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Introduction

NATIONALISM AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

NATIONALISM IS CLEARLY on the rise. Populist politicians with a nationalist program have recently won elections in many parts of the world. Viktor Orbán did so in Hungary in 2010, Narendra Modi in India in 2014, Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines in 2016, Donald Trump in the United States in 2016, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018. They all argue that their nation's identity and interests should be protected against globalization, immigration, and assertive minorities. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union in order to "gain back control." It also seems that xenophobic incidents occur more frequently. Notwithstanding the emphasis these right-wing populists put on national independence and the protection of their unique traditions and culture, it is quite curious that this nationalist wave seems to have occurred simultaneously around the world.

Moreover, the forms in which nationalism expresses itself are also strikingly similar throughout the globe. During the football World Cups, a "feel-good nationalism" can be found almost everywhere, even quite prominently in relatively new countries such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. As in many other parts of the world, people in Cameroon—a five-time winner of the Africa Cup of Nations—gather with family and friends to watch the matches of the national team. Radio shows, television programs, and internet forums discuss the performance of the squad for weeks, producing a national conversation in which supporters from all walks of life participate. Football—known as soccer in the United States—strongly contributes to the reproduction of the imagined community of the nation. However, the nation is not just imagined, it is also performed. At international matches, fans come to the stadium wearing the national jersey and waving the national flag. Some attend the game with painted faces, wigs in the national colors, or spectacular hats, while others even dress up in fantastical costumes inspired by various national stereotypes (figure I.1). Some play typical music on characteristic instruments or special songs composed for the occasion.[1]

FIGURE I.1 Senegalese fans on stands at the FIFA World Cup, Moscow, June 2018. These supporters, also known as the Twelfth Lion, are dressed in the national colors and have painted their bodies with letters forming the word "Senegal." At the national team's important matches they are accompanied by musicians and perform traditional dances.

Nationalism tends to be associated with chauvinist demagogues, xenophobic movements, wars of conquest, ethnic-cleansing campaigns, or even genocide. However, at World Cups, it can also bring people together. Moreover, nationalism can even be used to pacify a tense or warlike situation. In Ivory Coast, the national football team actually contributed to the consolidation of a fragile peace agreement between the government and northern insurgents. In 2007, team captain Didier Drogba insisted that the next qualifying match for the World Cup would be played in Bouaké, which had been the center of the rebel forces. The 5-0 win over Madagascar, with the final goal by Drogba himself, provoked an outburst of collective joy that helped in bringing the two parts of the country together.[2]

Even in sub-Saharan countries with highly artificial borders and very diverse populations, nationalism has taken hold of the imagination and has a strong impact on everyday life. Cameroon, for instance, has around 280 ethnic groups and hundreds of languages. Nonetheless, its inhabitants express their national feelings en masse during sporting events, cheering their national representatives.[3] But what is the nation that they identify with? Membership is

clearly not determined by ethnicity or culture. In fact, the nation consists of the community of citizens, the *demos*, and is defined primarily by the state.

There are also many nations that can be characterized in a very different way: as an *ethnos*, a large group of people sharing the same ethnic background, language, and culture. However, many nations defined in such terms, such as the Kurds or Catalans, do not have their own state and consequently could be described as nations without a state, or state-seeking nations. There are many such culturally unified nations, but they are all excluded from World Cups because the International Association Football Federation (FIFA)—just like the International Olympic Committee and the United Nations—only admits independent states. These state-seeking nations moreover cannot alone determine their fate. This became clear in the autumn of 2017, when both the Kurds and the Catalans organized independence referendums based on the right to self-determination, which received broad support from the voters. However, since these plebiscites were not authorized by the governments of Iraq and Spain, respectively, the international community did not recognize Kurdistan and Catalonia as independent nation-states. They therefore remain barred from international organizations and sports contests.[4]

Yet, the cases of Kurdistan and Catalonia are less straightforward than they seem. In fact, political entities tried to become independent in 2017, not national communities. In the Kurdish case, it was the autonomous Kurdistan Region within Iraq that organized the plebiscite, while in Spain, the government of the autonomous region of Catalonia took the initiative. Moreover, both regions are not ethnically or linguistically homogenous, and many speakers of Kurdish and Catalan live in adjacent territories. Thus, large Kurdish minorities can be found in Syria, Turkey, and Iran, while lots of Catalan speakers live in neighboring regions of Spain, the principality of Andorra, Southern France, and on the Italian island of Sardinia. So nationalism is not so much the spontaneous expression of feelings of belonging by members of a particular community; it is mostly channeled through territorial authorities and institutions such as nation-states, education systems, armies, political parties, national football teams, and regional governments.

So we may conclude that the conventional understanding of the nation as a large group of people united by common descent, a shared language, culture, or religion that has—or strives for—its own state does not reflect reality. Actually, there is a profound mismatch between the number of states and the number of potential nations. Currently, the United Nations has 193 member states, and according to a recent estimate there are 7,151 living languages in the world. Moreover, only a fraction of the existing states is ethnically or culturally homogenous.[5]

But whereas ethnically or culturally homogenous states are an exception, the nation-state model has been adopted throughout the world. The nation-state was invented in the United States and France during the age of revolutions, and it was fundamentally different from existing forms of statehood such as tribal federations, city-states, autocratic empires, and absolute monarchies. A nation-state has a clearly bounded territory and is based on the sovereignty of the nation, which expresses itself in a (written) constitution, equality before the law, and an institutionalized form of political participation. As a result, the nation is formed by the community of citizens—the *demos*—which therefore is not necessarily ethnically or culturally homogenous. Remarkably, the nation-state has been an extraordinary success. By now, almost all countries have adopted the nation-state model, leaving only a handful of exceptions such as the absolute monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Brunei, or religiously defined states such as Vatican City and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.[6]

Thus, nationalism—defined as striving for or loyalty to a nationally defined state—is a complex phenomenon. Nations can be characterized in terms of *demos* or *ethnos*, they can be based on state-oriented or state-seeking nationalism, they can focus on what binds people together or on excluding outsiders, and they can be both peaceful and violent. And as every historian knows, things profoundly change over time, and so do nations and nationalism. In order to get a good understanding of the history of nationalism across the globe, we need to explore both the enormous success of the nation-state and the variegated impact of nationalism on people around the world.

A Fresh Approach

Since the revival of openly expressed nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s, the number of studies on this topic has grown enormously, profoundly improving our understanding of the evolution of nationalism in the different parts of the world.[7] Nonetheless, a fresh approach is needed. In general, existing studies have five serious flaws: (1) they mostly take *ethnos*-type nations as a starting point; (2) they focus excessively on nationalist activists; (3) they mostly interpret nationalism as being transferred from the West to "the rest"; (4) they see the replacement of empires by nation-states as largely inevitable; and (5) they tend to suffer from various forms of methodological nationalism.

First, scholars still primarily use an ethnic or cultural definition of the nation. This is particularly true of authors studying expressions of national consciousness before the late eighteenth century, as they generally emphasize the continuity between older ethnic identities and modern nations.[8] Surprisingly, many scholars focusing on modern forms of nationalism equally assume that nations have a cultural core. This is even the case with some of the classical modernist studies

that continue to be points of departure for most investigations. Both Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner assign a crucial role to language and culture, the former by emphasizing the role of print capitalism in standardizing vernacular languages and thus creating cohesive national cultures, and the latter by arguing that mass education in a national language was required in industrial societies.[9] However, the invention of the nation-state during the age of revolutions was the consequence of a conflict about political legitimacy in which ethnic, cultural, and language differences did not play a substantial role. So in order to understand the rise of the nation-state model, we primarily need to take into account the nation as a *demos*, a community of citizens.

Second, the traditional focus on nationalist movements and their leaders has been challenged by the historical sociologist Andreas Wimmer, who in *Waves of War* (2013) uses big data and sophisticated statistical analysis to refute the almost exclusive focus on domestic actors. His study demonstrates that even if a population enthusiastically embraced the ideals propagated by nationalist activists, the most important factor in determining whether a nationalist movement succeeded in creating a sovereign nation-state was the existence of an international "window of opportunity." Independence mostly can be explained by widespread geopolitical instability or substantial international power shifts. Internal factors such as the strength of a nationalist movement—or socioeconomic modernization—had a modest impact, at best. Examples of such windows of opportunity are the Atlantic Revolutions, the Second World War, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, each of which enabled the creation of a wave of new independent nation-states.[10]

Third, the spread of nationalism has generally been interpreted as a process of dissemination from the West to the rest, largely linked to the advance of the modernization process. It first affected Western Europe and the Americas, after which nationalist movements arose in Central and Eastern Europe. By the end of the First World War, the nation-state had become the norm in the West, inspiring anti-imperial activists in the colonies to start claiming independence.[11] Wimmer, however, repudiates the view that nationalism is the consequence of a linear modernization process. The modernity of the economy, an expanding infrastructure, or high literacy rates—like the strength of the nationalist movement—were not very relevant for explaining the dissemination of the nation-state model during the nineteenth and twentieth century.[12] Recent studies, moreover, have shown that at the end of the eighteenth century the world was much more connected than we previously thought. Activists and statesmen from around the world felt inspired by the new nation-state model and immediately tried to adopt various of its aspects. This means that nationalist ideas were widely present in the non-Western world long before the rise of the anticolonial independence movements.[13]

Fourth, the view that empires were outdated and inexorably would be replaced by modern nation-states has been refuted as well. Recently, various scholars have made clear that nation-states and empires were not completely opposed forms of statehood. Actually, until the 1960s, most Western European nation-states were also colonial empires. At the same time, many traditional empires adopted various elements of the nation-state. Hybrid forms such as imperial nation-states and nationalizing empires were very common during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This means that in many cases, the emergence of the nation-state was not a sudden conversion, but rather the result of a gradual transformation.[14] As a consequence, reformist politicians in traditional states in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa probably had a more important role in appropriating and disseminating the nation-state model than Western propagandists or anticolonial movements. Moreover, even at the height of the decolonization process, many newly independent countries tried to create broad federations. So it was only toward the end of the 1960s, when most of these federations had ended in failure, that the nation-state achieved a hegemonic position, turning the international system based on sovereign nation-states into the natural order of things.

Finally, various forms of methodological nationalism have distorted the understanding of the history of nationalism. The overwhelming majority of investigations are case studies that primarily examine developments within one national context, while focusing mostly on individual actors and events.[15] This is a logical approach for historians. Traditionally, historians argue that in order to understand a society, one has to study its roots. However, this generally encourages scholars to explain developments almost exclusively from a national perspective by focusing primarily on domestic actors and ignoring foreign influences and transnational patterns, resulting in exceptional paths for each nation. Thus, existing studies largely emphasize national differences, while often implying that every nation—as a dedicated nationalist would also argue—is unique.[16] More ambitious historical overviews tend to focus on one continent, while also portraying developments in the area under study as exceptional.[17] Truly global interpretations of the history of nationalism, on the other hand, are almost nonexistent or outdated.[18]

Nationalism: A World History, therefore, breaks new ground by analyzing the rise and evolution of nationalism as a global process. It also aims to escape the stranglehold of methodological nationalism by avoiding the excessive focus on individual cases, singular events, and national differences. Instead of examining the nationalists themselves and their roles in exceptional situations such as wars and political conflicts, the goal of this book is to understand the structural impact of nationalism on the wider population. This should be done accurately, and since the causal relationship between the propagation of

nationalist ideas—primarily based on the *ethnos*—and the advance of the nation-state model—mostly based on the *demos*—is very weak, both topics will be studied in parallel. The aim is to show both how people became receptive to the nationalist message and how they related to the nation-state.

This will be done with an indirect method. A real bottom-up approach—giving a voice to hundreds or thousands of individuals from the past—would be an enormous challenge but would hardly provide a meaningful picture of the manifold ways in which nationalism influenced the world. Therefore, I will focus on the practical effects of the rise and evolution of nationalism, by exploring the advance of the nation-state model and the nationalization of the cultural realm as two interrelated but separate processes. This book will analyze these processes by focusing on four themes: (1) the creation of new nation-states, (2) the meaning and reach of citizenship, (3) the impact of nationalism on the cultural realm, and (4) the nationalization of the physical environment.

By systematically studying these four themes, it will become clear that the rise of new nation-states was determined mostly by major shifts in the international context, that the relationship between nation-states and their citizens evolved largely according to global patterns, and that worldwide intellectual trends affected both the nationalization of the cultural sphere and the nationalization of the physical environment. Actually, the main watershed moments were global and often affected all four realms in a similar way.

Structure of the Book

The book adopts a chronological format in order to show that nationalism changed profoundly over time and that its evolution was far from linear. It opens with a chapter that provides a brief overview of the evolution of national identities from the Middle Ages until the age of revolutions. This is followed by seven chronological chapters that examine a period of about thirty to forty years and which are divided by major international turning points: the beginning of the American War for Independence in 1775, the Congress of Vienna of 1815, the Revolutions of 1848, the start of modern imperialism as a result of the Berlin Conference of 1885, the beginning of the First World War in 1914, the end of the Second World War in 1945, and finally 1979, the year that saw the international breakthroughs of neoliberalism with the election of Margaret Thatcher and of identity politics with the Iranian Revolution.

Within the chapters, the approach will be thematic. Developments are largely examined by clusters of countries—for instance, by continent, by empire, or by focusing on a number of neighboring states—or by subthemes, such as the impact of nationalism on specific scientific disciplines or cultural domains. The emphasis will be on structural mechanisms, shared patterns, and

general trends. *Nationalism: A World History* will not systematically chart the transnational contacts and networks that enabled the quick spread of nationalist ideas. Although international contacts will be mentioned occasionally in the text, it is clear that the awareness of nationalist developments elsewhere was widespread; most activists had extensive transnational networks, and more often than not, inspiration came from outside sources.

As for the geographical reach of the book, the first chapters will concentrate on Europe, as it was there that the nation-state ideal arose. But even at this stage, the Americas already played an important role, and short references to similar developments in Asia and Africa will appear now and then. From the early nineteenth century on, the story will become more global. The aim of the book is not to be all-encompassing; not all countries or cultural domains can be discussed in detail, and for the most part a few relevant examples from various parts of the world are used to illustrate a more general trend.

In the first section of each chapter, I will discuss the rise and spread of the nation-state model. The nation-state was invented during the American and French Revolutions. The ideal of the sovereignty of the nation, which implied legal equality and political participation, was particularly attractive for members of the middle classes around the world, but their leverage was quite limited. Reformist rulers of traditional states would have more impact. They quickly became aware that nation-states mostly had the upper hand in international conflicts, and as a consequence, they aimed to strengthen their states by adopting some of its most useful elements. A major international power shift, exemplified by a humiliating defeat, often provided the incentive for traditional states like the tsarist and Ottoman Empires, Madagascar, Persia, Siam, and Japan to drastically change course. Using the concept of isomorphism, I will elucidate the mechanisms that subsequently gave rise to a growing number of remarkably uniform (nation-) states.[19] In order to strengthen the state, reformist politicians introduced conscription, a centralized bureaucracy, individual property rights, legal equality, and secular education. Many of these innovations were introduced in the European colonies as well, while the process of decolonization—which equally was connected to large-scale geopolitical crises—came to imply the wholesale adoption of the nation-state model. From 1789, most new states, first in Europe and the Americas and then in the rest of the world, adopted a constitution, a form of representative government, and several of the other institutions that had become inextricably linked with the nation-state model. During the twentieth century, this isomorphic process of nation-state formation was reinforced by international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, which, directly or indirectly, require member states to adopt similar institutions and procedures.

The second section, on citizenship, shows how inhabitants were connected to the nation-state. Initially, the criterion of "civilization" was used to exclude women, Indigenous populations, and people of color from (full) civic and political rights. During the nineteenth century, national citizenship often was attractive to middle-class males only: they were given the right to vote. At the same time, it was mostly experienced as a burden by the lower classes, especially in the countryside, where the introduction of the nation-state was accompanied by direct rule, conscription, and rising taxes. Racial ideas gained currency toward the end of nineteenth century and served to exclude ethnic minorities and specific immigrant groups. Some ethnic communities were made the target of eugenic measures, ethnic-cleansing campaigns, or programs of forced assimilation. Over time, however, nation-states provided more services to their citizens, and many adopted the model of the welfare state. In addition, the emancipation of women, Indigenous populations, and the LGBTQ+ community gave (more) civic rights to wider sections of the population, more fully integrating them into the nation. Recently, the guarding of national borders has been strengthened, especially against the entry of poor immigrants.

But how and when did ideas and practices related to the nation become relevant for large sections of the population? This is the topic of the third section of each chapter. Although vague conceptions of nationhood existed before the eighteenth century, ethnic and cultural differences did not play a significant role in the invention of the nation-state during the Atlantic Revolutions. The conceptual framework needed to delineate a secular domain of human cultural activity came into being only during the Enlightenment, when umbrella terms such as culture, civilization, art, society, and progress received their modern meanings. The nationalization of the creative activities of humanity began in earnest during the Romantic era, when the nation was increasingly defined as a linguistic and cultural community. As a consequence, a single (Christian) civilization was largely replaced by a growing number of distinct national cultures, each with a standardized national language. In the humanities and social sciences, the nation increasingly became the basic unit of analysis, and by constructing national histories, defining national canons, and even gathering national statistics, the nation was reified in scholarly discourse. Artists, musicians, and writers did the same by representing and characterizing the nation in many of their works. The impact of racial ideas on the cultural sphere was most profound from the 1890s until the 1940s. Although after 1945 avant-garde modernism propagated a kind of placeless cosmopolitanism, mass media continued to naturalize the division of the world into discrete nations, each with their own characteristics. The affirmation of culturally defined national identities has made a strong comeback since the late 1970s, as testified by the rise of

identity politics and populism. Recently, collective identities have been strengthened by the echo chambers of social media.

The fourth section deals with the nationalization of the physical environment, which began during the Romantic era when the first national museums and monuments appeared in European and American capitals. Throughout the nineteenth century, new monumental state buildings, statues of national heroes, nationalist street names, and the preservation of cultural heritage helped to nationalize public spaces throughout large parts of the world. Toward the end of the century, extraordinary landscapes, characteristic buildings, and many aspects of the domestic sphere were nationalized as well, including the decorative and culinary arts, the design of gardens, and pets. World's fairs, tourism, and later, UNESCO's World Heritage List were instrumental in disseminating standardized representations of national identity such as vernacular buildings, artisanal products, traditional costumes, typical dishes, folklore, and characteristic souvenirs, which could be defined as a process of cultural isomorphism. Moreover, the branding of products as originating from a specific nation—such as Camembert, tequila, sushi, Volkswagen, and Ikea furniture—became an established marketing strategy during the twentieth century. In all these ways, the common association that exists between national identities, the physical environment, and various aspects of everyday life were normalized and became second nature to people around the globe.

A last word on more practical issues. In a book that targets a global audience, non-English terms are avoided as much as possible, so most of them are translated. Exceptions are only made for widely used terms, such as "samurai." I have tried to respect the East Asian tradition of mentioning first the family name and then the first name. For pragmatic reasons, I have adopted the transcription of names from other writing systems by adopting the form used by some of the main English-language authors on which my argument in that particular instance is based.

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