Chapter 1

On the Persistence and Difficulties of Political Community

Existential Roots and Pragmatic Outcomes of National Awareness

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Prologue

After many days' journey, [the explorers] came to towns, and cities, and to commonwealths, that were both happily governed and well peopled. Under the equator, and as far on both sides of it as the sun moves, there lay vast deserts that were parched with the perpetual heat of the sun; the soil was withered, all things looked dismally, and all places were either quite uninhabited, or abounded with wild beasts and serpents, and some few men, that were neither less wild nor less cruel than the beasts themselves. But, as they went farther, a new scene opened, all things grew milder, the air less burning, the soil more verdant, and even the beasts were less wild: and, at last, there were nations, towns, and cities that had not only mutual commerce among themselves, and with their neighbors, but traded both by sea and land to very remote countries. (More 12–13)

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Before cultural nationalism rooted political community in the inheritances of a folk group, Thomas More looked for *communitas* as an expression of birth and place. Traveling with companions, Raphael, More's fictitious explorer of New Iberia, finds himself amidst a harsh, hostile, and inhumane environment. Suddenly a stretch of countryside appears before his eyes. Here we have a place of mild climate and verdant landscape, a fertile setting for agriculture and a settled life: the foundation of pastoral and of the proto-nation. The natural setting and the reference to landscape provide an important correspondence to nation—for nation, like landscape, speaks simultaneously to pastoral myth and to the inclination to find meaning within the complications of our local existences.

Pastoral has served as vision, a reflection of urban dwellers' poetic quests for the simplicity of the bucolic countryside, for the imaginative power inherent in places of origin. But pastoral's origin is neither fanciful nor imagined. In anthropological terms, *agro-pastoral* may be described as a social-ecological system; the "idyllic" qualities attributed to it by poets might be seen as an expression of its qualities before the intensive exploitation by humans combined with stress inherent in all natural systems reached a "tipping point," undoing ecological balance and causing a "regime shift" (Scheffer). To call forth pastoral is to find the quality of place in the real and imaginative geographies of peoples.

Similarly, nation, from Latin *natio* for birth and by extension a people, is a quality embedded within real communities. When More speaks of towns and cities he is referring to the requisite infrastructure; when he speaks of nations he refers to the people. The people of New Iberia are like all people: born to a place and engaged in a way of life. Their association takes the form of engagement in agriculture and "mutual [i.e., local] commerce," the necessities of settled life and their particularity reflects common birth, and the potential inherent in the commonality of birth and the commonality of place, magnified over time, forms the basis of political community. In New Iberia that community takes the form of a "commonwealth" that perhaps has implications for all nations in the future, but only insofar as their arrangements are suitable to different climes and also worthy of emulation.

Introduction

This book by European and American scholars based in Europe examines the anthropological and political foundations of nation and expressions of

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nationalism in our time. Our approach might be termed "radical" in the sense that we seek to consider the most contemporary issues in a broad anthropological perspective, considering as in More's fable, the roots of nation.

We begin with a simple question: Why are people still interested in expressions of nation? We have been particularly concerned to identify the existential and affective rationales for this continued attachment. Thus, we look at nation and nationalism in terms of an array of concepts—*genos*, *ethnos*, citizenship, place, and environment—utilizing disciplines of philosophy, history, political science, anthropology, literary/cultural studies, and environmental studies. We suggest that "cultural" and "political" definitions of nationalism can neither be conflated, nor placed in isolation. Furthermore, while expressions of the national vary considerably from one country to the next, what they share is that nation is central to democracy and to the real question of democracy's survival.

Confronting Assumptions

As crude restatements of nationalism began to appear in Western societies in recent years, journalists were surprised and equally dismayed. Witness this response by a British journalist to the use of strong-arm tactics in the conflict between the Spanish state and the Catalan national independence movement: "We are told constantly that the problems of today are global, that economic crisis, climate change, terrorism and migration can be tackled only by supranational action. Yet here we have, once again, people and politicians turning instead to the nation state as the answer to their problems" (Landale).

Landale is right to express disbelief on behalf of much of the public and particularly the well-educated public. On the one hand, the tendency of peoples to resort to their national identities seems to confirm conservative attitudes regarding the endurance of nationalism and the shallowness of European and global identities. On the other hand, the decision by the Spanish government to resort to force suggests the stupidity of resorting to the old nation-state framework.

Those judgments are a response to and a reflection of the major trends we have seen dominating the media sphere in the last decades as the progress of liberal institutionalism—animated by the global human rights movement, the development of stateless NGOs, economic globalization, and cultural globalization particularly in music and film—has called the older identities

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around nation and locality into question. Ideologically, postcolonialism has been a major force in raising doubts about the legitimacy of nation-states, particularly in the western hemisphere, and the concept of globality on the macro level and gender and ethnic identities on the micro level have provided alternatives to national citizenship. Taken together, these trends and ideas imply a shift in perception and understanding of the world. For many, this turn has been confirmed historically by the end of history thesis that followed in the wake of the collapsing Communist system (Fukuyama). Western publics have been encouraged to see globalism as the realization of Kant's democratic peace, while nationalism must be seen as regressive and reactionary.

Of course, one could point out that there are many more sophisticated ideas that have developed in the fields of history, political science, and international relations that understand that national institutions and national actors remain important; as, for example, that the national reflects one layer among many that constitute globality as a whole. At the same time, the global turn has been interpreted more radically in fields that have been influenced by postmodernism, such as sociology and geography, and particularly in literary and cultural studies. Popularizers in the 1990s (Friedman; Barber) advanced a strong globalization hypothesis that has had a lasting impact on media perceptions of globalization. What matters is not the academic question of whether globalization should be understood through a weak or strong hypothesis (Held and McGrew), but how it has been perceived by audiences and publics. That is difficult to gage, but we can make certain assumptions based on the association of globalization with job loss and large-scale immigration, two of the more important issues that underlie the rise of the nationalist right in Europe and the United States. At the same time, the apparent inability or unwillingness of many politicians to address these issues has given rise to the idea that globalization is akin to a wrecking ball, a force that cannot be contained and is wholly negative in character. This raises the question: What do people attracted to or tolerant of the new nationalism believe is being wrecked?

Commentators have rushed to find explanations. They have pointed out that a growing number of people in the democratic West have felt left out of the economic and political changes of recent decades, that the critical events that preceded and accompanied the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump—particularly the great recession of 2008–2009 and the breakdown of the vaunted US economy—convinced insurgents of the declining fortunes of the democratic Western nations. These events

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have produced grievances, but more importantly they have helped provoke an aura of loss and decline. Arguably then, material insecurity cannot fully explain the reattachment to nation, much less the manner in which people have resorted to raw expressions of nationalism. Beneath doubt and the fear of falling lies the fear of losing one's identity: there is a growing feeling that globalization projects a future of institutions rather than of peoples, of forces rather than established political traditions, of losses rather than gains. The chief loss is that of nation, which for most people in the Western countries also means the loss of democracy. At the moment, appeals to national identity are an attempt to reassert those earlier political choices in response to the overwhelming media attention given to globalization, international social movements, and cosmopolitan opinion. This is a particularly important message in the American context, given both the importance of social movement politics in the United States since the 1960s and the fact that American national identity has been deeply intertwined with democratic liberalism (Hartz), which in recent decades has actively delimited and perhaps even suppressed both national and civic expressions of the public.

Opponents of the current order seek to make space for the reassertion of the political, without necessarily understanding what this implies. The real point is that politics here is a statement for the recovery of *agency* of the commonweal and the empowerment of the majority in the face of a divided public and the overwhelming presence of the technosphere that operates to "disembed" the assumptions of modernity by "a lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction," a process that results in the destabilization of the "political, social and cultural unity of modern society" (Marden 6, 9). Government now reconceived as "governance" replaces the supremacy of the legislative process with experts who serve as "repositories of technical knowledge" that operate through closely associated activist networks (7, 11–12). Nationalism appears to offer to "return" agency to the majority—peoples who are becoming aware once again of the collective and inclusive idea of nation. The manifestations differ, ranging from the powerful, but largely defensive nationalisms of the Anglophone countries (noted in the Brexit campaign and Donald Trump's election), to the assertive independence campaigns for Scotland, Catalonia, and Kurdistan—positive nationalisms that express the desire of buried nations to assert their existence and their right to self-determination. For the moment, the world stage is divided between the expression of nationalism (left or right) and proclamations of global cosmopolitanism and progress to a world society. There is also the division between the passions of the populace and the

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cool deliberations of academics. The task of this volume is to look behind these divisions and dilemmas.

The "Trinity" and the Imbroglio of the Nation-State

The most important foundational justification for international institutionalism and global awareness rests with the standard interpretation of twentieth century history. There can be little doubt about the character of the historical record: two world wars, systematic genocide, and the development of weapons of mass destruction. Considering the fact that the long nineteenth century that preceded the world wars was characterized by nation-building and nationalism, it might seem reasonable to blame nation-states for unleashing a plague of chauvinistic attitudes and policies onto the world. The solution, accordingly, lies with cultivating a transnational governance by institutions and civil society at various levels, as well as encouraging economic interdependence that would make war unlikely in the future. In the first version, as advanced by Woodrow Wilson at Versailles, the integrity of nation-states would be a foundation of the new world order, but after World War II, with the rise of Soviet and American global reach, nation-states became less important. By the time the Cold War ended, nation-states seemed to have become outmoded obstacles to global integration and world peace.

Recently, one scholar has directly challenged this view, arguing that the greatest threat to peace is not nation-states, but real and aspiring empires. Indeed, liberal institutions that form the basis of globalism as an idea actually rest, he tells us, on "national cohesion . . . the bedrock on which a functioning democracy is built." By contrast, confused and competing national identities bred authoritarianism: "no multinational empire has ever been ruled as a democracy. Lacking mutual loyalty, its respective nationalities see one another only as a threat. That was the case in multinational states such as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Syria and Iraq" (Hazony).

Although states perform important and irreplaceable tasks of governance, the conceptualization of the state given prominence in Westphalia Treaty (1648) embodied in the concepts of territorial supremacy and political sovereignty, combined with the nation understood as the essence of a people, created in the nation-state something of a super-organic life force:

> Naked life (the human being), which in antiquity belonged to God and in the classical world was clearly distinct (as *zoe*) from

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> political life (*bios*), comes to the fore-front in the management of the state and becomes, so to speak, its earthly foundation. Nation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth [natio] (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty. (Agamben 93)

Agamben points to two problems that follow from this conceptualization. In the first, the unification of the birth of the people (natio) and the rise of the state, is a form of appropriation (i.e., the appropriation of the powers of human biology by the state). The subsidiary problem is the decline of political life, what Arendt calls the *polis*—not the sovereign state, nor the bureaucratic state, but the *ongoing* participatory political life of cities, regions, nations. In its most articulated and dangerous form, the nation-state has cannibalized these political and anthropological processes by literally absorbing the biological lives of the people into its own essence. But by disconnecting human nativity (natio) and other localizing processes from the historical development of the nation-state, Agamben opens a path to the possible reconstruction of the national as a basis for a new politics. Thus, a sharp distinction between national identity and nationalism is fundamental to his thought, somewhat parallel to the distinction between patriotism and nationalism.

Other reactions to nationalism have been more reductive. The most important line of development, which we might term "neo-functionalist Marxism," found its origin in the work of Anthony Giddens's characterization of the nation-state as an engine of modernization. Beneath political rationales and cultural markers of the nation, Giddens found a simple functionalism: national territorial expansion made possible a national market; a national market required and promoted the standardization of culture and both were necessary to modernization and pursuit of economic power of the few. Social forms are an outcome of the quest for modernization within the limits of the technological and political powers that can be mustered against the forces of inertia and reaction. The price that is paid for success is the sacrifice of the old values of an organic order. Functionalism then stands at the origin of the strong globalization hypothesis as well, taking modernization as the determining factor—and again, social values such as loyalty and place become mere obstacles to its achievement (see discussions in Beck; Held; Giddens; Hardt and Negri; Rosenau).

In postmodern theories of nationalism, Giddens's emphasis on modernization and nationalization as the twin processes of capital accumulation, underscores what Anderson identifies as the social project of the rising owner

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class. Birth (natio) does not belong to people, but rather to the projection of an "imagined community" that served to confound and manipulate captive populations. Accordingly, nations do not really exist prior to their "invention"; nationalism arises by an act of usurpation—absorbing the mythmaking powers once held by the church and royalty (22–23). Consequently, the seizure of power/knowledge takes the form of narratives that "allow the society in which they are told, on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it" (Lyotard 20). Thus, the so-called national narratives constructed the world through their own categories; their progenitors in the social sciences adapted a methodological nationalism (Beck) that became self-perpetuating and self-justifying, in this view. It remained for scholars in cultural studies to find the hidden rationale for national narratives by harnessing linguistic deconstruction to postcolonial perception. The nation rests on its exclusionary borders, while border crossings contest exclusion and must be valorized (Wiegman and Pease). The bottom line is this: rather than contesting the meaning of nation, postcolonialism has wished to transcend it and to reveal the underside of locality and place as the driver of the modern nation-state. Consequently, we are encouraged to see nations as monsters of rationalization, the building of national identity inherently racist, territory a form of exclusion and its state a means for exclusionary decision-making—propositions that possess some measure of truth, but function to transfer the symbolic powers of biology once possessed by the nation-state to international institutions and global bureaucracies—far removed from the realm of everyday life and the political.

Bringing the Nation Back: A Catalogue of Approaches

Michael Mann criticized the strong globalization hypothesis that the nation-state was disappearing, asserting instead that the power of nation-states was on the rise. An even stronger counterargument was Hirst and Thompson's study *Globalization in Question*, which provided empirical evidence to suggest that "globalization, as conceived by the more extreme globalizers, is largely a myth" (2). These are important works because they inserted realist judgments based on traditional analyses into a highly theoretical field by suggesting that even if a unified global society was emerging, it lacked the political foundations for its completion—a judgment that seems amply confirmed by recent events.

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A second critical development also emerged in the 1990s. Michael Billig's 1995 book *Banal Nationalism* is one of the first significant works that sought to reexamine the nation in a cultural context of everyday life—an important contribution to the political anthropology of the nation. Billig redefined the origins of political in everyday life, identifying four major components of national identity formation and retention that seem to him to persist in everyday life: ways of behaving (habits), practices for "talking" about nationhood, means of being "situated" in a homeland, and methods for retaining beliefs about national identity. "Nationhood," he tells us, is empirically verifiable in populations and is experientially real; it is "still being reproduced: it can still call for ultimate sacrifices; and, daily, its symbols and assumptions are flagged" (8–9).

Billig's work was empirically circumscribed, but in proving the existence of national feelings in an age assumed by many scholars to have moved to a new global identity, he provided a great service and pointed the way to the current debate over the origins of nationalism. Modernists such as Hans Kohn, Elie Kodourie, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm, among others, understand national identity as a consequence of alienation produced by modernization. Traditionalists (sometimes called "perennialists") see national identity as ubiquitous and recurrent throughout history (Jensen 11–14). Jensen traces awareness of nationhood to widely perceived perceptions about national character in the Middle Ages and shows its development in the early modern period well before industrialization and the formation of the modern state. She shows that in contrast to ancient notions about character formation as a consequence of physical geography, in the seventeenth century Hume understood the origin of national character in being "subject to the same government" (9). National identity formation was thus both political and existential: the peoples of Europe were evolving new ways of talking about their identities as a result of the growth of trade and changes in political forms.

Understanding populations' interactions with their areal and social environs supports the traditionalist position in regard to national identity. Awareness of commonalities of birth can be seen as an outcome of the human condition. In consequence, a much broader and complex understanding of nation is possible: a definition that bridges the lifeworld and avoids stigmatizing national feelings, but this explanation also leaves us bereft of an explanation for the historical origin and political impact of the nation—and in particular the development of the modern nation-state.

A useful starting point to mediate the traditionalist position on the origin and persistence of national consciousness and the development of the

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modern state may be found in the work of Anthony Smith. He is a traditionalist in that he understands the importance of premodern identities based on myths and memories, but he is keen to explain the role of nationalism in the context of the rise of the modern nation-state. For example, he argues that aristocratic "ethnies" (ethnic identity groups) were able to encourage, when possible, or impose, when necessary, a deeper and wider national identity on subject peoples ("The Origins" 148).[1] In the task of explaining the rise of the nation-state, Smith is instrumentalist and determinist in his approach: history is used to explain the present—which is not an unimportant task considering the persistence of social and political patterns in the present, but this leaves out the possibility that new sociocultural formations may be in the process of developing. Nation building and the formation of nation-states for Smith can be said to be "organic" (i.e., not manipulated and multidimensional). There is the civic dimension as societies become urban and more complex; there is the process of elite-directed "cultural regulation" backed up by the creation of a "strong and stable administrative apparatus" ("The Origins" 148). But behind these modern developments lies the deep-seated "territorial nation" that itself develops in conjunction with ethnic formation (*Ethnic Origins* 134–40). Smith was undoubtedly driven by a wish to counter modernist and postmodernist theories of nationalism as a whimsical invention for self-interested purposes, an idea based on what one reviewer referred to as the fad of social constructivism (Neuberger). Smith points out that without territorial markers, peoples are merely "populations bounded in political space" (*Ethnic Origins* 2).

In the present context of this book and ongoing political developments, Smith's synthesis may be less interesting than its identification of the components and processes of nationalism. One such component is national sentiment. Azar Gat defines nationalism as "solidarity with one's people and one's state" (32) and finds it throughout history. It was there in the city-state and among different peoples who formed the ethnic cores of empires. In the Middle Ages, it took the form of tribal kingdoms north of the Alps. It is central to the political: all national cores are "rooted in primordial human sentiments of kin-culture, affinity, solidarity and mutual cooperation" (31). Most of humanity inherits a community and arguably all of us are subject to the wish for these larger identifications, but these apparent truisms beg the question of how these formulations can be made relevant to our crowded and fragile world. What processes and creative formulations are emerging?

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National Politics in the United States: The Threat of Negation

After Donald Trump's surprising and narrow election victory, the United States was plunged into a crisis of legitimacy even worse than that which followed George W. Bush's contested election victory in 2000. Not only had Mr. Trump run a very divisive electoral campaign, for the first time since the arrival of the global age a candidate openly challenged the assumptions of a post-national, open-border, multicultural conception of society. Under the circumstances, perhaps one should not be surprised that various demonstrations against the Trump presidency ensued, but there is one very personal act of defiance that I would like to consider in some detail.

On July 4, 2017, a young, otherwise anonymous American woman from Philadelphia by the name of Emily Lance posted a video on Facebook depicting herself with an attached artificial device designed to direct her urine stream; in this case she directed it all over an American flag that had been draped over a toilet. She captioned her video: "F*** your nationalism. F*** your country. F*** your stupid f****** flag" ("Emily Lance Threatened after Urinating on the US Flag on 4 July"). Later, in response to the ensuing outrage from various quarters, as well as threats by right-wing extremists, she raged on: "Freedom (of speech/expression) means that I'm entitled to do and say as I please, EVEN if you don't like it—and no your feelings don't count; that's your own problem. . . . What don't you people understand? You're celebrating freedom while damning me for doing the same. You can't have it both ways. FREEDOM OR NONE" ("Women Pees on American flag, Now All of America Is Pissed Off").

At the present in a country bitterly divided over the election, her act might be excused as intemperate but without significant consequence. Alternately, one could very well categorize her performance as an act of sexually inflected civil disobedience that, like Thoreau's refusal to pay the poll tax, asserts the priority of a higher moral law. In the process, their actions might be said to begin what Victor Turner calls a "social drama"—a means of playing out and resolving social conflict (23–59). But unfortunately, unlike indigenous cultures on which Turner based his observations, we lack the capacity to carry social dramas to symbolic resolution. We are much more likely to see public urination on the national symbol in ideological terms and forget its social and personal psychological dimensions.

The ideological misreading of Lance's act is by no means limited to the right. Indeed, it begins with the antagonist herself, in her own assertions.

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Her thinking is very much in line with the recent turn from liberalism that once served as a set of principles for national governance, to liberalism as an ideology of national negation. Significantly, while Lance expressed herself in the familiar political language of liberty—Patrick Henry's well-worn dictum comes to mind—the act's referent had little to do with engaging the social or political order, even in a revolutionary sense. Henry wished for political revolution and the creation of a new state. Lance's act refers only to the negation, one could well say; the degradation of America and the assertion of (her)self: an act of narcissism. One is reminded that in his thinking about the "totality" of the social world, Hegel posited his theory that the zeitgeist moves forward through the repudiation of current ideas and assumptions, but that during a period of transition, the dialectic depends on the perpetuation of these oppositions before a new synthesis emerges. In the case of Lance and the American left, the fixation on negation has rendered the alternative, presumably a borderless world of the multitudes (Hardt and Negri), invisible. In the left politics of symbol, negation means we need not ask the question of where the alternatives lie.

Recently, Nancy Fraser has argued that while the fundamental driver of world politics today is neoliberal financialization and globalization, neoliberalism's symbols and temperament derive from the left: "In its U.S. form, progressive neoliberalism is an alliance of mainstream currents of new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism, and LGBTQ rights), on the one side, and high-end 'symbolic' and service-based business sectors (Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood), on the other" (Fraser). In effect, Fraser has restated the thesis first lanced by Christopher Lasch in his 1995 book *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. The question raised by these critiques is systematic to liberalism as the predominant ideological formation in the United States for the past one hundred and fifty years.

When it rose to a position of prominence in the twentieth century, liberalism rested on balancing rights-based discourses with the interest and concerns of the majority. American liberalism is deeply rooted in the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the long-standing practice of open immigration, to mention a few instances. This is problematic in the sense that political integrity and integration is difficult in an ideology, and to some extent a legal Constitutional system, which asserts the absolute right of dissent and self-fulfillment. Consequently, the extent to which an American political community has existed for itself, has depended on liberalism's engagement with a republican ethos of the commonweal—as, for example, in the progressive era of the early twentieth century.[2] American liberalism, as

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defined in its "classic" era by FDR's New Deal, built on those developments in civic orientation and democratic pragmatism and combined them with state planning and regulation. The result was a number of important political and economic reforms *and* a spirit of national community, which made possible national survival during the Great Depression and World War II.

If Nancy Fraser is correct, progressive neoliberalism (or the "progressive" liberals) has moved us precisely the opposite direction. It has become the symbolic force behind the technostructure; it provides the content by which "cognitive capitalism" broadcasts itself to the entire world. Ironically operating in the name of liberal social theory—of the capacity to self-identify and generate social movements based in subjective self-identification—has meant that contemporary liberalism has lost the necessary dimension of critical realism and has misunderstood the content of globalization. In contrast to the historical precedence of the state assuming the biological powers of the people (as observed by Agamben), we now face the prospect of an authoritarian state identifying a power abstract from and above the people. This is a different authoritarianism from that which the left fears; it is an authoritarianism consonant with the ideology of technological supremacy, a putative universal culture, and the triumph of bureaucracy (*The Myth of the Machine*; *The Bureaucratization of the World*).

Back to the Future

Nation in the broad anthropological sense remains a central component of the political. The resurgence of communities provides the basis for pursuing common interests and developing effective responses to the existential threats we face. The gravest threat experienced by populations across the globe is the one to their sense of collective identity and value in a world that seems to be defined by and for global elites. In effect, we live in an era in which the foundations of the political are threatened. States endure, but the political and cultural linkages to the state are threatened.[3] For a segment of academic opinion, this is not problematic. As globalists, they are projecting a world of universals—human rights, environmentalism, and technological modernization—organized around a gaggle of private but somehow "global" institutions (NGOs) governed by an international financial architecture as theorized and monitored by institutions such as the IMF and backed by a cartel of states operating in the "global interest." Such a political formation lacks a future, partly because it lacks a mechanism for

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overseeing how fairly benefits are being distributed. That is another matter of pressing importance. In this volume, the question concerns a related but distinct matter: Is the future of global modernization really a return to an authoritarian past? In projecting global governance and cosmopolitan values, are we lining up against the peoples of the world, against the localizations of culture and politics, and against the (potentially) creative processes of historical development? Do we threaten to collapse democratic societies and usher in an age of unrestrained technocracy?

Summary of Chapters

Reassertions of the national are conventionally seen as a revival of hard politics hatched by "irresponsible" "populist" and "nationalist" elements—euphemisms for uneducated, xenophobic people. In this volume we have presented a balanced view that accounts both for the base and higher motivations of people in search of nation. The argument considers historical and practical uses of natio within specific contexts.

The backdrop for the articles in part 1 is the rise of international institutionalism and globalism in various forms and phases. These trends specifically affected academic discourses in the humanities and three of the four chapters in this section pertain to literary and cultural studies. Collectively, the essays point to the persistence of national identity and suggest that disappointments with globalism and cosmopolitanism are not limited to right populism but are expressed in the experience of writers, environmental reformers, theorists of international relations, politics, and civics. Taken together, these chapters are groping toward a new politics of culture that reestablishes the link between people and places. For some, these linkages are observed as limits; for others, they are advocated as key to address political questions. In the latter case, nation may be seen to promote commonalities of identity, engagements with fellowship, and experience of place/landscape.

In chapter 2, Steven Colatrella takes a wide berth, offering both a critique of the liberal international order and a revision of the history of the American left from its current postcolonialist orbit, calling into question assumptions about the relation of social justice on the one hand and internationalism and globalism on the other. Applying—but also critically appraising Hannah Arendt on the crisis of rights theory—Colatrella argues that today's universalist doctrine of human rights is vague, abstract, and

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unenforceable. In reality, human rights today depend on the efforts of nongovernmental organizations that lack the power to legislate. Having one's own country, by contrast, has the potential of making rights real and enforceable. A country of one's own is measured by participation in the public sphere. For Colatrella, the struggles for social justice by subaltern classes and minority groups has had the effect of widening the public sphere and, in the process, creating the nation.

Chapters 3 and 4 both argue that the preconditions of national identity and statehood in the political and cultural landscape show us the limitations of a politics based on cosmopolitanism and globalism. In chapter 3, Ole Sneltvedt applies Hannah Arendt's concept of the "world of common things" to critically examine the epistemological foundations of "methodological cosmopolitanism," which misses the importance of materiality and of locality in the creation of polity. The physical world of things provides Sneltvedt's foundation for his claims that American polity is materialized in landscape and composed of layers derived from both early republican and national periods.

In chapter 4, Werner Bigell takes aim at global environmentalism for its failure to account for the cultural character of landscape. Tracing eco-globalism to its beginnings in American nature and ecological writing, he argues that its initial concerns and solid footing have been displaced by vague and unrealizable "solidarities" with animals and plants. The evolving field of the environmental humanities is an example of misplaced communitarianism, according to Bigell—we should rather direct our quest to reestablish a commons to the intersection of public space and the cultural landscape, as in noted Finnish and Russian examples and in utopian literature.

The articles in part 2, "Contextualizing the National: Constraints and Possibilities," remind us of the continued threat posed by the attempt to found and sustain polities on the basis of a narrow sense of biological or ethnic origin. If nation is essentially a matter of ethnos to the exclusion of civic ends, we risk repeating errors of the past. Expressed positively, a larger view of politics founded on the concerns of civil society and ongoing cultural concerns—the search for identity and meaning—can be beneficial and is arguably necessary to free societies. At the same time, we learn that the national can be easily submerged in a fragmented social world filled with competing signs and narratives. There are two fundamental questions raised. First, how does the nation (the sense of belonging, of community, of home) survive in a world where its value is so sharply contested? Where is it embedded and how does it persist? Second, from what perspective should

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we read the interaction between culture, politics, and the state—from a position of hermeneutical suspicion or political engagement?

In chapter 5, Venla Oikkonen examines popular interest in national origin. The article follows conflicting claims around the discovery in 1991 of Ötzi, a fifty-three-hundred-year-old mummy. Interestingly and somehow appropriately, the mummy was found in the Alps right on the rather indistinct border between Italy and Austria. She describes the ensuing scramble to claim the body as "Austrian" or "Italian" and the attempt in the media sphere to lay claim to genetics as a means of verifying national origin. Oikkonen, noting the differences between evolutionary and political time frames, not only shows that national populations are not creations of human evolution and that genetic research is not very useful in verifying national origin stories, but also that there is a widespread willingness on the part of national publics to make *zoe* (biology) the foundation of *bios* (civil society and the state). Thus, as Oikkonen notes, while the contemporary science of genetics has not supported research in the origin of nationalities in Europe, it has served as an occasion for furthering public misunderstanding and simplification of national origin.

In chapter 6, Bruce Barnhart picks up the thread of the critique of biological and ethnic essentialism discussed in Oikkonen's chapter. He argues that biological conceptions of nation may be used to discipline the civil society, such as in the case of US immigration restrictions in the 1920s traced to belief in an Anglo-Saxon ethnic superiority. Applying Hannah Arendt's critique of totalitarianism to a reading of two novels, including *The Great Gatsby*, Barnhart reflects what has become received postmodernist understanding: nations are social constructions of modernity, which carry on the colonial project by constructing migrants and minorities as "others." In this sense, the piece reflects social constructivism and postcolonialism, two of the most important developments in the turn to a hermeneutics of suspicion. At the same time, Barnhart pushes this theory into an interesting direction by linking nationalism to capitalism as an implicit condition of national development manifest in "national time." In Barnhart's account, the authoritarian themes of Fordist American capitalism (i.e., regularity, control, and hyper-development) are consonant with the quest for ethnic uniformity and the suppression of minority voices.

One interesting context for revisiting the national character, even in light of its often disappointing and even oppressive character, is taken up in chapter 7. Here the anthropological need of human beings to find a sense of belonging takes some surprising twists and turns in the life of

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an exiled Italian writer. Sergio Sabbatini narrates the story of a self-exiled Italian writer, Luigi Di Ruscio (1930–2011), who left Italy in the 1950s to take a production line job in Norway—a country presumably more in line with his socialist inclinations. Sabbatini explains that the writer's subsequent reassertion of his Italian national identity is subject to the complications of the contested meaning of being Italian. We learn that standard (American) tale of the migrant writer struggling to adapt to his new home while remaining true to his origin simply fails to explain the layers of identification and practice with which Di Ruscio struggled. Furthermore, in the European context, bilingualism and binationalism (Italian and Norwegian) takes the form of multiple linguistic/literary commitments on the part of Di Ruscio, including: engagement with formal literary Italian, the fluidity and expressiveness of his regional dialectic, the exercise of everyday Norwegian, as well as the perpetuation of political "language" of international socialism in a capitalist world. Linguistic multiplicity, ideological strife, and familial and social estrangement were the background to his conflicted commitments. But what stands out in the context of this volume is Di Ruscio's ironic repossession of the idealized Italian national literary language—despite his discomfort with its elitism, formalism, and suppressive qualities—as the most important basis for his wish to recover a sense of national belonging.

In chapter 8, Stefano Adamo furthers the recontextualization of the nation by considering its potential for civic re-formation. In Adamo's account, nation is not so much an object of thought or emotion, as a product of social interaction and human memory. He traces the definition and the redefinition of Italian national feeling in the last half a century from a heroic-political stance in the 1970s to apathy and finally to the rise of an emotive pathos at the turn of the century. National awareness requires self-consciousness, which in this case arises through the process of addressing its problems. The circumstances are the persistence of poverty in Italy and the cultural hangover created by the glamour, grandeur, and individualist ethos associated with Hollywood in general and the American Mafia film in particular. In his reading of two Italian Mafia films released in 2000, *Placido Rizzotto* and *One Hundred Steps*, Adamo reveals Italian moviemakers as having undertaken a limited but not insignificant national project: the films are at least partly didactic in character. Furthermore, by shifting the pathos of the typical gangster film from repulsion to compassion (for the victims), the Italian films have engaged in creating symbols for reconstruction of the foundation of an ethical society, contributing to nation as a civic project.

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If this book could be read as constructing an opposition between reassertions of nation and skepticism toward that project, the conclusion by Rosario Forlenza addresses that opposition by employing political anthropology. He argues that any political project for recovering the nation must be rooted in reconstruction and recovery. Nation is a form of the familiar and has historically played a positive role in combatting the ever-present threat posed by the growing development of an abstract, cold, legalistic, and ultimately dangerous view of the world.

Notes

1. Smith distinguishes between lateral and vertical strategies for the development of latent national identifies and the formation of states. The two processes are linked. In one case, it is managed through a bureaucratic regulation and in the other, through the articulation of a cultural ideal resting on learning and vision.
2. Alternately with a socialist ethos, but this has been largely absent.
3. Argument from globalization discourse on the rise of global states.

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