factors that define the potential trajectories of conflict escalation and resolution within the given structural framework conditions. Investigating the parameters of conflict means casting a spotlight on what conditioned the behavior of social groups under conditions of polarization, disintegration, conflict escalation, and conflict resolution.

// This analysis into the parameters of conflict at the meso-level also provides the backdrop for the cultural anthropological analysis of the role of integration and disintegration at the synthesizing level of inquiry (= WP 4.2).

***3.3*** *Dynamics of change.* Dynamics of historical change are the forces that drive transformations of the structural framework and alter the parameters of conflict in socio-cultural systems. Historical change is thus more than just passing time, it is an alternation in patterns of social structures, institutions, and behaviors over time. The development in how doctrinal commitments were deployed and how they affected the politico-religious system more broadly was driven by a number of different factors that RISE needs to understand to be able to make sense of the wider developments.

// This analysis into the dynamics of historical change at the meso-level of investigation also provides the backdrop for the cultural anthropological analysis of the role of adaptation and transformation at the synthesizing level of inquiry (= WP 4.3).

***3.4*** *Comparative analysis.* The comparative cultural analysis provides a contrast medium for the investigation that will throw into sharp relief the cultural specifics at work when different late-antique political systems built and managed politico-religious alliances—and when in different cultural settings political authority met with doctrinal dissent (my understanding of comparative historical analysis is informed by Fʀᴇɪʙᴇʀɢᴇʀ 2019, Sᴛᴇɪɴᴍᴇᴛᴢ 2014; Dᴇᴛɪᴇɴɴᴇ 2009; Hᴀᴜᴘᴛ/Kᴏᴄᴋᴀ 2009; Kᴇᴅᴀʀ 2009; Mᴀʜᴏɴᴇʏ 2004; Bʀᴀᴇᴍʙᴜssᴄʜᴇ 1989; Kʀᴏᴍ 2021 provides an overview of current debates).

// This comparative analysis at the meso-level also provides the backdrop for the cultural anthropological analysis of the role of entanglement and diversification at the synthesizing level of inquiry (= WP 4.4).

As these explorations are more conceptually demanding, penetrating the empirical groundwork investigated at the micro-level of inquiry (i.e., WP 2) with cross-cutting approaches of comparative structural analysis, the four tasks in WP 3 will be conducted by the postdocs, as the more advanced researchers in the team. The work of the postdocs will thereby also provide additional conceptual framing for the three tasks conducted by the PhD students *and* build upon their findings regarding the three sets of strategies that constitute doctrinal commitments. At the same time, the outcomes of the tasks pursued by the postdocs at the meso-level investigations will build the supporting arches that carry the weight of the synthesizing dimension at the macro-level of inquiry (i.e., WP 4), as the uppermost tier of analysis.

***WP*** ***4: The macro-level of inquiry (synthesizing dimension) – four tasks | PI project***

Comprising four tasks, the macro-level investigation (WP 4) pursues the overarching synthesis of RISE. Building upon the matrix of interlocked vertical and horizontal vectors of inquiry at the micro- and meso-levels of analysis, this uppermost tier of investigation establishes an overall understanding of the rise of the confessional state in late antiquity. The overarching synthesis ingests the refined conceptualization of political authority (produced in WP 1) and aggregates the outcomes of the subordinate empirical and comparative structural investigations (WP 2 and WP 3) into a new master narrative of politico-religious change in late antiquity, applying a historical methodology that operationalizes concepts of cultural anthropology (my understanding of historical-cultural anthropology is based on Wᴜʟғ 2018, Tʜᴏᴍᴀs 2010, Bᴀʀɴᴀʀᴅ 2000, Hᴀʀʀɪs 1983, 1968).

Due to the fundamental conceptual link between confessional governance and political authority, the synthesizing investigation necessarily roots inthe four key dimensions that constitute the fabric of political culture at large—and to which, consequentially, the four tasks of WP 4 are devoted. These four key dimensions are formed by the structural parameters and historical dynamics of (4.1) modes of human interaction and communication; (4.2) processes of societal integration and disintegration; (4.3) dynamics of socio-political adaptation and transformation; and (4.4) conditions and effects of cultural entanglement and diversification. RISE explains the deep transformation of the politico-religious fabric in late antiquity as a profound realignment of political authority in these four key dimensions, to which the four tasks and their methodological approaches relate as follows:

***4.1*** *Interaction and communication.* In order to gain the complete picture, RISE needs to understand precisely how the rise of confessional governance in late antiquity was geared with changing modes of human interaction and communication. This investigation is coupled with the meso-level inquiry into the structural framework conditions of doctrinal commitments (i.e., WP 3.1), but it aims, more fundamentally, to understand the cultural prerequisites and historical trajectories of the complex development toward confessional governance in late antiquity.

***4.2*** *Integration and disintegration.* Furthermore, the project needs to understand the details of how the rise of confessional governance in late antiquity was conditioned on changing patterns of societal integration and disintegration. This task, in particular, draws on the insights gained at the meso-level of inquiry regarding the parameters of conflict escalation and resolution (i.e., WP 3.2), but it investigates the more fundamental forces that hold society together and drive it apart.

***4.3*** *Adaptation and transformation.* Additionally, RISE needs to comprehend how the rise of confessional governance in late antiquity was contingent on changing dynamics of socio-political adaptation and transformation. This subproject builds upon the insights gained at the meso-level of inquiry regarding the factors driving historical change (i.e., WP 3.3), but it addresses, more fundamentally, how the rise of confessional government was intertwined with specific realignment processes within the socio-cultural fabric of the late-antique societal systems at large.

***4.4*** *Entanglement and diversification.* Finally, RISE can only gain the total picture of politico-religious change in late antiquity when we understand precisely how the rise of confessional governance in late antiquity involved changing conditions and effects of cultural entanglement and diversification. This task in particular draws on the insights gained at the meso-level of inquiry by means of systematic comparisons between different late-antique cultural settings (i.e., WP 3.4), but it aims at going beyond mere comparisons in addressing the structures, functions, and dynamics of mutual impact and dependence between different late-antique cultural contexts.

The macro-level investigation into these four key dimensions (WP 4.1–4) will show how a development that began with doctrinal commitments led to a substantial reconfiguration of the politico-religious fabric at large. At this macro-level of inquiry, RISE shows precisely why, how and to what effects doctrinal commitments were first introduced as a novel policy instrument deployed in defined areas of interaction to facilitate the formation of alliances between public authorities and Christian communities; how the reach and impact of doctrinal commitments extended over time to progressively broader areas of governance, society, and culture; and how, eventually, they turned the political systems of late antiquity into polities that inextricably geared political authority toward orthodoxy. Applying the refined conceptualization developed in WP 1 and absorbing the outcomes of WP 2 and WP 3, RISE will be able to show, at the uppermost level of inquiry, how this development was driven by the effects of the doctrinal commitments themselves, but also by changing structural framework conditions and contingency factors. The operation of doctrinal commitments within these complex politico-religious landscapes of late antiquity, as RISE will show, eventually brought about novel forms of governance that can best be described as early forms of the confessional state.

The macro-level investigation of WP 4 also yields a precise understanding of how the mechanisms of doctrinal commitments themselves changed in this process. The working hypothesis of RISE is that the confessional state, as a novel form of governance, could only emerge when doctrinal commitments themselves substantially changed their character in a threefold way: (a) the ‘strategies of implementation’ evolved into a core area of policy action for all key societal sectors of the late-antique monarchies; (b) the ‘strategies of justification’ became a central pillar of political legitimacy; and (c) the ‘strategies of delimitation’ were no longer applied to shield specific societal sectors from the operational effects of doctrinal commitments. The rise of confessional governance—understood as a societal system that predicates political authority on religious orthodoxy—was thus a gradual transition, characterized by how doctrinal commitments themselves changed their structure, their functions, and their impact.

To be sure, what we see at the end of this centuries-long process of complex historical change is not ‘confessionalization’ in the early modern sense. Nevertheless, the socio-cultural prerequisites that are so characteristic of early modern confessional governance entail crucial elements that evolved much earlier and effectively geared political authority toward religious orthodoxy already in the period of transition from antiquity to the Eurasian Middle Ages. Even more strikingly, RISE will show that all the essential mechanisms that led to the rise of these early forms of confessional governance were already in place in the Roman political system of the fourth century AD. On the synthetic dimension of inquiry, RISE will be able to show how doctrinal commitments made by the state—a political instrument that has so far evaded adequate scholarly scrutiny—were the key historical determinant for this remarkable development.

As the synthesizing dimension (i.e., WP 4) is the most sophisticated level of inquiry, requiring the broadest historical understanding and most elaborate conceptual comprehension, it will primarily be pursued by the PI.

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The project’s methodology, comprising four work packages with their individual tasks as outlined above, is designed to successfully tackle the complexity of the historical developments under investigation—establishing an integrated research matrix that serves as a powerful explanatory tool for understanding the transformation of the political cultures in late antiquity. In carving out the intriguing interconnections between political authority and religious quests for orthodoxy, RISE will establish a groundbreaking overall understanding of the deep politico-religious transformation between antiquity and the Middle Ages.

***Project Design and Timeline: Structuring the Path to Success***

In order to allow for seamless, productive, and successful teamwork, the four work packages and the individual tasks are interlocked in a sequence of five research stages of one year each. The project design and timeline for RISE are tailored to address the complexity of the historical transformation under investigation:

* ***Constituting phase:*** In the first year, the team will establish the working routines, develop and coordinate their detailed research plans, engage in intensive data collection, and review the state of research. RISE will hold a theory-oriented workshop (related to WP 1) to refine and sharpen its conceptual foundation. The PhD students will define and delineate the reach of their tasks (WP 2.1–3) and the postdocs will focus on WP 3.1, ‘structural framework conditions,’ in close coordination with the PI, who will work on WP 4.1, ‘interaction and communication.’ #### and #### will temporarily join the team as visiting scholars and strengthen our approach to religious violence, intolerance, and creedal standardization in late antiquity.
* ***Converging phase:*** In the second year, the team will establish theoretical and empirical cross-links between the four work packages (as part of WP 1) and reinforce the exchange of intermediary results, sharpening the contours of each task. The PhD students will intensify the empirical investigations (WP 2.1–3), while the postdocs focus on WP 3.2, ‘parameters of conflict,’ in close coordination with the PI’s work on WP 4.2, ‘integration and disintegration.’ Each PhD student will host one workshop related to their tasks, inviting scholars who can provide critical input regarding acute questions about sources and methodology. Nadine Vɪᴇʀᴍᴀɴɴ will temporarily join the team as a visiting scholar, supporting the team in conceptualizing political authority with regard to late-antique confessional governance.
* ***Conjoining phase:*** In the third year, the team will extensively test the working hypotheses, refine the interpretive models (WP 1), and engage in intensive knowledge transfer between the different work packages. In particular, the PhD students will conclude their empirical investigations and synthesize the preliminary results of their tasks (WP 2.1–3). The postdocs will focus on WP 3.3, ‘dynamics of change,’ in close coordination with the PI, who will focus on WP 4.3, ‘adaptation and transformation.’ RISE will hold its first international conference, jointly organized by the PhD students, on the impact of doctrinal commitments on the Roman monarchy.
* ***Consolidating phase:*** In the fourth year, the team will complete WP 2, fully absorbing the insights regarding the political praxeology of doctrinal commitments into WP 3 and WP 4 and turn to cross-cultural comparisons and questions of entanglement. In particular, the PhD students will conclude their investigations (WP 2.1–3), wrap up their manuscripts, and submit their dissertations. The postdocs will focus on WP 3.4, ‘comparative analysis,’ in close coordination with the PI, who will focus on WP 4.4, ‘entanglement and diversification.’ #### will temporarily join the team as a visiting scholar, strengthening our comparative approach to the late-antique Near East. RISE will hold its second international conference, jointly organized by the postdocs, on comparative cross-cultural approaches to the religious impact on political authority in late antiquity.
* ***Concluding phase:*** In the fifth year, the team will synthesize the outcomes of WP 3 and WP 4 and gain an overall understanding of the rise of the confessional state in late antiquity. In particular, the PI and postdocs will pursue a final intensive refinement of the interpretive models and concepts (WP 1), establish the overall picture, and secure the project results. RISE will hold its third international conference (organized by the PI) on the rise of the confessional state in late antiquity and its wider historical implications. The PI and postdocs will complete the manuscripts of their books, and the team concludes the project.

RISE will draw on and extend the PI’s existing academic network and, in particular, maintain a lively academic exchange with the visiting scholars and six ‘critical friends,’ who will support us in a number of particularly challenging research fields: #### (Kiel) for the early Islamic empires; #### (Irvine Calif.) for the Sasanian empire; Muriel Mᴏsᴇʀ (Frankfurt) for late-antique imperial elites; Jenny Rahel Österle-El Nabbout (Regensburg) for early medieval cross-cultural entanglement; #### (Tübingen) for late-antique law; #### (Berlin) for transcultural approaches to Christianity. All visiting scholars and ‘critical friends’ mentioned here have enthusiastically agreed to cooperate with RISE.

***Outcomes and Impact: From Aspirational Goal to New Horizons***

By means of an ambitious interdisciplinary research agenda, RISE will show, for the very first time, how and why late-antique imperial powers intervened in confrontations over religious doctrine; how these interventions were embedded in the late-antique politico-religious domain more broadly; and how they gave rise to forms of governance that inextricably geared political authority toward religious orthodoxy. The outcomes will be important for all those disciplines to which our conception of the late-antique political cultures extends. RISE will thus leave an enduring mark on the academic field, providing an explanatory model that stimulates further explorations into the large-scale socio-cultural transitions between antiquity and the Middle Ages. Given the wider implications for how we understand the cultural fabric of politico-religious conflict, the outcomes will potentially have indirect effects on broader public debates as well.

The success of this ambitious project depends on meticulous planning, the careful composition of the research team, a maximum level of commitment and dedication on the part of the team members, and excellent coordination within the team. Four workshops and three international conferences will place the project firmly within the global scholarly context; additional measures—research residences, conference participation, ‘critical friends’ and visiting scholars—strengthen our support network and scientific quality management system and reduce the inherent risks of this aspirational project. The outcomes will be published in a series of scholarly monographs, two conference proceedings, one theory-oriented companion, and a string of papers or book chapters in leading journals and anthologies.

Given the enormous importance and far-reaching implications of the rise of the confessional state in late antiquity and the role of doctrinal commitments in bringing about this novel form of politico-religious governance, it is striking that historical scholarship so far has not developed a solid understanding of the political praxeology of doctrinal commitments; of how they were structurally embedded in the politico-religious fields of late antiquity more broadly; and how they affected late-antique political cultures at large. RISE opens novel perspectives on these highly complex historical developments by establishing a powerful new theory of late-antique political culture. We have long abandoned the idea of late antiquity as an era of decline and fall, but we have yet to make sense of a major moment in human history and of the historical factors that made it possible. RISE will powerfully explain the rise of the confessional state in late antiquity and the role of doctrinal commitments as the decisive trigger of this world-historic change.

***Bibliography (works cited and works consulted)***

Works cited in B2 are marked with an asterisk.

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