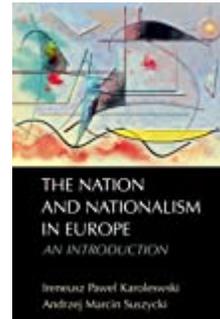




Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski, Andrzej Marcin Suszycki, eds. *The Nation and Nationalism in Europe: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 223 pp. \$100.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7486-3806-2; \$32.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7486-3807-9.



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A Primer on the Nation and Nationalism with Identity Questions of Its Own

Introducing advanced students in the social sciences to the theories of nation and nationalism that have appeared in the last four decades quickly becomes a complicated endeavor. The sheer number of competing concepts and significant controversies, even when pared down to a handful of major authors, makes it difficult to create a syllabus that is both wide-ranging and practical. Ireneusz Paweł Karolewski and Andrzej Marcin Suszycki's *The Nation and Nationalism in Europe: An Introduction* tries to accelerate that process while steering students towards horizons beyond the existing literature.

Karolewski and Suszycki lay out four main objectives: to take stock of the current state of research on the nation and nationalism; to familiarize readers with the most significant controversies in that literature; to critique the preceding theories and offer new approaches of their own; and to demonstrate the function of those approaches through a series of empirical case studies (p. 3). The order of this four-part scheme bears a rough resemblance to how the authors structure the work, which they declare to be "not a traditional textbook on nation-

alism" on the grounds that their goal is not only to survey the field but also to shape it with a few key innovations (p. 12). In practice, unfortunately, this strategy results in something of an uneasy hybrid of review and argumentation, since no strong central thesis or set of theses binds Karolewski and Suszycki's observations into a coherent whole.

The arrangement of the first four chapters, however, does serve to reinforce one of the book's principle contentions, namely that preceding studies do not keep the concepts of "nation" and "nationalism" at an appropriate distance from one another (p. 13). Thus the first chapter concentrates on searching for a definition of "nation" alone. Here Karolewski and Suszycki avoid resting on a single definition of the word, urging more productively instead that we adopt Reinhart Koselleck's terminology to understand the nation "as a concept of experience and expectation," the meaning of which is a matter of historical standpoint—that is, of context rather than absolute consistency (p. 15). They classify four "perspectives" on the nation from the existing literature, each of which has

its own well-known proponents: the functionalist, the constructivist, the genealogical, and the rationalist.

These perspectives are set up mostly to be knocked down, for in the second chapter Karolewski and Suszycki deliver their alternative take on the concept of the nation. They posit a derivative method that defines a nation as a political community endowed with a collective identity, more specifically a political collective identity, distinguishable from other social identities and social roles, with variable boundaries of belonging and the capacity to integrate masses of people around one identity while allowing for other group loyalties (pp. 37-38). This commendable move to embrace a fluid idea of the nation opens the door to more depth and nuance than many earlier theories, which present it as a static, independent object possessed by groups and individuals.

The outcome is stunted, however, because the authors give only a very brief and incomplete account of what national identity is or by what mechanism it operates. They restrict themselves to assigning the concept three tiers: its durability in times of crisis, how outsiders are constructed and excluded, and the We-I balance between individual and collective identity (pp. 39-40). They rightly describe this as a parsimonious approach and argue that the nation is better known by its workings and effects than by its substance (p. 41). Karolewski and Suszycki draw upon psychological research to isolate four clusters of effects of national identity on individuals, groups, and institutions: cognitive effects that determine the perception of national membership and the character of outsiders; self-esteem booster effects, including collective memory, that encourage individuals to participate in a national collectivity; effects on the legitimization of political systems; and effects on mobilization for collective action. This interdisciplinary impulse is very welcome, as is the gesture towards taking the role of emotion seriously. But the subject is too complex and this section of the book too underdeveloped for Karolewski and Suszycki's account of the nation to remain much more than that—a gesture.

The third and fourth chapters deal with nationalism as a separate phenomenon. Together, they most closely resemble a traditional textbook. Here, Karolewski and Suszycki demonstrate an impressive ability to synthesize vast amounts of diverse social science literature—it must be said that, in general, the book is exceedingly well documented—and then categorize it with precision. In the third chapter they survey previous definitions of nationalism by breaking down the literature around three

research foci (p. 57). The first of these is the relationship between nationalism and modernity, specifically concerning debates over whether and to what extent modernization can be considered the cause of nationalism. The second relationship is that of nationalism and democracy, i.e., how much the latter depends on the former; the third, of nationalism and distributive justice.

The fourth chapter is a similar exercise, in which Karolewski and Suszycki analyze six debates over how to classify nationalism by type. These are, succinctly: Ernst Gellner's typology from *Nations and Nationalism* (1983); the classic division between civic, Western and ethnic, Eastern nationalism, which, to their credit, Karolewski and Suszycki reject elsewhere (p. 12); the liberalist ethical evaluation of nationalism as ontological versus consequential; manifest versus banal, or everyday nationalism; nationalism driven by elite versus non-elite activists; and nationalism promoted by or against states.

These chapters favor what we might well regard as the canon of nationalism studies. The work of Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Liah Greenfield, Anthony Smith, Elie Kedourie, Hans Kohn, and Rogers Brubaker features prominently here. In this respect, Karolewski and Suszycki have provided a useful field guide, as it were, to the most commonly cited theorists and their respective critics. The authors are so thorough in their categorization, however, that at times the reader might feel overwhelmed by the task of remembering Karolewski and Suszycki's extensive taxonomy of nationalisms. A more serious problem, one perhaps made inevitable by limitations of space, is that their literature review does not present any historiographical commentary, leaving the impression that these theories appeared at roughly the same time. This strips nationalism studies of its historical contexts, and therefore of a sense that it has evolved according to broader developments in intellectual and political history. Why was Kohn's concern for good civic nationalism over bad ethnic nationalism so influential in post-Second World War thought? Why did the 1980s witness an explosion of important new accounts? Why did the early 1990s, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the so-called Eastern Bloc, push nationalism studies into the institutional limelight that it still enjoys today? The book leaves such questions unconsidered, but some attention to the development of the field would have supported its aspirations as an introductory text.

In a very short fifth chapter, Karolewski and Suszycki lay out a kind of anti-typological view of national-

ism, proposing that we examine its mechanics on four levels rather than along a single axis. They take pains to stress that we understand these levels to be "relatively open categories" that are "not necessarily parts of a bigger whole" and therefore neither stacked hierarchically nor always influencing one another (pp. 105-106). Thus, they claim, we can observe nationalism function on a micro level, that of the individual; a meso level, "as a discursive commitment of non-governmental actors to national interests" (p. 107); a macro, or governmental, level; and finally in the realm of geopolitics at a supranational level.

The sixth chapter, in which Karolewski and Suszycki apply this methodology on nationalism to a series of empirical case studies, does not entirely suffice as a full explanation of their levels-based analysis, but it is enough to show how they imagine it to work. They put forward a diverse and interesting assortment comprising Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Latvia, Poland, and Sweden. This is a balanced ensemble that on one hand avoids seeing nationalism through narratives of pathology and intractability, as often associated with more spectacular standbys (e.g., Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia), while on the other hand recognizes a "Europe" that expands well to the north and east of Germany. Karolewski and Suszycki supply good illustrations of discourses of nationalism (the meso level) and nationalism within party politics (the macro level), but give only scattered attention to the micro and supranational levels.

In the topical seventh chapter Karolewski and Suszycki take on the "relationship between governmental nationalism, regionalism, and European integration," which they construe as a "semantic triangle" of the regional/meso-governmental/macro-European Union/supranational levels (pp. 166-167). They take a perceptively critical stance towards studies that understand region/regionalism as simply nation/nationalism writ large. As a corrective, they posit that regional iden-

tity lies somewhere in between the abstract community of the nation and the "face-to-face" environment of the local community and that, thanks in part to the European Union, a state of ambiguity prevails with regard to the (possible) rise of "regional nationalism" (pp. 172, 184). The authors then spend time assessing how far the EU mimics traditional nation-building techniques in a mostly flawed attempt to foster a durable "European" identity. By way of conclusion, they seem to predict that new types of collective identity in Europe will "never assume [the] resilience and durability" that national identity presently enjoys, nor will they achieve any success outside of the same methods of state-building used by nation-states (p. 198). Unfortunately, these rather bold prophecies do not receive more than a few lines of justification.

The fact that the eighth chapter amounts to a well-meaning if insubstantial collection of afterthoughts on "further research foci of nationalism"—namely globalization, religion, and gender—serves to highlight the main shortcoming of this volume. It adopts more tasks than it has the capacity to carry out. Neither a straightforward survey textbook nor a complete theoretical monograph, *The Nation and Nationalism in Europe* is strongest when evaluated for application as the former. Graduate seminar instructors in the social sciences on the hunt for readings that distill the literature of an enormous and often contentious field will be able to profit from this text's review chapters. And although we cannot presume that what works for the study of Europe can be applied without reservation to the study of everywhere else, much of this book speaks in terms generalized enough to be of interest to scholars of other geographical concentrations.

Those hoping for fresh approaches to theories of nation and nationalism, however, will be left wishing that its ideas, many of them salutary and worthy of pursuit, had been given more room to take shape.

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