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Introduction: The Tenacity of Nationalisms

Intellectuals have always had a strange relationship with nationalism. For one thing, nationalism was rarely taken seriously as a coherent ideological doctrine. Most classical liberals from John Locke and James Mill to Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper ignored or completely dismissed nationalism as no more than irrational 'tribalism' (Chen 2007: 22). The socialists and radical thinkers from Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg to contemporary neo-Marxists understood nationalism as a largely unpleasant side effect of class conflict. Hence, Marx and Engels (1998 [1848]: 39) scorned 'national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness' while, Luxemburg (1976 [1908]: 135) argued that '"the nation" as homogeneous socio-political entity does not exist ... only classes [exist] with antagonistic interests and "rights"'. Although some classical thinkers, such as Lord Acton, John Stuart Mill, Otto Bauer and Lenin, among others, developed more articulate interpretations of nationhood, their approaches were still highly instrumentalist in seeing nationalism as an underdeveloped set of sentiments lacking ideological complexity and pronounced autonomous qualities. Even contemporary theorists are adamant that nationalism has no coherent and articulated doctrine. Michael Freeden (1998: 750–1) characterises nationalism as a 'thin ideology' that, unlike liberalism, socialism or conservatism, lacks a comprehensive system of principles and ideas that address a wide range of political issues including 'its own solution to questions of social justice, distribution of resources, and conflict-management' that other, what he considers to be, well-established political ideologies provide. In his view, nationalist ideas are rarely independent but are better understood as 'embellishments of, and sustainers of, the features of their host ideologies'. In a similar vein, Andrew Heywood (2003: 136) argues that 'nationalism is not an ideology at all' as it lacks a 'developed set of interrelated ideas and values'. Even the classical theorists of nationalism such as Gellner and Anderson believed that nationalism is conceptually inchoate. For Gellner (1983: 124–5) the nationalist doctrines 'are hardly worth

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analysing ... [as they] suffer from a pervasive false consciousness ... we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets'. Similarly, Anderson (1991: 5) insists that nationalism is a set of beliefs characterised by 'philosophical poverty and even incoherence'.

For another thing, nationalism has regularly been understood as a doctrine whose pinnacle was long in the past and whose decline was inevitable. This attitude was succinctly expressed in Albert Einstein's famous quip that 'nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind' (Dukas & Hoffman 1979). Hence, over the last two hundred years many academics have pronounced its imminent death. Initially, nationalism was viewed as an unexpected offshoot of the French and American Revolutions and was perceived as a temporary aberration bound to disappear once the Enlightenment project penetrated all spheres of social life. By the mid-nineteenth century, the rise of nationalist movements in Europe was interpreted as a transitory phenomenon linked to the inevitable collapse of imperial rule. By early to mid-twentieth century, the violent nationalist excesses were yet again perceived as a historical anomaly rooted in the peculiarities of the German and Italian 'incomplete' and 'belated' unification. The post-WWII decolonialisation triggered another wave of nationalist movements throughout the world and the mainstream intellectuals tended to interpret this situation as a transient phenomenon linked to the disintegration and delegitimisation of European colonialism. The rise of new social movements from the 1960s onwards, including the nationalist parties and associations in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Catalonia, Basque country, Flanders and further afield, largely came as a surprise to many analysts. These 'new nationalisms' were yet again described as fleeting occurrences reflecting asymmetric centre–periphery state relations or class inequalities and as such were seen as unlikely to last. The collapse of state socialism in 1989–91 brought another wave of nationalist uprisings, which too came as a surprise to most intellectuals. These nationalist movements were yet again dubbed as temporary, assuming that once the former communist states undergo full transition to liberal democracy these nationalist sentiments will inevitably wane. The similar type of social diagnoses was pronounced in the wake of largely unsuccessful Arab Spring of 2010. More recently, the Brexit referendum, the Trump election and the rise of the far right in Europe have all been described as another temporary nationalist glitch spurned by unregulated economic globalisation, intensified mobility of people and the rise of sharp economic inequalities.

It seems that these dominant views of intellectuals fly in the face of historical reality. If nationalism is no more than a simple, immature and emotional attachment to a particular collectivity or territory then one

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could not explain why such popular attachments were largely non-existent before the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and why they have continually gained in strength over the last two centuries. Furthermore, the conventional mainstream accounts of nationalism as a temporary aberration cannot explain why this 'transiency' has constantly been 're-occurring' over and over again. If this phenomenon keeps 're-appearing' at regular intervals and has been doing this for the last two hundred years than it makes no sense to describe nationalism as a historical anomaly.

It is important to recognise that nationalism is not a juvenile disease that one can outgrow or cure. Nationalist movements are not some kind of marginal nuisance that periodically interrupts a natural flow of human development. It is crucial to acknowledge that rather than being a historical abnormality and a temporary irritation, nationalism is in fact the dominant form of modern subjectivity. Just as with other modern ideological projects, nationalism too is a child of the Enlightenment. Instead of viewing nationalism as an unsophisticated and inchoate bundle of sentiments, it is paramount to conceptualise and analyse nationalism as a fully fledged ideology and a dominant form of subjectivity in the modern era. Nationalism is not a thin ideology as Freeden sees it; it is in fact a very rich and diverse set of ideas, principles and practices that are integral to the organisation of everyday life in modernity. This ideology is associated with a long list of theorists, ideologues and practitioners – from the classics such as Herder, Mazzini, Fichte, Hegel, Rousseau, Garibaldi, Michelet, von Treitschke to its more recent proponents from the political left to the far right, including Tagore, Gandhi, Fanon, Farrakhan, Bannon, Dugin and so on. Just as with other political ideologies, the nationalist ideologues have published numerous books, pamphlets and political manifestos that clearly outline the key ideas and principles of this ideology and many have also offered the specific solutions to the key social and political issues – from the distribution of resources to social justice and conflict management issues (Ozkirimli 2017; Smith 2008; 1999). For example, all separatist movements – from the Scottish National Party, the Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea, Vlaams Blok to Sinn Fein or Junts per Catalunya – have published extensive political programmes that address nearly all relevant social issues. Furthermore the principal ideologues of these movements have all articulated their visions of the social order they envisage independence would bring. The same applies to the non-separatist nationalist movements and parties from the French Front National to the Austrian Freedom Party, Danish People's Party, Independent Greeks, BJP or Polish Law and Justice. In this sense, nationalism could not be regarded as a conceptually inferior ideology as it

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provides comprehensive answers to key social and political questions just as any other political ideology does.

Nevertheless nationalism is much more than an ordinary political doctrine. It is also a social practice embedded in the everyday life of modern societies. While an average citizen of any modern nation state might not be familiar with the idiosyncrasies of liberal, socialist or conservative ideologies, she is very likely to know what nationhood means to her. In other words, precisely because nation-centric understandings of social reality are so pervasive in the modern world, it is almost impossible to escape this ideology in everyday life. Hence, in a sociological sense, nationalism is a super-thick ideology, a meta-ideological doctrine, which penetrates daily interactions of human beings and as such also shapes how modern individuals see and act in their social world.

Furthermore, the popular perception that nationalism is something that belongs to the past, a 'measles of mankind', is completely inaccurate. The conventional depictions of the nineteenth century as the heyday of nationalism, which are still taught in history classes all over the world, are simply wrong. In fact nationalism as a worldwide sociological phenomenon only gains significance in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Whereas in the early nineteenth century only a very small number of political, cultural and economic elites developed a strong sense of national attachments, in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries nationalism has become a mass phenomenon that impacts on the thoughts and actions of billions of individuals globally. The popularity of nationhood is well attested in the social surveys conducted all over the world. These surveys show that ordinary citizens now identify much more with their respective nationhood than any of their predecessors ever could (Duina 2018; Gallup 2015; Medrano 2009; Antonsich 2009, Smith and Kim 2006). This is not to say that such periodic snapshots of public opinion are the best way to gauge the changing character of nationhood. There is no doubt that the intensity of national attachments is contextual and dynamic and as such is bound to wax and wane as social, economic and political conditions change. Nevertheless, while individual attitudes do change, the organisational and ideological context in which these ideas and practices are developed and operate are much more stable. Since we now live in a world where the nation state is the only legitimate form of territorial rule and where nationalism is the dominant and most popular mode of operative ideology, it is almost impossible to escape the nation-centric understandings of social reality. In a world of nation states the rulers can successfully justify their right to rule only by invoking nationalist principles – the view that the nation is the fundamental unit of human solidarity and political legitimacy. While rulers and those who aspire to

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rule can deploy different intensity and type of rhetoric used, they still have to rely on nation-centric tropes. In other words, there is no escape from nationalism in modernity. The rulers and the wider public can be more or less nationalist; their nationalist ideology can be more or less inclusive; they can utilise more civic or ethnic idioms of nationhood; such rhetoric can be more or less aggressive, but there is simply no way to avoid nationalism in a world whose legitimacy resides in the principle that the nation state is the only legitimate form of territorial organisation. It is here that the nation states differ from pre-modern forms of polity where there was no place for nationalism as their rulers invoked very different sources of rule justification – mythologies of kinship, the divine origins of kings, specific religious traditions, civilising missions and so on. Thus there is no modernity without nationalism. While this ideological doctrine might escalate only intermittently, it nonetheless dominates persistently.

Grounding Nationalisms

The recent dramatic rise of 'nativist', 'populist' and various 'identitarian' movements from India, Turkey, the Philippines, Russia, China, Japan, Israel, to the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Brazil, France, Hungary and Poland, among others, has prompted lively debate on their character and their causes. The largely unexpected victories of Donald Trump in the 2016 US elections and the United Kingdom's 2016 referendum leading towards the decision to leave the EU, together with the proliferation of far-right movements and populist parties in many European countries, have led commentators to conclude that these developments are best characterised as 'new nationalism'. The argument is that the main features of the new nationalist ideology include strong resistance towards immigration, anti-globalisation, preference for the introduction of economic protectionism, identity politics, support for populist leaders and nativist policies and general hostility towards cultural and religious differences. For example, Takis Fotopoulos (2016) argues that this new nationalism differs from its old, nineteenth century, counterparts as it primarily appeals to those who see themselves as the victims of globalisation and who aim to 'minimise the power of the elites'. Other analysts such as David Goodhart and Eric Kaufmann emphasise the cultural sources of new nationalism. Rather than being rooted in economic inequalities and the unevenness of globalisation, they argue, the new nationalism is engrained in firmly held values that reject multiculturalism and cultural diversity as such. Hence Goodhart (2017) identifies an ideological schism between the majority nationalist 'somewheres' and the elite globalist 'anywheres'. Kaufmann (2018) also sees new nationalism

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as primarily driven by cultural concerns linking it to the rejection of 'open border' policies and popular dissatisfaction with ever-greater cultural and religious diversity that now characterise many Western societies. Rather than seeing anti-immigrant sentiments as a proxy for economic inequalities, as Fotopoulos does, Kaufman argues that the surveys show that the new nationalism is a cross-class phenomenon, often driven by middle classes as much as by impoverished groups.

The principal problem with these and similar interpretations is their overemphasis on recent events and lack of engagement with the long-term historical trends that have shaped the dynamics of nationalist ideologies. Hence, rather than singling out specific, ad hoc, individual factors such as the economic costs of neo-liberal globalisation or conflicting cultural worldviews, it is crucial to analyse the rise and transformation of nationalisms through much longer periods of time. Firstly, the very concept of 'new nationalism' is vague and misleading. The idea of 'new nationalism' has been deployed and reused on so many occasions to account for the variety of political events that took place from the early twentieth century to today. For example, this concept was used by Theodore Roosevelt in the series of public speeches that were later published as a book *New Nationalism* (1910). In these speeches Roosevelt articulates his vision of a strong federal government that would unify US society through the protection of welfare rights and private property. The same term was deployed during WWI and in its aftermath when Wilson's and Lenin's ideas of national self-determination were linked directly to popular aspirations for national sovereignty and the rise of 'new nationalism' (Rosenthal and Rodic 2014). This concept was also used to describe the anti-colonial and post-colonial movements that strived to establish independent states from the 1950s to 1980s. The rise of separatist organisations in 1960s, 70s and 80s Western Europe has also been termed 'new nationalism', as was the collapse of the communist federations in the 1990s (Ignatieff 1994; Tiryakian & Rogowski 1986; Snyder 1968). More recently the notion of 'new nationalism' was utilised yet again to describe popular resistance to economic globalisation (Delanty 2000). This overuse of the concept is more than a sign of scholars' lack of imagination. Rather this is a symptom of the larger problem – the widely shared misperception that nationalism is a transient phenomenon bound to eventually evaporate. Hence, instead of tracking down and analysing these diverse forms of nationalism's transformation through time and space, many analysts tend to confine this phenomenon to a set of very narrow temporary causes. In this context, the designation 'new' does not stand for a novel phenomenon but for the analyst's surprise that nationalism has not gone away.

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Secondly, using the term 'new' could wrongly imply that either there was no nationalism before these recent political developments or that what is happening now is profoundly different from what was there before. However, I would argue that rather than seeing these developments as being qualitatively different or utterly novel it is much more productive to treat them as the particular variation of social processes that have been in place for the past 200 years. In other words, nationalism did not and could not emerge suddenly and out of nowhere in 2016. Instead, the recent political events such as Brexit or the election of Trump have only made its prevalence and persistence much more palpable. To track down its historical dynamics it is paramount to recognise that nationalism has been, and remains, the dominant mode of political legitimacy and collective subjectivity in the modern era. Hence, in contrast to pre-modern polities such as empires, city states, patrimonial kingdoms or tribal confederacies, where the rulers legitimised their right to govern by invoking mythological origins, royal prerogatives, civilising missions, kinship rights or religious authority, nation states are unique in a sense that their very existence is justified in terms of popular (i.e. national) sovereignty. In other words, the strength of nationalism in the modern era stems in large part from the organisational dominance of the particular form of polity that underpins the modern world – the nation state. In this context, all modern states and social movements that aspire towards political or cultural sovereignty inevitably appropriate nation-centric discourses and practices. As Ernest Gellner (1983: 6) made clear, in the modern world nationhood is so normalised and naturalised that there is a near-universal expectation that 'a man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable [. . .], but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind'. This stands in sharp contrast with the pre-modern world where the overwhelming majority of people identified in local, mostly kinship-based, terms or perceived their world through the more universalist prism of religious beliefs and practices. With the rise and expansion of nation states worldwide, nationalism has gradually become the dominant cognitive framework for understanding wider social relations. Although one can trace the origins of this ideology in the influential intellectual movements such as the Enlightenment and Romanticism and the political revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is really in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that nationalism has become fully grounded in the institutions of modern state – from the educational system, mass media, the military and civil service to the public sphere. Furthermore, its organisational and ideological potency is also rooted in the workings of civil society, private

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corporations, NGOs and the wider networks of kinships, friendships, neighbourhoods and peer groups. It is only it the last century or so that nationalist ideologies have managed to finally penetrate much of the globe, whereby, as various surveys show, most contemporary individuals perceive their nations as being one of their primary sources of identity.

Why has nationalism proved to be such a potent, protean and durable force in the modern age? Why has the nation state established itself as the central organising mode of social and political life in the last two hundred years? Why is nationalism still the dominant form of collective subjectivity?

The principal aim of this book is to explain why nationalism remains the most potent operative ideological discourse in the modern era. More specifically, the ambition is to explore the social origins and the organisational, ideological and micro-interactional dynamics of nationalist ideologies. In this context I work with a broader, sociological, understanding of nationalism. This means that nationalism is not to be associated solely with separatist doctrines, anti-immigrant nativism or far-right politics, rather this concept aims to capture the variety of historical and contemporary nationalist experiences.

I see nationalism as an historically shaped and constantly changing phenomenon defined by its organisational capacity, its aptitude to articulate popularly enticing ideological narratives and its ability to link wider ideological projects with the emotional and moral universes of face-to-face interactional networks. In other words, nationalism is an organisationally and ideologically embedded process that has historically proven to be extremely successful in tapping into the micro-world of everyday life. The conventional perspectives which focus extensively on separatist movements or periodic surges of nativist and populist politics often overlook the centrality of nationhood in the modern era and as such are unable to provide coherent explanations of this phenomenon. Rather than being a bizarre anomaly, nationalism stands at the basis of modern social order. To emphasise the importance of the organisational and ideological structures as well as the interactional dynamics that foster the creation, reproduction and proliferation of this doctrine, I develop and utilise the notion of grounded nationalism. This concept is intended to capture several features of the nationalist phenomenon.

Firstly, nationalism is historically grounded in a sense that once it developed it became sturdy and has subsequently expanded and proliferated in different directions. Initially, it captured the hearts and minds of intellectuals, the property-owning strata and other political, economic and cultural elites. It then gradually incorporated other social groups – the middle classes, civil servants, soldiers, police officers, workers, farmers

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and the urban poor, among others. This gradual, vertical, mostly top-down, expansion was soon followed by the more horizontal and external augmentation as nationalist ideas and practices were slowly but surely diffused throughout the globe. Scholars still disagree whether nationalism originated in Europe or the Americas (Wimmer 2012; 2002; Breuilly 1993; Anderson 1991). However, there is a great deal of agreement that once the ideas of popular sovereignty, national independence and cross-class cultural homogeneity spread, they took firm root among different groups. Hence, once established, nationalist ideas and practices tended to grow and expand through the various social movements, civil society groups and state institutions. This is not to say that this was in any way inevitable or that nationalism has quickly displaced other ideological projects. On the contrary, the rise of nationalism has been profoundly contingent and was strongly resisted by the representatives of the ancien régime, the rural population, the religious establishment, monarchists and many others. Furthermore, for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalism was incorporated into other ideological projects – from liberalism, socialism and feminism to imperialism, conservatism and racism, among others. It took a long time for nationalism to become a dominant operative ideology of the modern era. Although its historical entrenchment was gradual and rather slow, once established, nationalism tended to become grounded and expansive. Much of this expansion was fostered by its malleable character. Nationalist ideas and practices were constantly reformulated in order to attract diverse social groups. Hence, in the early and mid nineteenth century, nationalism was firmly aligned with the progressive causes advocated by liberals, socialists, feminists, anarchists, republicans, secularists and others. In this period, most nationalist movements were largely dominated by the middle classes. By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalism attracted a much wider following but by then its central discursive tropes had become amalgamated with right-wing ideas ranging from imperialism, colonialism, monarchism, fascism to eugenics and racism. After WWII, nationalist ideas become even more grounded. With the collapse of colonial structures, the nation state model was firmly established as the only legitimate form of polity organisation. In this context, the dominant nationalist discourses underwent yet another ideological shift, moving firmly to the left of the political spectrum and coalescing with socialism, revolutionary republicanism and anti-colonialism. Nationalism widened its support base further and was gradually embraced by populations all over the globe. Hence the historical grounding made nationalism into a strong and persistent social force that

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continued to develop and expand together with the growth of the organisational and ideological capacities of the state and non-state actors.

Secondly, nationalism is organisationally grounded. For nationalist ideas to have any impact on the thoughts and behaviour of many individuals they require forceful social organisations. Hence, nationalism developed and proliferated with the growth and expansion of organisational power. Initially, the spread of nationalist doctrines depended on relatively small organisations such as secret revolutionary societies including the Italian Carbonari, Portuguese Carbonária, Greek Philiki Hetairia or the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress among many others. Such organisations were successful because they operated highly disciplined, yet very flexible models of organisation involving small covert cells dispersed throughout their respective countries and abroad (Rath 1964). Later nationalist ideas were promulgated through the large social movements that were involved in a variety of social, cultural, political and military actions. For example, Irish nationalism grew in part through the establishment of the Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association, both of which promoted 'traditional' Irish activities – sports, dancing, music, language and literature. Initially, the members of GAA were small farmers, shop assistants and barmen but gradually the organisation spread throughout Ireland and its membership base expanded dramatically. At the core of GAA success was its ever-expanding organisational capacity – with the hierarchical and parish-based structure of boards, committees and councils (Cronin et al. 2009). In addition, Irish nationalism developed through the successful organisation of over fifty 'monster rallies' that were organised by the supporters of Daniel O'Connell's campaign to repeal the Act of Union between 1843–45 (Coakley 2013). Such activist-led meetings, involving hundreds of thousands of participants, were highly instrumental in spreading nationalist messages and in fostering a nation-centric understanding of social and political life in Ireland. The other nationalist movements deployed different organising strategies, ranging from petitions, mass-scale strikes, civil disobedience campaigns, protests, boycotts, the establishment of parallel institutions, rebellions and violent insurgencies, among others. In all of these cases it was organisational power that proved crucial in spreading nationalist ideas.

However, the centrality of organisational grounding is most clearly visible in the rise of state capacity. Over the last two hundred years, the state authorities have invested heavily in the development of their infrastructure, including transport and communication networks as well as the capacity to control their borders, resources, taxation and their population. The rising organisational capacities provided for the increased size

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