


# The Many Faces of Nationalism

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## Abstract

This article reviews three recent books on nationalism, each focusing on a different aspect of this multifaceted phenomenon. Mylonas and Radnitz's volume explores the relationships between nationalism and the politics of treason, Hadžidedić's book zooms in on the historical interdependence of capitalism and nationalism, while Maxwell's historical monograph explores nationalist habitus as a form of lived experience. These three insightful contributions show the diversity and plasticity of nationalist ideology and practice.

**Keywords:** nationalism; theories of nationalism; fifth column politics; capitalism; everyday nationalism

**Enemies Within: The Global Politics of Fifth Columns**, edited by Harris Mylonas and Scott Radnitz, Oxford University Press, 2021, 304 pp., \$29.95 (paperback), ISBN: 9780197627945.

**Nations and Capital: The Missing Link in Global Expansion**, by Zlatko Hadžidedić, Routledge, 2022, 136 pp., \$128.00 (hardcover), ISBN: 9781032159706.

**Everyday Nationalism in Hungary, 1789–1867**, by Alexander Maxwell, De Gruyter, 2019, 262 pp., \$113.99 (hardcover), ISBN: 9783110634112.

Only twenty years ago, many scholars interpreted nationalism as an ideology experiencing gradual and inevitable decline. Social and political theorists from Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens to David Held and Zygmunt Bauman were adamant that globalization had dissolved the borders of nation-states and that “old style nationalism” had become obsolete (Giddens 2002, 18). Even as an astute thinker as Hartmut Rosa (2013, 203–4) could not escape this type of reasoning, as he wrote about the ever increasing “denationalization” of societies and the “loss of the national state’s function in the age of globalization.” Today, the focus has shifted in the opposite direction and many scholars speak about the resurgence, revival, return, renewal, or re-emergence of nationalism (Tamir 2019; Hazony 2018; Judis 2018). For example, Tamir (2019, 3) writes how “the reemergence of nationalism has taken the world by surprise” while Hazony (2018) points to the “return to nationalism” that is exemplified by “the British vote for independence and a nationalist revival in the United States.” The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has further intensified this view of nationalism’s “re-emergence.”

However, there is nothing new to these types of pronouncements, as intellectuals have been writing off nationalism since its inception and have then just as often been regularly surprised by its “sudden” and “unexpected” periodic “revival.” From Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Popper to Friedrich Hayek, political theorists have habitually dismissed nationalism as a temporary anomaly bound to disappear soon (Malešević 2019, 1–5). As this does not happen, many intellectuals express astonishment every time nationalism becomes highly visible in public discourses. Hence the focus usually shifts towards finding the immediate causes of something that is in fact a *longue durée* phenomenon and, as such, requires structural and historical explanations.

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The classical scholarship on nationalism demonstrated a long time ago that such dismissive proclamations have no foundation in historical reality (Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983; Smith 1986). Nationalism developed quite late as a sociological phenomenon, but once it took hold of state power its growth was largely continuous. Nationalist doctrine has managed to replace competing ideological discourses of state legitimacy, including the divine origins of monarchs, imperial creeds, and the notion of a civilizing mission, among many others. From the end of WWII, nationalism has gradually attained many hegemonic features and has become the dominant form of political legitimacy in the contemporary world. In addition to acquiring state power and enveloping official institutions and non-state organizations, this ideology and social practice has penetrated civil society and the inter-personal networks of everyday life. The scholarship on everyday nationalism clearly indicates how embedded nation-centric thinking is our daily practices (Fox and Idriss, 2008, Skey and Antonsich 2018, Knott 2016). Hence nationalism never experienced a significant decline. Instead, over the last two hundred years one could witness an incessant proliferation of nationalism across the globe and within different social strata of individual societies. As I have argued before, the historical trajectory of nationalism has been shaped by nearly continuous organizational, ideological, and micro-interactional grounding across time and space (Malešević 2020, 2019, 2013). The relative invisibility of this grounding and the lack of aggressive language in the public discourse have prevented many commentators from adequately assessing the actual strength of nationalist penetration in everyday life. Thus, as nationalism never went away, nor it was in decline, it could not experience a “re-emergence” or “return.” The recent proliferation of aggressive nationalist discourses does not indicate its “revival,” it only makes ongoing nationalist practices more visible in the public space. In this sense, nationalism resembles the proverbial iceberg: many pay attention to its tip when there is a threat of direct collision, even though the iceberg has been there before and much of it remains invisible to the human eye.

One of the reasons why intellectuals tend to regularly downplay the significance of nationalism is that this phenomenon has many faces. Nationalism has protean features that, like a chameleon, can easily adapt to its surroundings. Scholars have traditionally invoked the image of the Roman god Janus to pinpoint the two contradictory faces of nationalism – as a force of collective solidarity, but also as a mechanism of group aggression against those that do not belong to the nation (Nairn 2005). However nationalism has many faces – it is a multifaceted political ideology, a habitual form of everyday practice, and a very plastic type of modern subjectivity.

Nationalism is a flexible discourse and social practice that can coalesce with far right and far left ideologies but can also accommodate moderate positions across the political spectrum. Nationalist ideas are the cornerstone of such ideologically diverse movements as the far right *Reconquete!* in France and Finns Party in Finland, and far-left groups such as the Catalan *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* or the United Socialist Party of Venezuela. Similarly nationalist principles feature prominently in center right parties such as the Conservatives in the UK, *Forza Italia*, or the Croatian Democratic Union, and in the center left parties, such as Scottish National Party, the Bulgarian Socialist Party, or the Danish Social Democrats.

Even more importantly, nationalism is not just a political ideology, it is also a social practice that is integral to many activities and processes present in a variety of social organizations and outlets of everyday life. For example, nationalist practices are often promoted by religious organizations (i.e. Serbian Orthodox Church, evangelical Christian movements in the US, or the Jewish Home organization in Israel.) Nationalist ideas can also underpin civil society activities (from ethnic minority NGOs and cultural heritage associations, to national sport societies such as the GAA in Ireland and Basque pelota clubs), private corporations (from selling distinct national products such as BMW and Guinness, to promoting national tourist destinations such as the Taj Mahal or Hagia Sophia), and different social institutions (such as masonic lodges, veterans' associations, or even nursing homes.)

Nation-centric practices are also integral to everyday life and habitual interactions between friends, family members, neighbors, peers, and clan and kinship-based groups. For example, wedding celebrations in the Balkans are often accompanied by patriotic songs and the waving of national flags, while in Denmark birthday parties regularly feature Danish national symbols, such as the *Danneborg*. The intimacy of friendship is also often interwoven with the shared experience of fervent cheering for one's national teams in various sporting competitions. In this sense, nationalism has become a meta-ideological doctrine and social practice that infuses many aspects of everyday life in the contemporary world. Hence to better understand this complex phenomenon, it is necessary to explore these many faces of nationalism.

The three books under review here illustrate only too well how diverse and complex nationalism is. Although they each focus on a different aspect of nationalist experience, they all show how potent nationalist ideas and practices are in the modern world. Moreover, the three books indicate clearly how nationalism is not something to be associated only with extremist movements, as many contemporary commentators tend to do, but is a phenomenon that shapes all aspects of social life – from politics, the military sphere, and economics, to culture, arts, cuisine, and even drinking practices. It is precisely through this focus on diverse thematic issues that one can get a better sense of how multifaceted nationalism truly is. The three books explore different dimensions of nationalist experience: Mylonas and Radnitz's edited volume offers a comparative view of the "fifth column" discourses that often accompany nationalist struggles in the political arena; Hadžidedić zooms in on the relationship between capitalism and nationalism, and in this way emphasizes the economic underpinnings of this relationship; and Maxwell's book explores the lived experience of nationalism in everyday routines, thus focusing in on the cultural aspects of nationalist phenomenon.

### Nationalism and the Politics of Treason

In "Enemies Within: Global Politics of Fifth Columns" Harris Mylonas and Scott Radnitz provide an excellent panoramic view of fifth column politics from different parts of the world. In their introductory and concluding chapters they develop a theoretical framework for analyzing this under-researched topic. Mylonas and Radnitz define fifth columns as "domestic actors who work to undermine the national interest, in cooperation with the external rivals of the state" (3) and also differentiate this phenomenon from others such as scapegoating, conspiracy theories, and oppositional politics. The book contains ten in-depth and insightful case studies focusing on different historical and geographical contexts where the rhetoric of "enemies within" was a crucial mechanism deployed to delegitimize political opponents. Mylonas and Radnitz historically trace the origins of this phenomenon and its relationship with nationalism. Although the term "fifth column" appeared first in the context of Spanish Civil War, its contemporary use was already prevalent in the post-Napoleonic world. The key point here is that the idea of having compatriots who collaborate with enemy forces is directly linked with the notion of popular will and national sovereignty. With the gradual collapse of imperial structures, the issue of political loyalty to one's nation became a cornerstone of state security. In this context, all minorities can become suspicious: "The rise of nationalism as a political principle, coupled with incomplete assimilation, gave rise to the concept of minorities, whose differences from the national majority within a polity made them inherently suspect" (4). Hence, fifth column rhetoric regularly targeted recognizable ethnic minorities.

The first part of the book focuses on this form of ethnic targeting: Volha Charnysh analyzes the historical dynamics of fifth column accusations in Poland and shows how changing social contexts and domestic political rivalries influenced the redefining of in-group boundaries. In this environment, Jews were the principal target for both left-wing and right-wing parties. Anti-Semitic cultural and political tropes were also visible in the Hungarian government's recent targeting of Jewish financier and founder of Central European University in Budapest, George Soros, a topic explored comprehensively in a chapter authored by Erin Jenne, Andras Bozoki, and Peter Visnovitz. They

contrast the experiences of 1990s and 2010s Hungary and show how the consolidation of Fidesz' political power, including the firm mass media control, has played a crucial role in cementing a view that Orbán is the only effective defender of the Hungarian national interest against international elites and a domestic fifth column. The other two chapters in this section investigate ethnic targeting in the US and China respectively. Zeynep Bulutgil and Sam Erkiletian nicely dissect differences between the contrasting treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII and German Americans during WWI. While both groups were depicted as the potential "enemy within," only Japanese Americans experienced the social ostracism that led to the forcible incarceration of over 120,000 people from 1942–1946. The authors emphasize the timing of immigration and the development of civil society as being crucial in enacting or preventing such exclusionary discourses and policies: the earlier settlement of German Americans in Chicago and their involvement with different civil society groups proved instrumental in preventing the emergence of a fifth column campaign. This was not the case for the later settlers, such as Japanese Americans, except for in Hawaii, where they immigrated much earlier and were able to resist the anti-Japanese rhetoric which was prevalent throughout the mainland US. Harris Mylonas and Kendrick Kuo also focus on ethnic minority targeting: their insightful chapter analyzes how the fifth column framing of Uyghurs by the Chinese government officials has followed changes in the geopolitical environment. Thus in the early years of communist rule, when the key external threat was the neighboring Soviet Union, Uyghurs were ideologically branded as "counterrevolutionaries" aligned with their "ethnic brethren" across the border. Later on, with the collapse of Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states in Central Asia, the framing has shifted toward describing this group "ethnoreligious national separatists." More recently, with the rise of Islamist movements, Uyghurs have been labeled "transnational Jihadists."

The second part of the book focuses more on the ideological targeting of "enemies within." Scott Radnitz compares the widespread accusations of presidential collusion with the enemy in Russia and United States. His analysis zeros in on two campaigns: one against President Yeltsin, who was often depicted in Russia as a stooge of the Western powers, and the other against President Trump, who was similarly accused of being a "puppet" of the Russian government. This chapter shows convincingly how potent nationalist rhetoric of the fifth column can be, as even leaders of the most powerful states are susceptible to such accusations. In his chapter, Robert Crews shows how the discourse of fifth columns has become nearly universal. He provides an astute historical analysis of Afghan society and demonstrates how the rhetoric of treason (often codified as "nation-selling") has often been deployed by oppositional groups to delegitimize various Afghan leaders by accusing them of colluding with the foreign powers.

In the third part of the book, the authors investigate a variety of challenges to fifth column politics. Thus, in their perceptive analysis, Lilian Frost and Kathryn Ciancia explore the changing dynamics of insiders and outsiders in Jordan and France respectively. Frost looks at the Jordan government's contrasting framing of Palestinians in the context of the two citizenship campaigns: while in 2014 the Palestinians were a target of fifth column rhetoric, this was not the case in the 1954 campaign, despite geopolitical incentives for such action. Similarly Ciancia shows how the concept of the fifth column is politically and culturally ambiguous. By zooming in on the case of Polish citizens in interwar France, she indicates that diaspora groups can be targeted with the same rhetoric of treason, and that their sense of national loyalty can be determined by external forces. In both of these cases the discourse surrounding fifth columns was shaped by the changing interests of political elites. In a very interesting chapter, Samer Anabtawi analyzes how sexual minority groups are depicted as the "enemy within." He compares the two cases, 1950–1970 USA and 1987–2022 Palestine, and demonstrates how LGBTQ movements strategically deployed nationalist discourses to fend off accusations of acting in collusion with foreign powers. The last chapter, authored by Kristin Fabbe and Efe Murat Balıkcıoğlu, looks at social mechanisms deployed by authoritarian governments to transform the discourse of collusion into the claims of subversion. In this insightful analysis, they focus on the case of Turkey under AKP rule and analyze shifting political alliances

with the Gulenist movement. In the early years the alliance was built on shared interest and a threat from the secular establishment, who depicted both Islamist movements as a fifth column supported by foreign governments. Once the AKP entrenched its power, the Gulenists became the main target of such claims, and after the unsuccessful coup the focus has shifted from accusations of collusion to subversion.

All the contributions in this book indicate how central the rhetoric of treason is to contemporary political discourse. Although the notion of treason predates nationalism by many centuries, its modern articulation has been shaped by the idea and practice of popular sovereignty. While in the ancient world one could betray a friend, a political ally, or a member of the same social strata; in the modern age the emphasis is firmly on the national forms of treason. Any sign of disloyalty to the nation is perceived as a grave moral failing, while collusion with the enemy is the equivalent of a mortal sin. It is no accident that in the legal systems of most contemporary nation-states, treasonous behavior results in the capital punishment. Hence the rhetoric of the fifth column is a powerful ideological weapon in political struggle and, as this excellent book shows, it is a phenomenon that requires much more scholarly attention.

### The Capitalists Benefiting from National Solidarity

Nationalism is not only a political phenomenon. It is a set of social practices that also shape and are shaped by economic forces. Hence in this very perceptive and enlightening book, “Nations and Capital: The Missing Link in Global Expansion,” Zlatko Hadžidedić explores the relationship between nationalism and capitalism. Most scholars agree that there are strong links between these two historical processes, but very few have explored their relationship in a greater detail. Hadžidedić’s book aims to fill this explanatory gap by identifying different historical and social mechanisms that have made the emergence and expansion of nationalism in the context of capitalism possible. The main argument is that nationalism developed as a consequence of capitalist expansion. With widening economic inequalities and the ever-increasing search for profit, capitalist elites had to generate and then deploy a social glue that would conceal deep socio-economic polarization within their respective societies. Hence, nationalism transpired as an ideological force capable of soothing social divisions by providing a shared device for social unity.

The book opens (in chapters 1 and 2) with a conceptual debate arguing that existing theories of nationalism fall short of providing an adequate understanding of what nations and nationalism are and how they came to be so dominant in the modern world. Hadžidedić critically reviews classical contributions, including those of Renan, Kedourie, Connor, Kohn, Weber, Deutsch, Gellner, Greenfeld, Hobsbawm, Breuille, and Smith, as well as the more recent contributions on banal, everyday, and grounded nationalisms. He argues that one cannot avoid teleological arguments when attempting to explain the historical dynamics of nationalism and for him “this telos” is “rooted in the global capitalist system” (20). He also explores the historical context under which the discourse of nation emerged and expanded throughout the world as well as why this concept became useful to the early capitalists.

Chapters 3 and 4 zero in on the idea of nation as a fluctuating discourse that has proven adaptable to different social and economic conditions. Hadžidedić persuasively argues that the conventional dichotomy of civic vs. ethnic nations is conceptually unsustainable, as the idea of nation has been historically very plastic and capable of accommodating very different historical and geographical conditions. The key point is that the capitalist system has been very effective in mobilizing and homogenizing diverse groups of people around this shared, yet flexible discourse. As Hadžidedić (6) emphasizes, “Nationalist mass mobilizations thus serve as a surrogate for capitalism’s unfulfilled promises.”

In chapter 5, Hadžidedić interrogates the relationship between nationalism and liberalism. He aims to show that nationalism has expanded in modernity “under the umbrella of liberalism as

capitalism's dominant ideology" (6). Thus this chapter points to the ideological similarities between liberalism and nationalism, identifying the notion of "self-determination of peoples" as playing a central role in delegitimizing the *ancien régime* of the imperial world and inaugurating the system of nation-states which were central in sustaining the global capitalist system and were instrumental in the proliferation of market driven capitalist relations.

The second part of the book investigates the historical origins and transformation of capitalism and its role in the expansion of nationalism worldwide. The focus of chapters 6 and 7 is the organizational logic of capitalist economy. In contrast to pre-modern feudal systems, which were deeply hierarchical but offered a degree of social security within the patrimonial networks of obligations, capitalism is centered on the perpetual accumulation of wealth and as such generates sharp inequalities and constant socio-economic insecurity. To prevent and contain the popular dissatisfaction that would result from this condition of uncertainty, capitalist elites have turned to nationalism as a political mechanism that generates social accord. In this context, the nation-state emerged as the optimal organizational container for the safeguarding of the capitalist economic order. As Hadžidedić argues, "the nation-state was used as a device ... to protect the interests of a particular class by containing the potential discontent of all other classes when it might have arisen as a threat to the dominant position of that class and the capitalist system itself" (85).

The last two chapters engage with alternative economic-centered explanations of the relationship between capitalism and nationalism. In chapter 8, Hadžidedić questions Wallerstein's arguments about nationalist movements as displaying "anti-systemic" features. Hadžidedić insists that the world system approach is inadequate in capturing the long-term dynamics of nationalism. Hence, he convincingly argues that rather than being anti-systemic, nationalism is in fact pro-systemic as it establishes political legitimacy for the capitalist social order and as such enhances the ability of capitalist elites to dominate society. The final chapter assesses the key findings of the book in the light of recent transformations of neoliberal globalization and the expansion of far-right politics. Hadžidedić argues that conventional views, which perceived neo-liberalism as the enemy of nation-states and nationalisms, have proved mistaken. Instead, recent political developments indicate that nationalism has gained in strength as capitalism has become more restrained and as social inequalities have widened across the world. In his own words: "The integrated and self-supporting triangle – consisting of capitalism, nationalism and liberal democracy – is thus likely to be transformed into a modified triangle, consisting of hyper-capitalism, nationalism, and authoritarianism" (115).

This very perceptive, innovative, and well-written book clearly shows that nationalism is much more than one of many political ideologies. Rather than being only a form of political action, nationalism is also interwoven with the socio-economic foundations of the modern world. Nationalism shapes the political institutions and influences the programs of political parties, but it also underpins the economic system that has dominated the modern world. For Hadžidedić there is no nationalism without capitalism.

### The Culture of Shared National Experience

There is no doubt that nationalism is both a political and economic phenomenon. However, its continuous organizational, ideological, and micro-interactive grounding and expansion has historically been dependent on its ability to penetrate the realm of everyday life. Hence there is now wide scholarship on banal and habitual forms of national experience. Alexander Maxwell's book "Everyday Nationalism in Hungary, 1789–1867" contributes to this burgeoning scholarship but makes an important novel intervention: while the vast majority of research on everyday nationalism focuses on the contemporary context, Maxwell is interested in historicizing this phenomenon. Thus, the book explores the early forms of habitual nation-centric experience in late-eighteenth- and early-to-mid-nineteenth-century Hungary. Maxwell traces "the beginnings of



nationalism as lived experience” (6) by focusing on aspects of everyday life that have not been studied extensively by historians nor theorized properly by scholars of nationalism. In this context, the book investigates various artifacts and social practices that were gradually becoming nationalized in the everyday routines of the ordinary population. Drawing on several theoretical perspectives, including Brubaker’s cognitive constructivism, Billig’s discursive psychology, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, and Pateman’s gender analysis, Maxwell aims to explain how and why different objects and practices of everyday life nationalized in early modern Hungary.

The first two chapters provide an extensive discussion about the key concepts used in the study. Maxwell insists that to fully understand the processes of nationalization in late-eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century central Europe it is important to historically situate the terminology that dominated daily interactions as “even ethnonyms were objects of contestation” (12). For example, as Maxwell shows, in the dominant Magyar terminology the concept of “nation” was reserved for Hungarians, and was contrasted with terms such as “peoples,” “races,” and “nationalities” that were associated with various ethnic groupings within the kingdom. In contrast, the prevalent Slovak uses of ethnonyms were very different: the tendency here was to apply the idiom of nation to all ethnonational groups, including Magyars, Slovaks, Croats, Czechs, and others, while the notion of Hungary and Hungarian was associated solely with the country/kingdom inhabited by these groups.

In chapter 3, Maxwell starts with an in-depth historical analysis of specific social practices. The spotlight here is on tobacco as an object of national contestation. The nationalization of tobacco is linked to tariff disputes between the large landowning producers and the central government in Vienna. Drawing critically on Gramsci, Maxwell shows nicely how something that started initially as a tax dispute gradually transformed into an established cultural practice whereby the Hungarian elites and the middle classes would smoke tobacco to signify their attachment to the Hungarian nation. Even poems contained verses that promoted the virtues of Hungarian pipe smoking as “smoking tobacco had come to signify friendship, honesty and social solidarity ... [that is] civic virtue and ‘nationality’” (82). Some of these practices were later imitated by ordinary Hungarian men, and the popular press spearheaded campaigns to promote the idea of Hungarian tobacco culture.

Chapter 4 analyzes how alcoholic drinks have become nationalized by different ethnonational collectivities in the kingdom of Hungary. Using Billig’s concept of banal nationalism, Maxwell dissects changing attitudes towards specific drinks: from the glorification of national wine to denunciation of non-national alcoholic beverages such as spirits or beer. Maxwell traces these changing practices to the relatively precarious position of wine producers in the empire and the sustained elite campaigns to drink and export Hungarian *tokaj* wine. However, what started off as an economic issue gradually transformed into a cultural symbol of Hungarian-ness. In this context, aristocratic nationalists promoted the idea of a national wine as a mark of “national excellence, cultural sophistication, economic growth, and progress generally” (109). *Tokaj* was thus associated with the Magyar nobility and beer, schnapps, and cheap spirits with the non-Magyar Others.

In chapters 5 and 6 Maxwell explores the processes that involved nationalization of gender roles. Building on Carol Pateman’s gender theory, he zooms in on the mustache as symbol of national virility and masculinity. Chapter 5 in particular looks at different practices involving shaving, trimming, and waxing of facial hair as they establish boundaries between different nations. The analysis of newspapers and other magazines indicates how the idea of the moustache was completely nationalized in the nineteenth century so that “a Hungarian without a moustache” resembled “a rose without thorns” (131). Although wearing a distinct form of moustache was initially a prerogative of the aristocracy and military officers, gradually men from other social strata embraced this practice and facial hair was established as a potent national symbol. During periods of pronounced political tension, not wearing a moustache in Hungary could be interpreted as a sign of

obedience to Habsburg rule. Similarly, as demonstrated in chapter 6, sexuality was also nationalized either through the promotion of endogamous marriage practices or through the policing of female sexual behavior. Even literary works promoted an ideal of faithful endogamous partners and the fidelity of Magyar women, who remained committed to their role of being “a patriotic spouse by remaining sexually faithful to a dead patriot” (160).

The last chapter explores the nationalization of clothing. While in the traditional world clothing was a marker of difference between the aristocracy and the peasantry, the proliferation of nationalist principles impacted the gradual homogenization of national clothing practices. Maxwell looks at the shift from localized peasant dress towards the development of a national costume. By questioning the literature on national indifference, he points to the role of fashion and state policies in the nationalization of clothing practices. With the spread of nationalist ideas, *diszmagyar* ensemble, an aristocratic costume, became a national costume worn by different social strata. This “sartorial nationalism” has impacted group dynamics within the kingdom, and other national movements, including Croats, Slovaks, Czechs and Poles, have formalized their own national costumes in opposition to the Magyar national dress.

Maxwell’s book is an important contribution towards historicizing everyday nationalism. The traditional scholarship has often associated aggressive nationalism with the nineteenth-century wars and revolutions in Europe and the Americas, while the second half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century were usually identified as a period dominated by peaceful and banal nationalist practices. This book points us in a different direction by showing that the habitual reproduction of nation-centric categories has a much longer history than we usually acknowledge. Since its inception, nationalism has expanded more effectively by becoming embedded in everyday routines than by being imposed through external violence.

### The Nationalist Hydra

In Greek and Roman mythology, the Lernaean Hydra is a serpentine water monster with many heads that have regenerative features. In later versions of this myth emphasize that as soon as one head is removed, two new heads regrow in its place. In some respects, nationalism resembles the Lernaean Hydra: it is a creature with many heads and many faces that point in different directions, and they cannot be easily eradicated. Moreover, nationalist ideas and practices are so embedded in the institutions of the modern state and the activities of non-state organizations that most individuals rarely notice how normalized and naturalized nationhood has become. Even more significantly, nationalist idioms and habits have deeply penetrated civil society and personal interactions of most people in their everyday life, and as such, nationalism has attained a hegemonic status that no other contemporary ideological discourse can match.

By focusing on three different aspects of social life – politics, economics, and culture – these three books illustrate only too well how potent and widespread nationalism is in the world we inhabit today. All three contributions are very successful in highlighting the centrality of nation-centric discourses. Mylonas and Radnitz’s volume provides a rich repertoire of case studies that show how the discourse of “fifth columns” is integral to nationalist politics all over the world. Being identified as the “nation-seller” and “the traitor” of one’s nation is the ultimate political insult, and is regularly deployed by political opponents to delegitimize one’s actions. This type of accusation had little if any resonance in the pre-modern world, that was deeply stratified in political, economic, and even more so in cultural terms (Gellner 1983). This is quintessentially a modern rhetoric that underpins the centrality of nationhood in the public sphere. Hadžidedić’s book also emphasizes the potency and importance of nationalism in modernity. By focusing on the socio-economic foundations of contemporary social orders, he successfully demonstrates how closely aligned are capitalism and nationalism. This should not be much of a surprise, as the former represents the dominant system of organizing production and distribution of goods and services, and the latter is the dominant form of



modern subjectivity. Maxwell contributes another layer to this complexity by dissecting a variety of cultural practices that have been central for sustaining nationalism over the last 300 years. Although nationalism is now fundamental to politics and economics, much of its reproduction is located in the cultural sphere – everyday habits that are often taken for granted.

All three books are strong and innovative contributions, but there are also some areas of analysis that could be improved, developed, or explained differently. More engagement with the sociological scholarship on nationalism would help unravel some analytical knots and explanatory weaknesses. For instance, Mylonas and Radnitz provide a very useful typology of fifth column claims and types of targeting, but there is not much focus on the specific sociological mechanisms that make these types of claims and targeting possible. As their focus is more on international relations and political agents, there is not enough analysis of the social reception of such claims. A focus on the social dynamics within each society would help us understand why some claims of treasonous behavior resonate with a wider audience and others have little or no impact at all. Some exploration of who is more receptive to the fifth column rhetoric in terms of class, gender, status, and other social cleavages would be helpful, too.

Hadžidedić's key theoretical arguments would also benefit from engagement with empirical sociological studies on the transformation of capitalism. The reifying and functionalist statements, such as that “nationalism was capitalism's deliberate invention” (39) or that “the system had to introduce a social glue tailored to conceal, and also to cement the actual polarization of society” (81) require some empirical evidence which would justify such strong claims. There is no doubt that capitalism has played a significant role in the development of nationalism, but the relationship between the two is not necessarily causal. There is more historical complexity in this relationship, which has, at times, indicated confluence, while at other times capitalism and nationalism have found themselves on a collision course. Capitalism certainly has influenced the historical trajectory of nationalist ideas and practices, but there are many other social and historical processes that have shaped the rise of nationalism. An exclusive focus on capitalism cannot explain the dominance of nationalism in the communist world. This concerns not only the obvious contemporary cases such as North Korea, China, Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba, but also former state socialist countries, from Romania, Albania, Yugoslavia, and Poland, to Mozambique and Ethiopia, and many others who relied extensively on nationalist rhetoric to bolster their claims to political legitimacy (Malešević 2002). There is nationalism beyond capitalism.

Maxwell's book provides a rich historical analysis of nationalist practices but not much information is provided on the specific sociological processes that make such habitual routines possible. Sometimes the concept of banal nationalism is used in a very nonchalant way to cover quite diverse social practices – from the routine flagging of nationhood to very active political resistance. For example, Maxwell (139) nicely shows how a particular type of moustache becomes a powerful symbol of Hungarian-ness in the 1850s. In this context, a shaved face was an indicator of obedience to the Habsburg rule. However, this is not an example of banal nationalism in Billig's (1995) sense of habitual, unconscious, reproduction. Instead, this is a potent symbol of national resistance, an act of anti-state nationalism. These activities might be a form of everyday nationalism, but they are not instances of banal nationalism. As Fox (2018) emphasizes, it is important to differentiate analytically between everyday and banal nationalism – these are two different phenomena and two different research approaches. Furthermore, Maxwell does more than most historians in linking his research material with the contemporary theories of nationalism. Nevertheless, this engagement with theory is a bit patchy at times and unusually syncretic as he attempts to bring together very different analytical positions – from Gramsci, Brubaker, Billig, and Pateman to Smith and beyond. This form of mix-and-match syncretism does not help us advance the theory-building that would generate coherent sociological explanations. There are profound epistemological implications of mixing incompatible theoretical approaches (Malešević 2004, 162–184).

Leaving aside these minor criticisms, all three books make an important contribution to nationalism studies. Their insightful analyses demonstrate how complex and contradictory is this phenomenon that now permeates nearly all aspects of social life. As scholars of nationalism, we are unlikely to capture the numerous heads of this hydra, but we are constantly learning more about her many faces.

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