



“Nationalisms in the 21st century: From Europe to the Americas” Symposium – Call For Papers

“Nationalism is war,” François Mitterrand declared in 1995, as a conclusion to a long speech setting out the objectives of the French presidency of the European Union. Uttered in a context of European integration, then taken up again since by many French politicians, including François Hollande and more recently Emmanuel Macron, in reaction to the rise of the extreme right, this association between nationalism and war must be understood in the West as the direct consequence of the two world wars that marked the 20th century. Because it inspired the military regimes that we know in Germany, Italy and Japan, nationalism has since then been discredited by a whole generation, born during or in the wake of WWII.

Not only does nationalism no longer seem to represent a taboo for the new generations, but the rise in power of extreme right-wing parties and populist movements over the last ten years also seems to point to a resurgence of this ideology –all the more flagrant as it coincides with the decline of the traditional political parties in many Western countries.

However, the nationalism we are witnessing today is not the same as that of the 1930s. It takes on different forms, at different regional and national levels, which it seems relevant to try to understand and define, in its multiple meanings, from one political and cultural context to another.

Historical framework

Presented as “one of the most powerful political forces of the twentieth century”, nationalism is a geopolitical fact that allows us to understand many situations and many conflicts in the world today (Heater and Berridge 2016). Indeed, it has led to many reconfigurations of the political space following the two World Wars and the Cold War (Brubaker 1996-4).

Born in Europe with the "People's Spring" of 1848, nationalism developed as a consequence of the Congress of Vienna (1814-15), which had chosen to ignore the liberal and national aspirations of the people. In Italy, Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Hungary and Poland, the rejection of government by foreign dynasties developed and took the form of nationalist agitation in more or less violent forms. Giuseppe Mazzini, in Italy, was a key figure in this movement, while John Stuart Mill (“Considerations on Representative Government”, 1861) and Ernest Renan (“What is a Nation?”, 1882), a few years later, attempted to theorize the question of what constitutes a nation.

The nation-states subsequently constructed nations –groups of people sharing a common attachment– corresponding to this state from a nationalist ideology aimed at justifying the existence of that same nation (Gellner, Hobsbawm and Thiesse, 1999). They not only constitute

the organizing principles of the world but the basis of international relations as well (Rosière 2020, Reece 2016).

At the beginning of the 21st century –the period we propose to focus on, nation-states are facing a series of social and economic challenges in a context of eroding identities and cultural interconnection created by globalization. They see their sovereign powers eroding and are transforming, or fear they are transforming, into “post-national” states (Habermas 2000) while the political space they govern no longer corresponds to the socio-economic space that transcends national borders. Euroscepticism, distrust of immigration and, in the United States, rejection of multilateralism and the return of protectionism are thus giving rise to a resurgence of nationalism, often in an aggressive, nativist and populist form.

Meanwhile, other phenomena are in turn fuelling regional nationalisms, for which the association with the far right no longer works since they are politically transversal in societies such as Catalonia, Scotland, the Basque Country, Flanders, Quebec... European integration then, more abruptly, Brexit, the Covid-19 epidemic, have all been determining elements in the questioning of nation-states from stateless nations which, because they have witnessed the – relative or subjective – failure of pluri-national states, are choosing to fight politically for their independence.

We are thus witnessing nationalism on several levels: state nationalism –sometimes unconscious, what some call “banal”, or “everyday nationalism”, and regional nationalism, which challenges the borders of nation-states in order to give to some cultural nations –or stateless nations– their own State.

Theoretical considerations

Whether a nation is seen as a differentiating factor (Bekus, 2010) or as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1993), the bond that unites members of the same nation is a matter of debate among scholars. On the one hand, some emphasize ethnocultural interpretations, defining the basis of the nation from objective characteristics such as culture, language, history or ideology (Adams in Bekus 2010). On the other hand, others offer modernist interpretations, which see the nation as a conscious construct, anchored in the present and independent of the past (Bekus, 2010). Disciplines also have their own approach with, on the one hand, historians, who analyze nationalism as a political force and, on the other hand, ethnologists, who tend to build it around the notion of ethnicity (Löfgren in Martigny 2010).

Furthermore, nationalism questions borders, which are presented by Michel Foucher as a central device in the making of nations (Foucher 2012). Because it must have a geographical basis –a state, a nation, and a territory must coincide (Kassem 2012, Foucher 1991)– the nation-state model emerged along with the concept of border. Better yet, borders were the territorial levers to legitimize nation-states and were then instrumentalized to reinforce national sentiment. Since the border is “the envelope of the nation” (Foucher) but also a “marker of identity” (Piermay, 2005), it is appropriate to reflect on this link between state, nation and border.

Nationalism is also a shape-shifting phenomenon: whether it inclusive or exclusive, ethnic or civic, pro-state or anti-state (Kassem et al 2012), each movement, depending on its claims, modalities, and founding principles, fits differently into these categories. Chronologically, there is a difference between the nationalism that has resulted from the “nationalization of the

political space” and the nationalism that produced it (Bubaker 1996). In the end, are these notions still relevant? Or have forms of “neo-nationalism” emerged?

Objectives

Because nationalism first emerged in Europe before being "exported" to the New World through the nation-state model and in a context of colonization, the phenomenon will be approached in a comparative manner.

First of all, Europe finds itself in the grip of antithetical forces: the desire to build a supranational entity that would supplant nation-states or multinational states, the emergence of sovereignism in response to European integration, but also the emergence of regional nationalisms that demand to create their own state - Catalonia, Scotland, Flanders.... Is this a sign of a Europe in crisis? What meaning should we give to these nationalist movements?

Moreover, not all European countries have adhered to the nation-state model. The United Kingdom, like Belgium, are multinational - or plurinational - states composed of several nations, defined by Stéphane Pierré-Caps as "different communities, each aware of its specificity and showing the desire to preserve it" (Pierré-Caps 1995). In the 1980s, euroscepticism rose and nationalism became stronger within countries (e.g. the Scottish nationalists' demand for a nation-state). If some entities wish to form a state on the basis of a nationalist movement, is this not proof that the nation-state still has a bright future? Could the European Union become a union of nation-states? Isn't the possible European salvation that would come from stateless nations based on a fundamental incompatibility between the two?

The Americas, for their part, have adopted the nation-state model out of step, in a context of decolonization, through more or less violent processes depending on the country. In the same way, they have followed the model of European integration, setting up regional agreements such as NAFTA, MERCOSUR or CARICOM. However, these attempts at regional integration have faced significant obstacles, including the refusal of states to give up what they consider to be hard-won national independence. As a result, these agreements are more trade agreements, with no supranational ambitions, that promote more functional than institutional integration (Sohn et al, 2007).

Also, nationalism has been linked to indigenous or indianist movements in very recent times. For example, Bolivia, which is a plurinational state, has been confronted with identity and territorial claims by "native" peoples, which the government has usually considered as populations occupying a territory. Latin American nationalism is also to be analyzed in the context of struggles between political authorities and indigenous communities, who were the first victims of this colonial nationalism through the spoliation of land and the consequent deforestation that has been much discussed in Brazil for example...

Finally, whether it is the state, political parties or civil society that instills and builds nationalism by rallying around symbols and principles, nationalism is the fruit of certain actors who produce a particular discourse - national narrative or political programs - whose aim is to mobilize individuals around this "connection" that unites the nation.

It is these questions concerning the different forms of nationalism that mark the beginning of the 21st century that this conference wishes to explore by structuring them around the following axes:

- The first axis will examine the **link between nationalism and populism**. The populist movements that have multiplied in Europe and in the Americas instrumentalize "traditional" or "ordinary" nationalism through an anti-immigration and pro-sovereignty discourse. Any proposal on the relationship between nationalism and immigration or nationalism and sovereignty is relevant to our reflection. How can nationalism be instrumentalized by populist discourses promoting withdrawal? What vision of the nation is put forward? What is the place for newcomers in the national project? Are the discourses that are emerging in Europe and in the Americas similar?
- A second axis will focus on **the opposition between regional nationalism and state nationalism**. It will be able to approach the subject from different angles:
 - o First of all, proposals analyzing the specificity of regional nationalist movements and their claims at the beginning of the 21st century will be privileged. Are these movements the result of a political problem between the central state and a region or is it rather a problem of social (and "national") cohesion within the region? Is the sense of regional belonging - perceived as "national", hence a problem of definition - compatible or not with the national belonging (of the nation-state).
 - o Moreover, when we know that Quebec, Basque, Catalan, Corsican or Flemish independentists went to Scotland in 2014 to attend the independence referendum, we can also study the existence of **transnational solidarity links** between certain nationalist movements, particularly between Europe and the Americas, at a time when the Scottish National Party has won the elections (2021) by a landslide and is unsuccessfully calling for a new referendum.
 - o Finally, when we know the **role that languages have played** in the construction of nationalisms (Brunet-Jailly 2017), proposals that will examine the way in which languages have been put at the service of nationalism in the 21st century will also be welcome. One might think here of the importance given to Gaelic and Ulster Scot in the negotiations prior to the restoration of an assembly in Northern Ireland in 2020, the efforts of the Scottish nationalist government to have Scots recognized as a national language (not dialect), but examples abound, such as the current reform of Bill 101 in Quebec dealing with the French language. The role of Catalan and Basque in the corresponding nationalisms is also absolutely fundamental as a national definition around the language question. On the other hand, in Latin America, apart from Portuguese, all the countries share Spanish as an official language, even if Guaraní in Paraguay or the pre-Colombian languages in Bolivia are now co-official. Does language build the nation? Can a nation be multilingual? Can the same nation straddle several states (and therefore be transborder)?
- A third axis will focus on **nationalism and the redefinition of borders** in a context of regionalization and integration, whether in Europe with the European Union or in the Americas with regional alliances. Does the European project mark the beginning of the crisis of the nation-state with the loss of certain national symbols (currency, borders)? Is the European Union a space of co-sovereignty? What relations does the European Union wish to establish between the nation-states and the supranational institutions?

Does the European construction lead to the advent of a European identity and perhaps even a European nation? Does European citizenship compete with national citizenship? The EU also gives a role and a voice to the regions of the nation-states, as actors in the implementation of European policies. Is the nation-state (in Europe at least) still the ideal actor in a globalized 21st century? Has the EU sought to weaken the nation-states? Has a Europe of regions been seriously considered as an alternative to a Europe of nation-states? In what way could Brexit be a *mise en abyme* for the Scottish or Catalan independentists (Catalexit)? These reflections could also, from a comparative point of view, make it possible to examine the links that structure the nation-states and the American regional groupings: the former NAFTA, MERCOSUR, the Central American Integration System or CARICOM (the Caribbean Community). Although less accomplished than the European Union, do these groupings convey an identity dimension that would challenge - or be in opposition to - existing national identities? Finally, what will become of these regional groupings at a time when populism is on the rise?

Because nationalism is at the crossroads of disciplines, this conference aims to be both transversal and transdisciplinary. All approaches are welcome, whether they relate to civilization, geography, history, political science, international relations, sociology, linguistics, ethnology, psychology... The presenters are also encouraged to adopt multidisciplinary and comparative methodologies in order to compare European and American countries.

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Proposals should be sent before October 31 to the following address:
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