Understanding Nationalism

The New York Times runs a video series called "The Interpreter" where its reporters explain controversial ideas. In February 2018, it put up a video, entitled "National Identity Is Made Up." The *Times* contended that, "national identity is the myth that built the modern world, but it also primes us for dictatorship, racism, genocide." What does it mean to say that one's national identity is "made up" or a "myth"? Something that is made up or a myth is not true. It's a story. By that understanding, a person could say, "I'm not really an American," the way someone who plays in a band on the weekends, but is an accountant during the week, could say, "I'm not really a musician."

And what does it mean to say that our made-up identity "primes us" for racism and genocide? Does it prime us for other things that are not so terrible? Could it also prime us, for instance, to vote in elections? Or maybe it could also prime us to be concerned about a school shooting in Florida even though we live in Maryland and have never been to the city of Parkland and don't know any of the children who were shot?

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The argument of this book is that national identity is not just a product of where a person is born or emigrated to, but of deeply held sentiments that are usually acquired during childhood. Nationalism is not simply a political ideology, or set of ideas, but a *social psychology*. Nationalist sentiment is an essential ingredient of a democracy, which is based on the assumption of a common identity, and of a welfare state, which is based on the acceptance by citizens of their financial responsibility for people whom they may not know at all, and who may have widely different backgrounds from theirs.

The psychology of nationalism is the basis for nationalist politics, which can take very different forms—on the left, center, or right. Demagogues can exploit the sentiments on which nationalism is based to promote a nativist or imperial agenda, but political leaders can also appeal to nationalism to rally a citizenry to resist foreign conquest or colonial domination. Abraham Lincoln and Benito Mussolini were ardent nationalists. The French revolutionaries of 1789 were nationalists; but so, too, was Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's Falange. Theodore Roosevelt and George Wallace both claimed the mantle of nationalism.

The political direction that nationalism takes has depended on how a politician or political movement draws upon existing nationalist sentiments. Politicians, parties, and policymakers who simply discount these sentiments, or who identify them solely with right wing excesses—as many in the United States or Europe have done—are likely to encourage exactly the kind of nationalism they might have wanted to avoid. That is the lesson of the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Sweden Democrats, and Donald Trump.

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Our current one-sided understanding of nationalism as the stimulus for racism and genocide comes out of the experience of World War II. After World War II, the leaders of the victorious powers tried to prevent the revival of the toxic, aggressive nationalism that had arisen in Germany, Italy, and Japan, which combined a quest for world domination with vicious scapegoating that, in Germany's case, led to genocide. In Europe, and to some extent in the United States, the very term "nationalist" and its cognates acquired a pejorative connotation. To call someone a "nationalist" insinuated some underlying sympathy for Nazis or fascists.

To prevent an outbreak of this toxic nationalism, the victors devised regional and international organizations that were intended to tamp down the urge for world domination and prevent the outbreak of ethnic or racial nationalism. These included the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Economic Community. Even NATO and the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact and Comecon were intended partly to prevent an eruption of aggressive nationalism. Together, these institutions helped prevent the outbreak of a new world war; they contributed to three decades of rapid economic growth and prosperity; and they squelched the development of the older nationalism that had sparked World War II.

Emboldened by these successes, and by the end of the Cold War, policymakers in the United States and Europe embraced in the 1990s and early 2000s the growth of new international organizations and the expansion of older ones. They encouraged global economic integration, dubbed globalization, and

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the subordination of national sovereignty to international rule. American President Bill Clinton urged Americans to "embrace the inexorable logic of globalization." British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "I hear people say we have to stop and debate globalization. You might as well debate whether autumn should follow summer."

During a fifteen-year stretch, the European Economic Community became the European Union. Most of the EU's continental members were united by a single currency; EU-wide rules restricted budget deficits and allowed the free movement of workers. "Rarely if ever has there been a greater voluntary concession of national sovereignty than Europe's Economic and Monetary Union," *Financial Times* economist Martin Sandbu wrote in *Europe's Orphan*. The EU encouraged the idea that a French or German citizen could be, above all, a citizen of Europe.

The World Trade Organization began operation in 1995, purporting to take the resolution of trade disputes out of the hands of individual countries and set limits not only on quotas and tariffs, but on government intervention to boost industries and exports. In 2001, with strong American support, China was invited into the new organization. On the European continent, the EU incorporated states that had been behind the Iron Curtain, and NATO expanded up to Russia's borders. And a new generation of multinational corporations and banks, untethered to particular countries, spanned the globe. When ExxonMobil CEO Lee Raymond was asked whether he planned to build more American oil refineries, he responded, "I am not a U.S. company and I don't make decisions based on what is good for the U.S."

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During this period, both the United States and Europe opened their borders wide to immigrants and refugees. George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton increased the annual entrants and included new groups of "guest workers." The European Union created open borders within it and welcomed refugees from the Balkans and later from the Middle East and Africa. When ten new countries (including eight from Eastern Europe) were admitted to the EU in 2004, the British, Swedes, and Irish waived the seven-year transition period before migrants from these countries could freely come to theirs to work.

Prominent thinkers and policymakers in the United States and Europe began to espouse a version of cosmopolitan democracy that promoted the transcendence and even abandonment of national loyalties. Mary Kaldor, David Held, and Daniele Archibugi advanced the notion of "cosmopolitan democracy." Held argued that the sovereign nation-state "would, in due course, wither away." Columbia University political scientist Saskia Sassen heralded a new "post-national and denationalized citizenship." Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor promoted the idea of "world sovereignty."

But a series of events disrupted the growing consensus around these new international and regional organizations and cut short the musings about world sovereignty. Russia predictably took offense at NATO enlargement. China became a regional military power with ambitions in the South China Sea and a global economic power capable of gaming the international trade and monetary system. Millions of jobs in the United States and Europe were lost to Chinese imports, some of which were from American, Japanese, and European companies that had relocated or outsourced their production from there

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in search of cheap labor costs. Illegal and legal immigration exploded in the United States and Europe; always something of an issue, it became fused in the public mind with Islamist terrorist attacks. Wars broke out in the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa—the result in part of American and European attempts to extend their sway over these regions—that brought millions of new asylum-seekers to Europe and the United States. The Great Recession of 2008 gave the lie to the promise of prosperity in Europe and the United States.

Together, these developments created new winners and losers in the international economy, new challenges to world peace, and new fears and resentments. They reawakened nationalist sentiments and antipathies that had lain dormant for decades. New politicians and parties have emerged that appealed to these sentiments. They included the Tea Party and the candidacy of Donald Trump in the United States; the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which led the vote for the UK to leave the European Union; populist parties in France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Italy, Austria, and even in Germany; nationalist parties in Hungary and Poland that have defied the dictates of the European Union on immigration and liberal democracy; and the resurgence of Russian nationalism under Vladimir Putin.

Liberals in the United States and social and Christian democrats in Europe have condemned many of these nationalist parties and politicians. They have portrayed them, as *The New York Times*' Interpreter does, as echoes of fascism and Nazism, or, in the United States, as the heir of Ku Klux Klan–style white supremacy. To be sure, many of these parties and politicians are deeply reactionary. They have exploited nationalist sentiments

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to cripple political opponents and in the process undermine democratic institutions. They have demonized outgroups like Europe's Muslims or America's Hispanic immigrants and have fomented conflict with other nations. But in simply condemning these nationalist politicians and parties, cosmopolitan critics have ignored, or even scorned, the underlying sentiments to which these politicians and parties have appealed, and have failed to address the circumstances that have provoked these sentiments. They have ignored the degree to which the rise of these groups signals the breakdown of an old order that cannot simply be reaffirmed, but needs to be reconstructed.

Politics is driven by complementarity. The political right from Edmund Burke to Ronald Reagan, as political scientist Corey Robin has argued, arose in opposition to the historic egalitarianism of liberals and the left. Similarly, the right wing nationalism of Donald Trump or Hungary's Viktor Orban or Germany's AfD is a backlash to the cosmopolitanism and globalism of American and European liberals. These politicians and parties did not, of course, come out of nowhere. The Tea Party preceded Trump, Pegida was a precursor of the AfD, and Orban is in many ways a throwback to the Communist Janos Kadar or even Miklos Horthy regimes. But their successes and (in the case of Trump and Orban) triumphs were in many respects a rejection of the excesses and failures of their liberal cosmopolitan rivals.

I intend this as a book of analysis, not advocacy. But I'll say a little about how I come to this subject of nationalism. I am of the same generation as Donald Trump. I grew up at a time when if you went into a store to buy something, you looked for the label "Made in the USA"—not out of patriotism, but out of the

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conviction that America made the best shirts, cameras, and cars. Trump's father was in real estate in New York. Mine manufactured dresses in Elgin, Illinois, until he went out of business in the 1950s and became a salesman. It was a shock to me, and to many in my generation, when American products seemed to vanish from stores and showrooms, replaced by televisions from Japan or South Korea and shirts and suits from Southeast Asia, and when the great cities of the Midwest declined as manufacturing moved south or abroad.

I was not bothered that American companies no longer dominated the market for T-shirts or toys, but I did worry that Americans had to buy flat-panel displays from overseas or that American auto companies seemed in an unseemly rush to move their plants to Mexico. I became sympathetic in the 1980s to politicians like Dick Gephardt or David Bonior, who railed against unfair trade practices and runaway shops. In 1995, Michael Lind and I wrote a manifesto for the *New Republic* entitled "For a New Nationalism," where we warned against a politics increasingly shaped by private interests. Political scientist Ruy Teixeira and I organized a luncheon salon, which we called the "new synthesis group," and which we hoped would lay the basis for a new political tendency in the Democratic Party that would embrace an economic nationalism rather than the free-trade let-her-rip globalization that Clinton Democrats and Newt Gingrich Republicans espoused.

None of that came to pass as we had hoped. In 2002, Teixeira and I published a book, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, in which we predicted that by the decade's end, the Democrats would have created a majority based on support from women, professionals, and minorities, along with about 40 percent of the

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old pro-New Deal white working class. We described the majority's politics as "progressive centrism," which we envisaged as an extension of Bill Clinton's New Democratic views. We were right about the Democrats' centrist politics and about the composition of the majority that would win Congress in 2006 and the White House in 2008. What we didn't anticipate was what happened next: the massive migration of white middle and working class voters to the Republicans, which underlay Republican Congressional successes and Donald Trump's victory in 2016.

I first encountered Trump at a rally in New Hampshire in August 2015, twenty years after Lind and I had published our manifesto. Trump's pitch was a mix of incendiary nativism about Mexicans and Muslims, tirades against Jeb Bush and Obama, and wacky foreign policy pronouncements ("We should have taken Iraq's oil!") with a ringing critique of footloose corporations and of trade deals that had screwed American workers. Economic nationalism had suddenly re-emerged, but as part of a right wing populist appeal. And Trump's views of trade and corporate America remained central themes in his campaign and important to his success in Midwestern and Southern towns that had been decimated by the loss of manufacturing jobs. For me, Trump's victory bore out the old adage, "Be careful what you wish for, you might get it."

If this book has an underlying political agenda, it is to identify and reclaim what is valid in nationalism—and of the liberal internationalism of the post-World War II generation—from both the cosmopolitan liberals who believe in a borderless world and from the right wing populists who have coupled a concern for their nation's workers with nativist screeds against outgroups and immigrants.

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Why Nationalism Matters

Here are three anecdotes in search of an analysis:

When I was on tour to promote my book on populism, a member of the audience reproached me: "I don't understand why you are criticizing free trade," she said. "It has raised the standard of living of many people around the world." Before I could measure my words, I replied: "I don't give a damn about people around the world."

Several years before that, a German friend began telling me how upset his mother had been to see people in Berlin hanging Turkish flags outside the windows of their apartments to show support for Turkey's team in the European football championships. Though a devoted internationalist like many Germans of his generation, he agreed with his mother, but didn't want to say so outright.

When I was in Tokyo, a prominent Japanese intellectual took me out for sushi. When I told him that I had a favorite sushi restaurant back home, he complained about how Koreans were

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opening up restaurants in the United States that claimed to serve Japanese food.

Many people today, whatever their considered convictions or political ideology, are nationalists in their hearts. It can come out when they are grouchy and tired, as I was on my book tour, or in response to an innocuous sporting event or the ownership of a sushi bar. But it's there.

Nationalism provides a framework—often unacknowledged—for our politics, expressed most clearly in the question of whether a policy is in the national interest. And in special circumstances, it can rise to the level of an explicit political ideology, as it has today in the United States, Europe, and parts of Asia: "America First" for Trump, "France First" for the National Front, "Italians First" for the Italy's League Party, and "Russia for [ethnic] Russians" for the anti-immigrant DNPI. To understand the deep attraction of these ideological challenges and to assess whether they are constructive or destructive, progressive or reactionary, you have to understand the sentiments on which they are based.

Origins of Nationalism

The German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder is credited with introducing the term "nationalism" in a work published in 1774. It didn't become a staple of political vernacular until well into the nineteenth century. But the key ingredient of what came to be called nationalism appeared much earlier: loyalty to a group larger than oneself. It resembles the loyalty felt within a biological family. The terms by which nations are described (in English, "homeland," "fatherland," "motherland," of which there

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are cognates like the German "Heimat" and the French "patrie") suggest the nation is an extension of the family.

Of course, a nation is not literally a family, but nevertheless there is a strong emotional tie that asserts itself. Group solidarity was indeed initially based on the survival of kinship groups that displayed loyalty. Azar Gat, a political scientist at Tel Aviv University, and author of *Nations*, writes that, "as Darwin himself suggested, under conditions of intense competition, a group which was biologically endowed with greater solidarity and with individual willingness to sacrifice for the group would defeat less cohesive groups." Gat sees a progression from these smaller kinship groups that can take the form of clans or tribes to what he calls an "ethnos"—"a population of shared kinship (real or perceived) and culture"—to a "people" that share a common understanding of their "identity history and fate"—to a "nation" in which a people become politically sovereign. He presumes that the features of loyalty, solidarity, and reciprocity that originated earlier in history are preserved in this progression and give cohesion to the larger group of the nation.

Moreover, to join, and be part of, a group is in effect to cede part of oneself. That can bolster an individual's self-esteem. When the group succeeds, so do its members. On a trivial level, one sees this among sports fans (i.e., fanatics). When the team wins, the fans win. Citizenship in a nation can have the same uplifting effect. Identification with a nation can deflect an abiding fear of mortality. Even if the individual is mortal, the nation itself is not. In his *Addresses to the German Nation,* one of the seminal texts of German nationalism, Johann Gottlieb Fichte writes of the "noble-minded man":

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> Life merely as such, the mere continuance of changing existence, has in any case never had any value for him; he has wished for it only as the source of what is permanent. But this permanence is promised to him only by the continuous and independent existence of his nation. In order to save his nation he must be ready even to die that it may live, and that he may live in it the only life for which he has ever wished.

Almost two centuries later, British Labour leader Neil Kinnock would express similar sentiment: "I would die for my country, but I would never let my country die for me." In *The Worm at the Core,* psychologists Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, and Tom Pyszczynski write, "People also gain a sense of symbolic immortality from feeling that they are part of a heroic cause or a nation that will endure indefinitely." In *The Psychology of Nationalism*, psychologist Joshua Searle-White sums up the appeal of nationalism: "Nationalism provides us with a way…to feel moral, right, and just. It gives us a way to join with others in a heroic struggle. It gives a sense of purpose and meaning to our lives, and even to our deaths."

Learning Nationalism

During childhood, people today acquire a fear of death and a desire for social approbation, but the question is how these become linked to nationalism. Threats from other peoples and countries can always be important—and lead to the historical development of nationalism—but in everyday life, a significant role, according to British psychologist Michael Billig, is played

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by what he calls "banal nationalism." National pride and loyalty are inculcated through the routine details of living and learning. These include learning of a country's history and heroes, filtered through a rosy prism, visiting its monuments, taking part in its celebrations and holidays, saluting its flag, singing its national anthem, and referring to the nation's inhabitants as "we" and "us."

For many people, the most important gateway to nationalist sentiment is through religious belief and observance. Nationalism's promise of transcending the self dovetails with the promise of many religions of evading the fear of death. Christianity, Islam, and other world religions address the hope of escaping personal mortality and powerlessness through identification with a larger group and a higher power. In some countries like Iran and Israel, nationalism is inextricably bound up with a religion. In other countries like Turkey and India, the ruling political parties have identified the national culture with a religion.

Even professedly secular nations continue to frame their objectives, and the substance of their nationalism, in terms borrowed from their countries' religious history. They have re-adapted religious customs, holy days, martyrs, sacred texts, and monuments. Americans say the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning of the school day, celebrate presidents' birthdays, and revere the Constitution. Fallen heroes like Joan of Arc and Martin Luther King, Jr., are celebrated. America's Memorial Day and Australia's Remembrance Day signify the transcendence of the self by the nation, as do monuments like France's Arc de Triomphe and London's Cenotaph.

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Political scientist Anthony Smith describes the modern nation as "a sacred communion of citizens." He writes, "Investing 'our' homeland with special qualities, and regarding it with reverence and awe, as the birthplace of the nation or the resting-place of its heroes and ancestors, is to continue in secular form the pre-modern practice of hallowing historic places and marking off sacred ancestral territories." Religion, Smith concludes, "far from being squeezed out of the frame of a secularizing modernity, re-emerges within it in new guises. Its legacies are not buried and forgotten, rather they are transmuted in and by nationalism."

Modern Nationalism

There is a heated debate among the social scientists who study nationalism about when nations and nationalism originated. Traditionalists like Azar Gat or Anthony Smith believe that you can find nations and nationalism as far back as ancient Egypt, Judah, China's Song Dynasty, or in pre-capitalist Poland, Hungary, France, and Japan. These were nations, according to the traditionalists, that commanded the loyalty of their peoples, as best evidenced in wars. The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga made a strong case for the emergence of nationalism during the Middle Ages.

Modernists like Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, or Ernest Gellner usually date the first nations and instances of nationalism from the French Revolution. (Liah Greenfeld puts the beginnings in Tudor England.) Modernists see the development of print literacy, capitalism, and popular sovereignty as necessary conditions of nationhood. The nation, Hobsbawm writes in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, is a "novelty." Some

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of this debate is purely semantic.* But if you strip away the nomenclature, there is a way of reconciling much of what is true in both approaches.

While the traditionalists are right that there were nations and nationalist sentiment before 1789, a significant change in the nature of both takes place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The result is the elevation in importance of nationalist sentiment and the development of a comprehensive nationalist politics and ideology.

In highly stratified and dispersed feudal Europe or Japan, nationalism primarily emerged when a foreign enemy was at the gates. Early Japanese nationalism was spurred by an abortive Mongol invasion, Chinese incursions, and the appearance of Christian missionaries and Western traders. Gat describes nationalism during these wars:

> In times of national emergency the elites did not hesitate to appeal to and arouse the masses' latent national sentiments, even if their socioeconomic interests differed

* Just as with other political and historical terms (e.g., populism, liberalism, society, people), the terms "nation" and "nationalism" cannot be subject to scientific standards of definition without artificially limiting the scope of analysis and without coming up with conclusions that defy common sense and ordinary usage. For instance, Walker Connor, a highly regarded political scientist who specialized in the study of nationalism, defined a "nation" as "the largest group that shares a sense of common ancestry." ("The Timelessness of Nations," *Nations and Nationalism*, 10, 2004.) By this definition, he acknowledged, there was a Basque, Polish, and Welsh nation, but not a British, American, or Indian nation. That will make the Basques happy, I'm sure, but will bewilder Americans. My own approach is to use the terms as popularly understood, and on that basis to look backward in history to find how the sentiments and beliefs associated with what people call nations or nationalism originated. A degree of inexactitude is unavoidable.

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and the nobles' token willingness to take up the peasants' cause scarcely survived the time of emergency.

Outside of national emergencies, national loyalty in these countries lay dormant and was subordinated to that of family, kin, village, parish, fief, or domain. That began to change, however, with the spread of print literacy; the replacement of feudalism with capitalism; the political revolutions in England, the United States, and France; the unification of Germany and Italy; and the challenge of Western imperialism in East Asia.

Literacy created the possibility for a popular politics and a broadly accepted ideology of nationalism. In Europe and the United States, Protestantism challenged religious and social hierarchy. Capitalism undermined feudal hierarchy, and it centralized production and people in towns and cities, where they could exert their influence *en masse*. Political revolutions destroyed the power of the monarchy and nobility. Popular sovereignty didn't necessarily require democracy, only the possibility of citizens massing in protest against a national administration, as they did in Europe in 1830 and 1848. Gat writes, "Two complementary processes were at work fueling the age of nationalism: mass society and popular sovereignty greatly enhanced national cohesion and the people's stake in the nation; and by the same token they opened the door and enabled the expression of long-held popular nationalistic sentiments."

Ernest Gellner argues that by destroying local institutions and hierarchies, industrial capitalism created a singular, direct relationship between the individual and the nation. "There is very little in the way of any effective, binding organization at any

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level between the individual and the total community," Gellner writes. "The *nation* is now supremely important, thanks to the erosion of subgroupings and the vastly increased importance of a shared literary-dependent culture." As a result, Gellner argues, nationalist sentiment assumed an importance that it had lacked in pre-capitalist societies.

The diminishment of these institutions has continued well past the heyday of industrial capitalism. Modern capitalism's divorce of production from the family—as described in Eli Zaretsky's *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life*—and the challenge to the traditional family from new sexual norms weakened a key institution that allowed individuals to transcend their isolation. Science's conflict with religion dealt another blow to an important source of group identity. The emergence of globalization in the 1970s has undermined the labor union and the locally owned factory and business and the community they sustained. Finding themselves at the mercy of currency flows, footloose multinational corporations, and migrant flows, and afflicted by anomie and a sense of powerlessness—the individual has little recourse except the nation.

Nationalism as a Framework

Nationalism provides a framework within which citizens and their governments deliberate about what to do—and justify what they have done. Citizens debate whether a policy is in the "national interest." Even debates over globalization or free trade will usually be waged on this terrain. In January 2017, in response to attacks by Trump and his aides on "globalists," *Forbes* ran a column entitled "Globalization Has Done a Lot of Great Things for Americans."

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This approach is not hardwired into people's brains, but learned; it can also be rejected, and has been, particularly during the 1990s, the heyday of globalization. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas advocated a "post-national constellation." Ulrich Beck urged "a politics of post-nationalism" in which "the cosmopolitan project contradicts and replaces the nation-state project." Martha Nussbaum urged Americans to pledge allegiance to a common humanity. "They are, above all, citizens of a world of human beings, and that while they happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world with the citizens of other countries."

Indeed, some policymakers and governments have championed policies like the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions on the grounds that doing so would help the planet avoid a climatological catastrophe, but in these cases, government officials can also argue that their nation would benefit. There are, however, some circumstances in which a government might adopt policies that would affect their citizens somewhat adversely in order to aid another country that is facing a natural disaster. And even when undertaking policies that they deem in the national interest, policymakers will take into account their effect on other countries, and try, especially if they are friends or allies, to limit any adverse consequence.

But in the great majority of challenges a country faces, public officials and citizens will look primarily to what they believe is in their nation's best interests. Oxford political scientist David Miller writes, "In acknowledging a national identity, I am also acknowledging that I owe special obligations to fellow members of my nation that I do not owe to other human beings."

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Some advocates of cosmopolitanism reject this outlook on ethical grounds. In criticizing Democratic Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders for rejecting a policy of "open borders," journalist Dylan Matthews argued that Sanders "is obligated to weigh the interests of a poor potential Nigerian immigrant equally to those of a much richer native-born American. I think if he saw an immigrant drowning in a pond, he has just as much of a duty to rescue her as he would if she were a native-born American." Should Americans display as much concern about Bolivians or Uzbeks as they do about their own citizenry? Maybe they should do so in some ideal world, but they simply don't. Questions about what a nation should or should not do are inevitably grounded in an existing common framework of concern.

At a similar time of global reach in the late nineteenth century, British moral philosopher Henry Sidgwick made exactly this point. The "cosmopolitan ideal," Sidgwick wrote, is "the ideal of the future" but it now "allows too little for the national and patriotic sentiments which have in any case to be reckoned with as an actually powerful political force, and which appears to be at present indispensable to social well-being. We cannot yet hope to substitute for these sentiments in sufficient diffusion and intensity, the wider sentiment connected with the conception of our common humanity."

Nationalism and the Modern State

In modern nations, the loyalty and solidarity expressed by the pronoun "we" underpins key institutions and practices. Nationalist sentiment underlies the public commitment to upholding the results of elections and to adhering to laws without coercion. Writes David Miller, "Where the citizens of a state are

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also compatriots, the mutual trust that this engenders makes it more likely that they will be able to solve collective action problems, to support redistributive principles of justice, and to practice deliberative forms of democracy." When there isn't such a common nationalist sentiment, either because of civil disorder or because of the existence of rival nationalisms, as in pre-Civil War America or Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, and Spain today, the country becomes difficult or impossible to govern.

Nationalist sentiment underlies the acceptance or rejection of the welfare state. The modern welfare state has been built upon shared nationalist sentiments. Governments had to secure citizens' commitment to pay taxes to help their fellow citizens when they became sick or disabled, too old to work, or lost their job and couldn't quickly find another one. Citizens had to be able to identify themselves with the fate—"it could happen to me"—of other citizens they did not know. (This is what Benedict Anderson meant by calling a nation an "imagined community.") This willingness to identify with others assumed that their fellow citizens who received this aid conformed to certain cultural norms: that, for instance, they were or had been willing to work; that if they were immigrants, that they had entered the country legally and were committed to staying and working and that in extreme circumstances, they would fight to defend the nation. They had to believe that the others shared the same nationalist sentiments—that they could be included in the use of the plural pronoun "we."

When this trust and feeling of reciprocity has broken down, then support for the welfare state has dissipated, as it did in the United States, amidst suspicion of what Ronald Reagan called "welfare queens," and in Europe, as suspicion has arisen that

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immigrants or refugees are free riders or "welfare tourists." At its extreme, it can be the basis for social exclusion of groups like Jews, Muslims, or Roma that are not deemed to be a trusted part of the nation.

In other words, nationalist sentiments can be the basis of social generosity or of bigoted exclusion. Nationalism is an essential ingredient of political democracies; but it can also be the basis for fascist and authoritarian regimes. What direction these sentiments take depends very much on the interplay between historical circumstances and the appeals that a country's parties, politicians, and officials make. Take the most extreme example of Hitler's Germany. Nazism is often portrayed as an inevitable outgrowth of German nationalism, but it did not have to be that way.

German nationalism was composed of the following: German Pietism, which emphasized feeling over reason, and came to identify the nation as the embodiment of Christianity and of Christianity's promise of eternal life; German romanticism, which in the works of G. W. F. Hegel or Friedrich Schlegel, saw the nation as an organic whole and the individual as a mere fragment who lived through it and through the state; and the Prussian quest for power through the unification of the principalities into a powerful state. These three strains came together in Prussian-led Wilhelmine Germany. They were reflected in the rise of German Social Democracy (which advocated a socialist state) *and* later in the rise of Nazism and still later in Germany's post-World War II solidaristic mix of Christian and Social Democracy.

There was no unbreakable chain that connected early German nationalism to Nazism. The triumph of Nazism in the

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1930s required, among other things, German defeat in World War I, the punitive terms of the Versailles settlement after the war, the specter of Bolshevism and the split in the Second International, the incomprehension of American, British, and French finance officials during the 1920s, and the utter failure of an embattled Weimar democracy. In short, nationalist sentiments do not necessarily lead rightward or leftward. They can shape the kind of government, but their ultimate disposition depends on a host of historical circumstances.

Nationalism as an Explicit Ideology

Since World War II, politicians, parties, and public officials have relied on the framework of nationalist sentiment to justify their initiatives, but they usually haven't specifically invoked nationalism to distinguish themselves from other politicians or parties. They haven't suggested that they alone represent the national interest and that their political opponents' commitments to the nation are equivocal. They haven't run on an explicit doctrine or ideology of nationalism. A politics based on this kind of an explicit appeal usually emerges only during times of social disorder—in the United States on the eve of the Civil War or in Europe between the two world wars or in countries in the throes of revolution. But this kind of explicit nationalist politics has resurfaced in Europe and the United States during the last decade.

There are at least three different kinds of explicit nationalist appeals. The first is intended to unite the nation against a foreign foe or a colonial power. This can occur during war or during conflicts over trade and territory or even over perceived wrongs from the past. What distinguishes these kinds of appeals is that they seek to unite an entire nation. The second

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kind of appeal attempts to unite a prototypical nation (such as "real Americans" or "true Poles") against an internal foe that is seen to threaten the nation's cohesion and integrity. Such foes can range from a monarch or an elite (who are seen either to represent only themselves or even a foreign interest) to an underclass or an outgroup or a secessionist movement. The third kind of appeal, which is characteristic of secessionist movements, seeks to unite a part of a nation, defined usually by a common territory and culture, against what has been a host nation. The Catalan appeal for secession against Spain or the Scottish appeal for independence takes this form.

The first and second of these nationalist appeals often occur together. Trump has railed against China and Mexico for their trade practices *and* against illegal immigrants and has proposed to ban visitors and immigrants from Muslim countries. Poland's government has attacked Brussels (the headquarters of the EU) and has contrasted "true Poles," who support its agenda, with "Poles of the worst kind." The Hungarian government complains of intervention from Brussels but also from Hungarian native and American citizen George Soros and his allies in Budapest.

This kind of explicit nationalism can appear on the political right or the left. It is often associated with the extreme right of Germany's Hitler, Italy's Benito Mussolini, Spain's Francisco Franco, the Southern Confederacy and the Ku Klux Klan. But nationalism was also central to the French revolutionaries of 1789, the North in the American Civil War, the national liberation movements of the twentieth century, and to Britain's resistance to the Nazi onslaught during its "finest hour." Sociologist Craig Calhoun writes in *Nations Matter*:

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> From the eighteenth-century revolutions, to the nineteenth-century "Springtime of the Peoples," to mid-twentieth-century post-colonial independence movements, nationalism has often been closely linked to the pursuit of greater self-government.

Whether on the left or right, most explicit nationalist movements and parties, and most nations during war or revolution, can display the strengths but also the significant weaknesses of group solidarity. By ceding their individuality to a larger group that defines itself as the nation, the members of a movement or party or of citizens in war relinquish their moral judgment and intelligence to the group, and most often to the group's charismatic leader. They become susceptible to suggestion and can come to believe things that they would ordinarily reject. They become capable of great courage and sacrifice on behalf of ends both noble and ignoble. They can display exceptional generosity and kindness or wanton cruelty and vindictiveness.

In the wake of World War I, Sigmund Freud, writing in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, described the psychology of groups ("Massenpsychologie" might be more accurately rendered as the psychology of "masses" or "crowds" or even "mobs") in a way that applies to some explicit nationalist movements:

> When individuals come together as a group all their individual inhibitions fall away and all the cruel, brutal, and destructive instincts, which lie dormant in individuals... are stirred up to find free gratification. But under the

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> influence of suggestion, groups are also capable of high achievement in the shape of abnegation, unselfishness, and devotion to an ideal. While with isolated individuals, personal interest is almost the only motive force, with groups it is very rarely prominent....Whereas the intellectual capacity of a group is always far below that of an individual, its ethical conduct may rise as high above it as it may sink below it.

A critical intelligence is often the first casualty of war, revolution, and impassioned nationalist appeals. Right wing nationalists have often based their appeals on exaggerated threats (for instance, of Mexican rapists) or wild conspiracy theories, but in wartime, the center and left often exploit the credulity of their followers. During the first Gulf War, fought to prevent a large country from absorbing its small neighbor, many liberals as well as conservatives believed that Iraqi soldiers were taking Kuwaiti babies out of incubators and leaving them to die.

Nationalist movements on the right have often advocated violence against their domestic as well as foreign adversaries. They have sought to constrict rather than expand democracy. But there is also a disturbing trajectory on the left: a long history of parties and movements—from France's Jacobins to Russia's Bolsheviks to the national liberation movements after World War II—that have begun with a promise of democracy only to embrace tyranny and even terror. In other words, there is a danger endemic to explicit nationalist movements on the right or the left. Even those that promise liberation often end up promoting oppression. It's not an historical aberration, but is rooted in the psychological nature of explicit nationalist appeals.

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Causes of the Nationalist Revival

The conditions that have made today's citizenry in the United States and Europe susceptible to explicit nationalist appeals go back to changes in Western capitalism and politics that began at least in the 1970s and to the big push toward a globalized politics and economics that began in the 1990s. What made many citizens in the United States and Europe receptive to nationalist appeals is a perception that they and by extension their nations were in decline. More broadly, it is a perception that their—and by extension their nations'—*way of life* was threatened. Many of these citizens were victims of the uneven development of the post-industrial global capitalism that had taken hold in the 1970s and reached a denouement during the Great Recession.

While metro areas populated by the highly educated have prospered, towns that had depended on manufacturing and mining have gone into disrepair. Factory and related business closings created what British political scientists Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin have called the "left-behinds" who see themselves falling behind in comparison to their compatriots. They blame trade, immigration, Brussels, and Washington for their fate. Some liberal political scientists have insisted there is no economic basis for right wing nationalist or populist politics, but the key consideration is not whether a particular area is well or poorly off in absolute terms, but whether it has experienced decline and whether its inhabitants feel themselves significantly less well off than people elsewhere in their countries.

There have been several studies of the Brexit vote in 2016. By comparing voting patterns with economic figures, Yann Algan, Pierre Cahuc, and Marc Sagnier found that "*increases* in

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unemployment during the crisis period 2007–2015 (rather than the level of unemployment in 2015) are strong predictors of Brexit vote." Economists Sascha O. Becker, Thiemo Fetzer, and Dennis Novy reached similar conclusions in analyzing the Brexit vote by voting district. They found the vote to leave the EU was strongly correlated with areas that had once had strong manufacturing employment, but now suffered from low pay, rising unemployment, and declining public services. In Germany, the heart of the AfD's support is in former East Germany. Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, two states where the AfD is particularly strong, have only a little more than half the per capita income of Munich's Bavaria or Frankfurt's Hesse. Austria's Freedom Party, Hungary's Fidesz, and Poland's Law and Justice all have their strongest support outside the more prosperous metro centers of Vienna, Budapest, and Warsaw.

Economic decline is often accompanied by a decline in the social network of unions, bars, and social clubs. In *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in the Age of Immigration and Inequality*, political scientist Justin Gest describes the politics of two East London boroughs, Dagenham and Barking, that used to house a huge Ford plant that had radically downsized from a peak of 40,000 to 2,000 employees, leaving many of the original inhabitants without work. The social fabric of these boroughs, based on unions and pubs, has deteriorated. Gest writes, "Pubs are endangered in Barking and Dagenham today. Their primary consumers, white working class men and women, have less and less disposable income. With the loss of basic warehouse and manufacturing work, they can no longer afford to spend precious pence on pints at the pub, let alone tickets to local football matches."

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The perception of economic and social decline was often linked to a perception of moral decline. This was seen to result from challenges to the family and church perceived to be caused by feminists and secularists, and by the jarring customs of immigrants. Gest quotes a letter that a member of the Barking-Dagenham tenant association wrote to British Prime Minister David Cameron in 2012:

> We used to be a very close community but over the last 15+ years this has changed so much and certainly not for the better. It would seem that immigrants from all over the world are encouraged to come to our borough to live, thus driving out the indigenous community one by one until now we have the situation where we are in the minority in a place we have lived for most of our lives.... The recent arrivals are only interested in their own cultures and, to a large degree, this is being encouraged by all the services created especially for them at great financial cost, while we sit on the sidelines and watch all this; we watch our elderly being frightened to go out because if they get on a bus they are likely to be the only person speaking English.

These citizens, like those in North Carolina towns that until very recently were centers of furniture manufacturing, or in northern French towns decimated by the loss of manufacturing and mining jobs, have felt left behind by post-industrial capitalism and by the libertarian, secular, and cosmopolitan culture of New York, San Francisco, London, Copenhagen, and Paris. They became prime candidates for an explicit

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nationalist appeal that would reaffirm their social identity and combat their own feelings of social isolation and political powerlessness.

In the United States, what made that group immediately susceptible to nationalist appeals was anger over trade deals that seemed to favor foreigners over the United States, a massive influx of legal and illegal immigration that appeared to take away jobs and raise social costs, and the onset of Islamist terror attacks to which they believed porous borders had made them vulnerable. In Europe, there was a similar mix, but the economic resentment was more focused on austerity promoted by the European Union than on trade deals. In both the United States and Europe, the fear and resentment over immigration, fused with a fear of Islamist terrorism, loomed as the single greatest precipitant of the new nationalism. Today's conservative nationalism is a complex of attitudes and sentiments about economic, social, and moral decline—a fear that one's way of life is under attack—that has been catalyzed into a nationalist politics by the economic, social, and moral issue of immigration.

After the UK voted to leave the European Union, a British polling group did a survey to determine what had motived the vote to leave and constructed a "word cloud" to represent the prominence of the different responses they got. Immigration was clearly number one. In April 2018, YouGov asked citizens from eleven EU countries what issues were the most important to them. Immigration was number one in all except for Spain and Poland. Terrorism was number two in all except for Spain and Poland (it was number one in Poland). Trump's vote in 2016,

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the successes of Le Pen's Front National, Orban's Fidesz Party in Hungary, Germany's AfD, and the League in Italy were clearly attributable to social anxiety over immigration and terrorism underlain by a perception of economic and moral decline. They were the proximate cause of the rise of the nationalist right.

Nationalists and Cosmopolitans

There is a key political division in the United States and Europe that is not between left and right or Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, but between what British author David Goodhart, analyzing the Brexit vote, calls "somewheres" and "anywheres." Somewheres usually live in small or mid-sized towns that were once centers of manufacturing or mining. They have an identity rooted in home, family, and nation—in the United States, often in faith and religion as well. They used to have multiple identities in union, company, and community, and used to be optimistic about their future, but are no longer. And they see their nation's well-being, standing, and social integrity being threatened by foreign trade, unscrupulous financiers, and above all mass immigration. Goodhart notes, "For several years now more than half of British people have agreed with this statement (and similar ones): 'Britain has changed in recent times beyond recognition, it sometimes feels like a foreign country and this makes me feel uncomfortable,'" One would find similar sentiments among Americans outside the big metro areas.

I don't know whether "anywheres" is the best term for the opposing outlook. The people Goodhart identifies as "anywheres"—young college graduates, professionals, people who live in one of the great thriving metro centers or upper tier

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college towns—wouldn't necessarily live *anywhere*. They would be comfortable in any of the other great metro centers, including Paris, New York, London, and Berlin, but don't send them to Buffalo or Calais or Magdeburg. "Cosmopolitans" might be a better term for them.

They have multiple identities, including a profession (with membership in professional associations) and a firm, a practice, or a university (in whose future they have a stake). They welcome immigrants, who often serve as maids, nannies, landscapers, roofers, cabdrivers, orderlies, home care aides, and waiters. They are not bothered by factory closings, which they see as the price of progress. They are not anti-nationalist, or unpatriotic. They would go to war if the country was attacked. They are proud to be American or French or British (or English), but unlike the somewheres, they don't depend primarily or even significantly for their self-approbation and esteem on *that* identity. It's not necessarily their hedge against individual mortality or anomie.

Anywheres, Goodhart writes, "have portable 'achieved' identities, based on educational and career success which makes them generally comfortable and confident with new places and people. Somewheres are more rooted and usually have 'ascribed' identities—Scottish farmer, working class Geordie, Cornish housewife—based on group belonging and particular places, which is why they often find rapid change more unsettling." The United States and Europe are rife with division between these two groups. The somewheres—who coincide roughly with the "left-behinds" of post-industrial capitalism in the U.S. and Europe—have provided the base of the explicit nationalist movements and parties. They voted for Brexit and Donald Trump and they cheer Victor Orban in Hungary or Marine Le Pen in France.

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The somewheres generally regard the anywheres as part of a global elite that is oblivious to them or, worse still, is trying to undermine their communities through shutting down their factories and mines and championing the influx of alien cultures. The anywheres—typified by a Wall Street, Frankfurt, or the City financier, a tenured professor from Oxford, Columbia, or Sciences Po, or a computer executive from Silicon Valley with multiple "achieved" identities—regard the somewheres as racists or misogynists or authoritarians who hearken to the Hitlers of history. The question for the future of politics in the U.S. and Europe is whether some kind of accommodation can be reached between these two very different political communities and sensibilities so that the worst excesses that can accompany explicit nationalism—the demagoguery, the rampant conspiratorializing, the scapegoating—can be marginalized. But for that to happen, the anywheres or cosmopolitans will have to exhibit greater understanding of what is driving many of their compatriots to support people like Trump and Orban.

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