

Nationalism and the Transformation of the State

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the recent conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East signal the return of geopolitics. This book challenges conventional approaches that ignore border change, arguing that geopolitics is driven by nationalism and focusing on how nationalism transforms the state. Using geocoded historical maps covering state borders and ethnic groups in Europe, the authors' spatial approach shows how, since the French Revolution, nationalism has caused increasing congruence between state and national borders and how a lack of congruence increased the risk of armed conflict. This macro process is traced from early modern Europe and widens the geographic scope to the entire world in the mid twentieth century. The analysis shows that the risk of conflict may be increased by how nationalists, seeking to revive past golden ages and restore their nations' prestige, respond to incongruent borders. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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Nationalism and the Transformation of the State

*Border Change and Political Violence in the
Modern World*

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Preface

This book presents the findings of an ERC-funded project, which was funded by an Advanced ERC Grant “Nationalist State Transformation and Conflict (NASTAC).” Since the project started in November 2018 and until it officially ended in October 2024, we accumulated a major debt of gratitude to our supporters, collaborators, and colleagues, who have made this project possible.

This is very much a product of inspired teamwork within the International Conflict Research Group at ETH Zürich, to which all the authors belonged when the project started. In addition, postdoctoral fellow Guy Schvitz contributed as a co-author to the papers on which Chapters 4, 6, and 10 are based. All of the NASTAC project’s PhD students co-authored articles that were turned into chapters as well: Dennis Atzenhofer contributed in this capacity to Chapter 7, Paola Galano Toro was a co-author on the paper on which Chapter 4 is based, and Roberto Valli co-authored the paper that forms the basis of Chapter 9. In addition, Andreas Juon, Maria Murias Muñoz, Seraina Rüegger, and Yaron Weissberg offered valuable advice and coding support for the project. We are infinitely grateful for all these collaborators’ contributions, without which this project could not have been realized.

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¹ Cederman 2024.

² Müller-Crepon, Schvitz and Cederman 2025.

³ Cederman et al. 2023.

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⁴ Cederman, Pengl, Girardin and Müller-Crepon 2024.

⁵ Pengl et al. 2025.

⁶ Cederman, Girardin and Müller-Crepon 2023.

⁷ See Cederman, Pengl, Atzenhofer and Girardin 2024 and Müller-Crepon, Schvitz and Cederman 2024.