

Kovács M. Mária – Petr Lom (eds.):
Studies on Nationalism from CEU.
Budapest: Nationalism Studies Program,
Central European University, 2004.¹

The Nationalism Studies Program at the Central European University in Budapest is a unique interdisciplinary program dedicated to the study of the phenomenon of nationalism in the region. Permanent staff and distinguished international scholars from various disciplines – political theory, sociology, anthropology, history, and law – study nationalism from a diverse array of perspectives. For this collection, we asked all our faculty to contribute a representative sample of their current work. We have also included the best submissions in an essay competition open to students of the Nationalism Program since its inception.

The Nationalism Studies Program was established to study nations and nationalism following the momentous transformations of 1989–1990. The ensuing calls for democratic legitimacy, the redrawing of many borders and the establishment of new states, and the claims for recognition and political self-determination following them, brought to the fore a whole set of scholarly and practical concerns. The first of these concerns the claims of minorities. This collection begins with three articles dedicated to this subject, authored by Will Kymlicka (perhaps the most widely known scholar in this field, currently at Queen's University in Canada), Panayote Dimitras (Greek Helsinki Monitor), and Mária Kovács (Director of the CEU Nationalism Studies Program). Kymlicka compares debates about minority nationalism in North America with their analogues in Central Europe, and notes that while debates about national minorities in North America are framed in terms of justice-based claims and are now increasingly accepted as legitimate, such claims are resisted far more strongly in Central Europe. And

¹ Instead of a review we publish the introduction of the book, written by one of the editors: Petr Lom

rather than being posed in terms of justice, they are more often framed around security-based concerns, particularly in relation to the territorial integrity of existing nation states. Arguing for the paramount importance of shifting discussion and assessment of minority claims away from security to demands for justice, Kymlicka holds this as the only way to proceed if there is to be any progress on the resolution of such demands for recognition. Dimitras continues this theme of how minority nationalist claims are constructed, perceived, and debated, but he expresses greater caution about such demands for recognition. Writing about nationalism in the Balkans, he points to a 'minority-rights paradox': though minorities raise human and minority rights as the basis for their claims, such claims are not devoid of ulterior motives and so are subject to ensuing limitations. Indeed, minority organizations and the leaders who articulate their claims are very often driven primarily by ethno-national aspirations rather than by respect for civic rights. Nonetheless, like Kymlicka, Panayote argues that the way out of this paradox is not to refuse rights to minorities but rather to seek solutions that would overcome all coercive, restrictive, and hegemonic practices among both minorities and majorities, solutions that he claims need to be found in the liberal model of nation-building, one that seeks to reconcile nationalism with liberal pluralism and democracy. The third paper on this theme of minority claims – by Mária Kovács – explores a question that Panayote leaves aside: How might nationalist claims be reconciled, not only with liberal democratic pluralism but also with the territorial integrity of existing states? Through a comparison of the responses of the international community to contemporary transformation in the Former Yugoslavia with the similar strengthening of international norms for self-determination and minority protection that occurred under the League of Nations, Kovács indicates how the 'spiral of increasing normative commitments' has now led to increasing difficulties in the application of international norms. These first three papers thus point not only to the extraordinary complexity of the ethical assessment of national minority claims, but also to the equally difficult task of putting such normative conclusions into practice, especially when, as Mária Kovács indicates, competing normative principles point to different practical conclusions.

The next three papers, by Erica Benner (of the London School of Economics), G. M. Tamás (CEU), and Rogers Brubaker (UCLA), reflect upon nationalism from the perspectives of social and political theory. Here the focus is not upon minority nationalism, but rather assessment of nationalist

claims more broadly defined. Benner asks whether there are any general theoretical similarities underlying the protean phenomenon of nationalism, which seems to ally itself as easily with liberalism as with its illiberal opponents. She argues that the doctrine that may unite the broad spectrum of nationalisms is neither an account of the significance of pre-political cultural identities nor the democratic constitutional idea of popular sovereignty, but rather a simpler constitutive and ultimately geopolitical core doctrine: a call for continuous identity between rulers and subjects based upon the security concerns of modern sovereign states. Like Benner, Tamás sees considerations of power as fundamental to explanations of nationalism. However, unlike Benner, who links nationalism to state survival and sees the specific content of nationalism as by definition unspecified and so extraordinarily variable, Tamás holds that the power driving most contemporary nationalist claims has been entirely decoupled from ethical concerns and, at the extreme, has now become simply what he calls 'ethno-anarchism': purely a demand for power that rejects any form of accommodation or assimilation, but gives aliens the sole choice of leaving or dying. He argues that this form of nationalism is entirely different from liberal nationalism which, though itself rife with paradox in trying to combine the universal with the particular, primarily upheld a civic, political understanding of national belonging and so allowed for some kind of inclusion – at best accommodation, at worst assimilation – for minority groups. The third paper here, Rogers Brubakers' exegesis of Marcel Mauss on nationhood, serves as a further example of how theoretical reflection

– here social theory in contrast with the political philosophy to which Benner and Tamás refer – can illuminate the particular causes and processes underlying nationalism. Brubaker argues that Mauss's thought is not only a precursor of Ernest Gellner's explanation of nationalism as an objective form of social organization, but also provides a distinctively sociological account of the concept of 'nation', an objectivist, structuralist perspective that is particularly important in shifting attention from essentialist accounts of the phenomena based upon putatively shared cultural characteristics. All three papers challenge the common assumption that classical social and political theory has little to say about nations and nationalism, instead pointing to the richness and importance of the history of political and social thought for understanding the phenomenon.

Scholars of nationalism are not concerned only with questions of minority recognition and self-determination, nor only with explanations of the

causes of nationalism. Equally important is systematic reflection upon questions of identity: both how individual and group self-understanding and self-definition are related to the nation, and how such identities are now under transformation due to the tremendous political, social, and economic upheavals of the last two decades. These are the questions raised by Michael Stewart (University of London), Viktor Karady (CEU), Petr Lom (CEU), András Kovács (CEU), Tibor Frank (CEU), and Tibor Varády (CEU). Stewart, an anthropologist by training, explores how the Roma conceive of individual and collective memory, challenging the assumption that the Roma are a people without any conception of a collective past, a people who celebrate impermanence. He argues that the perceived absence of historical reflection among the Roma is due to the lack of any public space for expression of collective Roma memory, as well as the result of specific characteristics internal to Roma social life: first, particular mnemonic or narrative devices which constitute a way of living in an expansive non-durational 'present' that excludes expression of the past but does not obliterate the past itself – as much contemporary scholarly analysis maintains; and secondly, the perpetual perceived danger of the gadze, or non-Gypsies, who serve to sustain a collective memory of a past replete with fear and terror. Viktor Karady similarly examines the function of history in shaping identity, but he takes post-War Jewish–Hungarian collective identity for his subject matter. Karady points to the remarkable flexibility and malleability of collective identity, again challenging essentialist accounts of cultural identity – like both Erica Benner and Rogers Brubaker – but this time pointing to how collective self-identification is an existential strategy, a matter of choice shaped and dependent upon the vagaries of historical and socio-political exigency. The next paper is a theoretical reflection upon contemporary debate about European collective identity. Here, Petr Lom argues that discourse about such identity results from the legitimacy and stability needs of the ongoing development of the European Union, but runs into two difficulties. Thickly culturally dependant notions of European identity are by definition rejected as both dangerous and anachronistic. But purely political definitions of collective identity founded upon the principles of liberty and equality run squarely into the difficulty of trying to reconcile universal principles with the realities of particular bounded political entities, and leave a radically underdetermined account of identity because of its basis in individual liberty. András Kovács is similarly concerned with contemporary Europe and the discourse on the construction of collective identity, but he examines a more specific case: how Hungarian public opinion was per-

sueded to accept accession to NATO. He finds that such opinion was influenced by political factors as well as by elite opinion-makers who made significant links between NATO membership and more historically based beliefs; he also observes how such nationalistic appeals could equally be used to mobilize opinion for different ends, both for and against accession. Like András Kovács, Tibor Frank marshals suspicions about the use of historical appeals for different purposes, but he uses his criticism to challenge a specific Hungarian 'folk belief', that the nineteenth-century Hungarian statesman Lajos Kossuth learned English from the study of Shakespeare alone during his incarceration in 1837–1840. Instead, he demonstrates how this myth was created primarily to win the support of the English-speaking nations for Hungarian independence. The last faculty paper in this collection continues this line of critical unmasking, but focuses its attention upon challenging unquestioned assumptions in post-Communist Central Europe regarding postulated realities rather than actual facts: appeals to liberal democracy or progressivism without specifying its actual content, or perpetual discourse about transition to a market economy that impedes recognition of actual change.

Following these faculty contributions, we then include four student submissions. The first two of these papers (Kelemen and Todosijević) are quantitative sociological investigations of contemporary attitudes in Central Europe. Kelemen studies attitudes toward Roma and Jewish minorities in Hungary, showing how the representational structure of these attitudes is shaped around three main strategies: (i) assimilation, (ii) discrimination, and (iii) tolerance, as well as testing a theory that finds a systematic relation between various stages of national orientation and attitudinal strategies towards minorities. The second attitudinal study here, by Bojan Todosijević, looks at national attitudes in 1995 Yugoslavia, and finds a persistent correlation between collectivism and attachment to one's own national or ethnic group as well as an affinity between such attachment and ideological dimensions of militarism. The last two papers in our collection are theoretical reflections upon nationalism (Hajdinjak, Kafka). Hajdinjak offers a strident critique of the often made distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism and argues that ethnically self-defined nations can be formally and practically as inclusive as civically defined nations, and conversely, how civic nationalism is too often used to mask various forms of exclusion. Kafka similarly turns his attention to civically defined conceptions of nationalism, in this case to the republican model of inclusive political citizenship espoused by the Oxford scholar David

Miller. Kafka argues that such models offer inadequate mechanisms to accommodate the cultural differences of national minorities and so are unable to deliver upon their promises of inclusive justice and political stability. The sixteen papers collected here offer the reader a variety of methodological approaches, subject matters, normative diagnoses, and prescriptions. They should suffice to demonstrate not only the tremendous richness of the phenomenon of nationalism, but also how a synoptic understanding of nations and nationalism requires comprehensive interdisciplinary study.