Nationalism in the 21st Century

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Nationalist ideology continues to shape global politics today, and yet twenty-first-century nationalism is faced with a unique set of challenges. For example, migration and diaspora create cultural, economic and social networks which now bind people across entire continents, let alone countries. The much-discussed onset of globalisation, together with regional integration, has also pushed governments to revise their nation-building rhetoric. Some nation-builders have reacted to globalisation as a potential threat, while others see it as a significant boost to their country's power and influence. This is important because of the implications for nation-state authority and legitimacy; nation-states seek to square national autonomy with deep involvement in regional alliances, trading networks and international organisations. At the same time, sub-state nationalists continue to compete for people's loyalty and support. Today, nationalists must reconsider the meaning of self-determination, independence, autonomy and sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected world.

The close of the twentieth century saw the unfolding of various forms of transnationalism, which led some to predict the end of the nation-state, while a spike in ethnic conflict and secession following Cold War collapse led others to identify a new rise of nationalism. All manner of minority, sub-state, terrorist, democratic, irredentist and post-communist nationalisms have been used as evidence of the latter phenomenon. Some have resulted in violent and bloody conflicts, as in the break-up of Yugoslavia, while others have had an impact on well-established democracies like the United Kingdom, where in 2007 nationalist parties came to power in Scotland (a position spectacularly consolidated in 2011) and in Wales (as junior coalition partner for four years). At the same time, however, the widely anticipated decline of the nation-state in the face of globalisation does not seem to have materialised. Neither of these characterisations is very helpful in isolation. It would be more useful to focus instead on the interrelationship between nationalism and the 'cosmopolitan challenge', used here to denote a set of trends ranging from migration and the creation of diasporas to the even wider phenomena of transnationalism, regionalisation and globalisation. Rather than argue that this challenge is fundamentally antagonistic to supposedly beleaguered nation-states and marginalised nationalists, my book *Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave 2012) highlights its actual interplay with nationalism and nation-building, and the ways in which nationalist ideologies have attempted to rise to the cosmopolitan challenge. Using examples from across the world, from Estonia to Fiji, and India to the USA, it does not argue that either nationalist ideology or the nation-state are in decline, but looks instead at how they are adapting to the cosmopolitan challenge.

Interpreting the principle of national self-determination to mean different degrees of autonomy, or sovereignty, is one pragmatic response to the evolution of globalisation and regional governance. Contemporary sub-state nationalists in the likes of Scotland and Catalonia also use the process of regional integration to support demands for greater autonomy from their overarching nation-states. This is just one example of how nation-states and nationalist movements are responding to the current political context, which is different to that faced by nineteenth and even twentieth-century nationalists. Regionalisation, in turn, is one among a range of contemporary phenomena which can be broadly termed the cosmopolitan challenge, and which exist in creative tension with both sub-state nationalism and nation-building. There are no clear principles regulating the relationship between globalisation, regionalisation and nationalism. Regionalisation and globalisation have been variously interpreted as beneficial or detrimental, not only to each other, but also to nation-states and nationalism more generally. If we follow the zero-sum analysis epitomised in so-called 'Eurosceptic' discourse, namely that member states 'lose' sovereignty as European integration progresses, then regionalisation appears to work against both the survival of nation-states and the

aspirations of sub-state nationalists for autonomy. On the other hand, a look beyond the European Union at other forms of regional integration suggests that regionalisation does not necessarily entail a loss of sovereignty. For example, organisations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) are premised on intergovernmental cooperation, which does not mean ceding sovereignty, but rather aims to enhance domestic legitimacy, national prosperity and international clout.

Globalisation denotes an increase in the speed and impact of cultural, technological, economic and financial flows that is qualitatively different in scale to the important global exchanges taking place in centuries past through trade and tribute, colonialism and cultural links. With regard to the interplay between globalisation and nationalism, both phenomena are also much too wide-ranging to detect either a positive or negative correlation between the two. Some nationalists will rail against globalisation's alleged dilution of their culture and traditions. Others will point to the way in which globalisation can bring prosperity and thereby support both nation-building and nationalist appeals for greater autonomy. One useful way of approaching specific cases is to distinguish between globalisation as a macro-level phenomenon on the one hand and globalism, understood as an ideological response to that phenomenon, on the other. This separates the multifaceted process of globalisation from the political project of globalism, thereby enabling a clearer assessment of their respective relationships to nationalism.

Phenomena like regionalisation and globalization, together with migration, transnationalism and diaspora, give a sense of the scale of the cosmopolitan challenge. The multidimensional impact of the cosmopolitan challenge on many individuals is what makes our present era qualitatively different from myriad international exchanges, which went on in past centuries. Cosmopolitanism is therefore used deliberately as an analytical concept with global scope, as opposed to the more limited, cross-border links evoked by the terms 'international' and 'transnational'. Evidently, the cosmopolitan challenge by no means affects all individuals directly or uniformly, but it definitely has the potential to influence an identity that many hold dear, namely national identity. Population flows, for instance, have an impact on existing nation-states by shaping perceptions of the national community and its members' sense of belonging. In response, nation-builders may reconfigure or entrench official markers of inclusiveness through migration and citizenship policies, as well as political discourse. Sub-state nationalists react to this by putting forward alternative understandings of nationhood and self-determination. In so doing, they are debating and defining what constitutes the nation. This is important because the current challenge to nationalists and nation-builders is to do this in a way that takes account of and even co-opts aspects of globalisation, regionalisation, transnationalism, migration and diaspora. My book looks at how different manifestations of nationalism and nation-building have responded to each of these phenomena in turn. It concludes that nationalism remains an eminently flexible ideology, which enables it to adapt to the demands of twenty-first-century politics. The cosmopolitan challenge is not insurmountable for contemporary nationalism. On the contrary, it forms part of the story of nationalism's continuing development.

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