Neither Civic nor Ethnic: Analyzing Right-Wing Politics Using a Theoretical Expansion of Kohn's "Dichotomy of Nationalism"

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Abstract

Comparative research looks for "ethnic nationalism" to classify a party as either "extreme right" or "radical right." "Ethnic nationalism" has turned into a common theoretical concept by way of various interpretations of Hans Kohn's work, developing a theoretical ethnic/civic contrast of national ideologies. The application of this dichotomy has been criticized for lack of theoretical depth that resulted in inaccurate analysis and, in some cases, harmful normative judgment. This article claims that this simple contrast between two types of national ideology omits complex theoretical views of nationalism that are neither civic nor ethnic, which are promoted mainly by the conservative right. By expanding Kohn's dichotomy into an "axis of ideological nationalism," it offers a normative theoretical tool to be used in comparative politics, paving the way for a more comprehensive model of right-wing national ideology.

Keywords

Ethnic nationalism; Civic nationalism; Culture and nationalism; Hans Kohn theory of nationalism; Radical right; Conservative right; Party families; Contagion to the right; Cordon Sanitaire

Introduction

Political parties on the far-right side are usually grouped together, establishing a party family referred to as "extreme" or "radical" and often identified by its ideology. This ideology is characterized by an exclusionary form of nationalism that sits at the far right's core, dictating its illiberal policy preferences and correlating with its supporters' authoritarian values (Mudde 2000, 181; Rydgern 2017, 485; Kitschelt 2018, 168). Therefore, any study of this far-right party family, whatever its name may be, must go through the roots of nationalism as an ideology.

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The kind of nationalism that is most commonly linked to right-wing politics is historically and methodologically attached to the dichotomy between “ethnic” and “civic” kind of national identity and ideology attributed to Hans Kohn (1944, 574). For decades, these concepts have influenced political and social scientists to make broad generalizations about the national identities of political actors, countries, and even whole geographic areas (Shulman 2002, 582–3).

The extensive and continuous use of the dichotomy’s core concepts has recently led to defining the far-right solely on the basis of “ethnic nationalism” (Polyakova 2015, 51; Bar-On 2018, 18). Leaning heavily on the prestige of this concept should involve addressing arguments against the dichotomy’s simplistic aspects. Scholars have previously warned against using vaguely defined concepts—“ethnicity” in particular—as an analytical tool, and it has been shown just how confusing the ethnic-civic dichotomy can be considering its normative undertones (Weber 1968 [1922], 395; Brubaker 1999, 64).

Indeed, there is a growing list of policies and attitudes that are considered to be ideologically “ethnic,” which makes them automatically attached to the far-right (Polyakova 2015, 51; Bar-On 2018, 22). Attributing an extreme party family to the protection of a wide range of policies that revolves around national identity could allow it to hide its hereditary biological understanding of nationalism behind the more accepted concept of culture. This may result in losing sight of that truly hereditary, organic, and racial national identity—“ethnic” in its narrow sense—which is rigidly exclusionary and anti-democratic (Brubaker 1999, 60).

An additional blind spot lies in the dichotomy’s inability to assess the conservative right. Conservatism is an ideological framework and party family that is an integral part of the political right and values the cultural bases of national identity (Huntington 1999, 39; Adams 2011, 59; Scruton 2014, 33–34). But as its national ideology is neither civic nor ethnic, it is simply overlooked, highlighting the under-researched state of the conservative right and the challenge of understanding its dynamics with the far-right side of politics (Mudde 2007, 27; Ricci 2009, 161–164; Muller 2006, 359).

This signals the importance of a theoretical expansion that would delineate the area that lies between those “ethnic” and “civic” types on nationalism, an area dominated by adherence to cultural bases of national identity. This article will suggest that turning Kohn’s “Dichotomy of Nationalism” into an axis of national ideologies would create a much more sensible base to understand the national attitudes of the right that can be further expended to correlate the entire political spectrum. As an axis is more sensitive to nuance than a

dichotomy, it would avoid conflating conservative and reactionary policy proposals. This would also prevent an unintentional inflation of the far-right and indicate the responsibility of mainstream right-wing parties to separate themselves from a kind of nationalism that goes against the civic foundations of twenty-first-century democracy.

Nationalism as an Ideology

Nationalism can be investigated either as a natural social phenomenon that precedes normative questions and takes place under certain cultural or economic conditions or as a social idea that involves the aspiration for collective self-determination that ends at a demand for sovereignty. Focusing on the second interpretation leads to nationalism being an ideology, a set of normative positions about men, society, and state, that fuels political policies.

Researching nationalism as an ideology starts by asking about the normative characteristics that theoreticians and political actors attribute to the concept and the scope of content they put into it. In the case of nationalism, a second refinement is necessary, recognizing it is considered a central factor in the creation of an enlightened democracy and at the same time can be a central factor in creating the exact opposite. Roger Griffin (2003 1993, 155) expressed it as follows: “As long as it has been an active force in history it [nationalism] has always contained the potential for promoting both genuine liberal democracy and its grotesque travesty...” This normative duality raises a question about the preconditions for praise and condemnation. What are they, and where can researchers of nationalism find them?

One theoretical way to answer this question is by placing nationalism in its entirety under normative scrutiny, based on the distinction with the concept of “love of the land,” otherwise known as “patriotism.” Even at the simplest level of comparison, patriotism is usually narrowly defined, while nationalism seems to develop two exclusionary characteristics. The first is going beyond love of country, promoting it over other national and international entities. The second is a sense of unity rooted not in geography but in culture, which may create intolerance toward other cultures inside a national entity (Primoratz 2017). Following this distinction, studies in political psychology have found that “nationalist attitudes share affinity to chauvinism, prejudice, militarism, hawkish attitudes, social dominance orientation, and lower levels of internationalism” (Kemmelmeyer 2008, 863). In current events, during the one-hundredth anniversary of the end of World War I, French President Emmanuel Macron rejected the “selfishness of nations only looking after their

own interests. Because patriotism is exactly the opposite of nationalism.” (The Washington Post 2018).

Criticism over the entire concept of nationalism is also related to the history of the term being used by extremist political movements, such as the fascist groups in Europe since the turn of the nineteenth century, which has historically been identified with right-wing politics. Scholars of fascist ideology tend to characterize, define, and condemn it due to the kind of nationalism it is promoting. According to Sternhell, Sznaider and Asheri (1994, 9–10):

The first of the two essential components of fascism to appear on the political scene of the end of the nineteenth century was tribal nationalism, based on a social Darwinism and often a biological determinism. By definition, this new nationalism denied the validity of any absolute and universal moral norms...

Indeed, it is easy to see that the normative difficulty that arises from a simple love of country is not as significant as a hierarchy among cultures and nations that produces a zero-sum atmosphere. But logically, it is difficult to understand how one can love something—be it a person, a group, or an idea—without creating any hierarchy. Since there is more than some convergence between patriotism and nationalism, it is also possible to argue that the latter is not bad in and of itself. Resnick (1997, 117) has argued that nationalism provides democracy with its need for a sense of community in which citizens “share deeper affinities with one another, cultural and historical attachments, moral bonds, the need for basic security.” Ake (1997, 285–6) further pointed out a possible correlation between nationalism and democracy by attaching modern democracy to the rise of the nation-state, which is based on national solidarity. Negating nationalism as a whole may thus hurt the democratic procedure, which often leads to a national consensus to prefer the nation-state’s interests over international ones.

As there seems to be at least a partial but binding connection between patriotism and nationalism, and as nationalism can contribute to the formation of a democratic nation-state, it seems better to distinguish and isolate the exact aspect of nationalism that creates normative difficulties, making the whole concept suspicious. Upon this premise, the above-mentioned cultural aspect of nationalism should be the starting point for normative analysis of national ideology.

A common answer for the source of trouble national ideologies could cause is “ethnic nationalism.” Though a much-criticized concept, it is used to promote theoretical arguments and compare empirical cases at the state and party level and is used as a base for normative judgment.

Resnick (1997, 118) provides a clear example of a sweeping normative condemnation of such nationalism, starting from its theoretical use. “Even in our own day, if we examine the matter closely, the ethnic aspect of nationalism can threaten the democratic framework.” While reserving that “This is not to make the argument that ethnic allegiance necessarily leads to such abominations,” he challenges the nations of the world to replace ethnic nationalism with a more political type of nationalism that he affiliates with the west (Resnick 1997, 119).

Tying an un-democratic type of nationalism, particularly “ethnic nationalism,” to a country or geographic area was once a common academic practice, but it recently became much more common to make similar use to characterize the far-right party family known as the “radical right.” According to Mudde (2013, 2), the description of the radical right as dangerous to democracy by its very nature has been common in the literature since the late 1980s. Since both “ethnic nationalism” and “radical right” share negative connotations, it is not surprising they found their way to characterize each other. These relations will be reviewed in detail, but first we must understand the importance of ideology for the definition of the far-right party family.

The “Far-Right” Party Family and Its “Ethnic Nationalism”

Although “radical right” is a dominant combination in the literature today, it is far from an agreed one. Many continue to use “extreme right” to emphasize the connection between parties at the far end of the political map, with Europe’s dark past being investigated as part of fascism studies (Carvalho 2016, 665; Mondon 2015, 400). Mudde, who used this term extensively in the past (2000 182), has coined the term “populist radical right” precisely to distinguish this party family from the extreme right (2007 49). Still many others kept distance from using “populism” as part of the definition (Eger and Valdez 2014, 128; Langenbacher and Schellenberg 2011, 11; Minkenberg 2011, 38), while Rydgren (2017, 486-487) recently went further and criticized it while isolating the “radical right.”

But this dominant combination has also attracted criticism, as “radical right” parties show no clear connection to a stream of thought and their connection to the origins of radical philosophy remains unclear. According to Kopsey (2018, 100), the term is not yet sufficient to create a clear distinction from fascism, meaning there is still no essential difference between “radical” and “extreme” right. A different criticism was articulated by Eger and Valdez (2014, 128), that “no comparable radical ideology exists. Here the use of the

term radical is subjective, and in the context of political parties, its opposite is ‘mainstream.’”

Unlike other party families, all the names and definitions being thrown to describe this far-right party family derive not from self-definition nor institutional or even historical ties but from deductive theories about their ideology that are subsequently applied empirically. And regardless of the name chosen to represent it, the link between it and the ethnic element of nationalism is now standard in many studies. According to Eger and Valdez (2014, 127), the basic concept that unifies the parties they call “neo-nationalist” is ethnic nationalism. In his early work, Mudde (2000, 181) noted that “all extreme right parties share an ideological core of nationalism...the ethnic nationalist subgroup combines the extreme right core with an ethnic nationalist and ethnopluralist outlook.”

But most notably, the definition of the “radical right” is based on this connection. Rydgren (2017, 485) simply stated that “since the 1980s, radical right-wing parties have emerged and become established in a large number of European countries ... they are united by ethnic nationalism.” Kitschelt (2018, 168) noted that “appeal to an exclusionary conception of national citizenship that privileges an ethnic and cultural notion of parochial collective identity and nationhood and rejects immigration and multicultural diversity appears to be now constitutive of radical right parties,” and according to Polyakova (2015, 51), “the distinguishing feature of radical right parties” is “ethnic nationalism, or the idea that the state exists to promote the interests of the titular ethnicity.”

In order to emphasize the irregularity of this party family, some conflate its ethnic nationalism with that of other party families and types of nationalism, usually “civic nationalism.” Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou (2012, 508) contrasted Ethnic/Civic nationalism with radical right/left. According to Bar-On (2018, 18), “ethnic nationalism is the savior of the radical right, its daily oxygen...” He then identifies this national ideology with fascism as well (Bar-on 2018, 20) and sets up an opposite kind of (civic) nationalism that may promote a genuine liberal democracy, *a priori* associated with most parts of the political map. Ethnic nationalism, liable to destroy democracy, is therefore attached solely to the radical right. (Bar-on 2018, 27).

Kohn’s “Dichotomy of Nationalism” and The “Culture Zone”

Since ethnic nationalism sits at the root of the far-right family and is widely used in other fields as well, it should be understood as a historical development of Hans Kohn’s (1944, 574) normative dichotomy between two concepts of

nationalism, one leading to political liberalism and the other wallowing in tribal solidarity. However, while few cite Kohn's work when using the terms of the dichotomy, even fewer address the many critiques of it, some of which challenge the possibility of establishing a useful theoretical analysis by using the core concepts attributed to it.

Kohn was not the first to use a normative dichotomy between a national ideology that leads to a developed democracy and ethnic nationalism that stops its development. This distinction existed at least since the end of the nineteenth century. French philosopher Ernest Renan regarded the ethnic element as an inferior type of union based on biological aspects. He attributed this kind of nationalism to Germany while describing his own French nationalism as in transition to a kind of nationalism that symbolizes the development of democratic governance, tolerant to various social groups in a way that allows them to be part of one national group (Duerr 2012, 20). Kohn elaborated on this dichotomy during World War II. He added a geographical and evolutionary dimension, attaching the ethnic base to Eastern and Central Europe. The main example, again from Germany, was described as myth-based and contrary to logic, individualism, and parliamentary democracy. Civil nationalism has been described as a complementary development of human rights and characterizes Western Europe and the United States (Kuzio 2002, 22–3).

The geographic separation absorbed most of the criticism. In a study of 15 countries, it was argued that “the traditional civic-West/ethnic-East argument is a gross simplification of concepts of nationhood in the West, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe” (Shulman 2002, 582–3). In an attempt to defend its advantages, it was even argued that Kohn himself did not believe in his dichotomy but rather intended to normatively criticize both kinds of nationalism (Pianko 2010, 311). But even critics of the empirical use of the terms continued to support the principle of an existing dichotomy between a tribal-based heredity ethnic nationalism and a voluntary and progressive civic nationalism (Kuzio 2002, 36; Shulman 2002, 558). Thus, despite the criticisms, and as evident from contemporary literature on the “radical right,” the core concepts of “Kohn’s dichotomy of nationalism,” presented in Figure 1, remained a common tool in the study of national identity.

Figure 1: Kohn's Dichotomy of Nationalism

However, well before Kohn's conceptualization first appeared, Max Weber (1968 [1922], 395) warned against the use of "ethnicity" as a conceptual tool for diagnosing social phenomena, saying it "would be abandoned" as a description of a collective, "for it is not suitable for a really rigorous analysis" and the sheer "concept of [an] 'ethnic' group dissolves when we define our terms exactly..." On the basis of Weber's critique, Rogers Brubaker (1999, 59) identified two opposite but equally valid interpretations of "ethnic nationalism," arguing the nature of the concept makes it void of a stable meaning. Brubaker unraveled this vagueness by asking "how culture fits into an ethnic-civil scheme?"

In its narrow interpretation, ethnic nationalism focuses solely on biological "descent," which means only hereditary factors such as race, skin color, and blood ties comprise the "ethnic" base of nationalism, separating it from any cultural feature of national identity. "On the strict understanding of ethnicity," Brubaker (1999, 60) argued, "nationalist rhetoric emphasizing common culture, but not common descent, has to be coded as a kind of civic nationalism." But the concept of "civic nationalism" is no less ambiguous. As it emphasizes only the voluntary and cognitive basis of members of the national community, once again a rigid conception is devoid of any sign of culture and severely restricts the ability to find such nationalism in empirical reality (Brubaker 1999, 61).

Thus, a narrow ethnic nationalism is extreme and rare, while a narrow civic nationalism is but an ideal form. "If one combines a strict understanding of civic and a strict understanding of ethnic nationalism, then one is left with few instances of either one and a large middle ground that counts as neither" (Brubaker 1999, 62). On the other hand, Brubaker found that an expansion of each interpretation creates a significant overlap between the terms. A broad civic base includes political institutions, social customs, historical memories, and sometimes language, while a broad ethnic base also includes customs, history, and language in addition to religion. Thus, the combination of flexible concepts presents "a large middle ground that could be classified either way..."

An illustration of Brubaker's criticism of Kohn's dichotomy is presented in Figures 2 and 3. Focusing on the "culture zone" between the poles, it contains the historical and the linguistic bases of nationalism, which falls through the gaps when using narrow definitions (Figure 3) and may be attributed to either civic or ethnic nationalism when broad definitions are implemented (Figure 2).

Figures 2-3: The “Culture Zone” under broad and narrow definitions of Ethnic and Civic Nationalism

In both cases, the political framework and institutions are identified with civic nationalism. Along with language and historical traditions, this corresponds with Weber’s (1968 [1922], 395–8) position on common national bases for analysis.

An additional cultural base for nationalism is religion. The creedal base of national identity is not “ethnic” in the narrow sense but includes substantial hereditary characteristics that are at odds with civic institutions. Its unique placement will be further discussed following a summary of the theoretical difficulties in applying Kohn’s dichotomy of nationalism in its current form.

Normative Judgment, Liquidated Definitions, and Conservative Nationalism

Brubaker’s question of culture signaled a large area of overlap between the “civic” and “ethnic” concepts of nationalism in their broad definition and a similarly large no man’s land in their narrow definition. Without adherence to solid definitions, leakage into the “culture zone” creates multiple examples of analytical inefficiency that is based on the use of the dichotomy’s concepts.

Aiming for a precise definition, Minkenberg’s (2011, 38) analysis of the radical right begins with a narrow statement about it being opposite to liberal democracy, but is quickly expanded by identifying “ethnic” with “culture”:

I define right-wing radicalism as a political ideology or tendency based on ultra-nationalistic ideas which tend to be directed against liberal democracy... in the construction of national affiliation, specific ethnic, cultural or religious criteria of inclusion or exclusion are accentuated....

Later on, this use of “culture” allows Minkenberg (2011, 45) to round up far-right parties in France and Italy with neo-Nazi movements. While this leakage into the “culture zone” expands the definition of the “radical right,” it goes well beyond “anti-democratic orientation,” therefore impairing the effectiveness of the analysis.

In other cases, the leakage is inherent by using broad terms from the get-go. Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou (2012, 509) defined “ethnic nationalism” as “exclusive and organic, defined by a community of birth and a native culture.” This use of “native culture” does seem to be narrow, while civic nationalism is defined broadly as “...inclusive and voluntary, emphasizing historic territory, legal political community and a civic culture.” Brubaker’s (1999, 60) critique hypothesized that such definition would make civic nationalism too heterogeneous to provide any useful analysis. And indeed, since the researchers are supposed to find very few cases that are compatible with ethnic nationalism in its limited sense, they also use the broader definition that leans on the “culture zone”: “Parties of the radical right oppose the EU on predominantly ethnic grounds as they perceive it to be a threat to the nation’s cultural homogeneity” (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012, 508). At the empirical section, this leakage allows for a very wide range of ideas and positions, from descent-based exclusion to “support for morality, religion, tradition and patriotism,” to be analyzed as part of “ethnic nationalism” (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012, 514).

It is also common for the leakage to occur without any prior theoretical notice. Bar-On (2018, 22) listed concrete policy proposals that he sees as part of ethnic nationalism, starting with examples that imply a narrow definition such as citizenship on a blood-only basis, but quickly adding proposals that are based on cultural foundations. Therefore, policies such as “...civic education, extensive knowledge of the language, culture, and history of the country, and a commitment to the dominant cultural and political values” get associated with the radical right.

Such leaks into the culture zone expand not only the definition of ethnic nationalism but also the radical right, which is supposed to be on the margins of the political map. Without clear definitions, there is no answer whether these parties profess to the ethnic or cultural kind of nationalism.

Sharpening the definition is even more important considering the negative normative judgment that is inherent to the use of ethnic nationalism. Brubaker (1999, 64) noted that this term was intended from the outset to be an object of condemnation as a primitive and intolerant basis of national identity that is at odds with democracy: “...hard to imagine a more normatively loaded one sided characterization... When civic and ethnic nationalism are paired, the former is invariably a term of praise, the latter a term of abuse.” The literature on the “radical right” shows that when there are no stable definitions, this

normative aspect built into concepts of the dichotomy can lead to very broad inaccuracies:

Polyakova (2015, 51) classified the aspiration to preserve the language, tradition, and religion of a nation as part of the broader definition of ethnic nationalism and tied it to the radical right. But without any manipulation to the dichotomy's terms and definitions, she then condemns this kind of nationalism as extreme and exclusionary, intended at ethnic nationalism in its narrow hereditary sense.

In this situation, a whole spectrum of political positions can become identified with an anti-democratic ideology. Immediately after broadly defining both sides of the dichotomy, Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou (2012, 509) hint that the entire politics of the right lean toward authoritarianism, while the left leans toward democracy. In the continuation of Bar-On's (2018, 22) list of ethnic nationalism policies, he criticizes the very questioning of multicultural qualities made by conservative leaders such as Nikola Sarkozy, Angela Merkel, and David Cameron as "co-opting the message of the radical right." Recalling that Bar-On affiliates the nationalist ideology of the radical right with the fascist understating of the concept, this condemnation of conservative leaders actually accuses them of cooperating with a message that is affiliated with fascism.

Without clear definitions, the derailment of ethnic nationalism into the culture zone makes it difficult to borderline the ideology of the far-right, lowering analytical efficiency and impairing the fundamental foundation of the term "radical right." Amidst the vagueness of the culture zone, the normative aspect of both "ethnic nationalism" and "radical right" misses its purpose to protect against the elements that are indeed contrary to peaceful stability, human rights, or democracy.

Another angle to this conundrum arises when comparing examples of ethnic nationalism with the traditional conservative right-wing view on national ideology, which is considered an essential philosophical basis of the "moderate right."

When Eger and Valdez (2014, 127) explain the meaning of preferencing members of an ethnic nation, they come with two examples: preferring an increase of public expenditure on pensions over benefits to asylum seekers and increasing investments in education while insisting that schools promote the national language. Are such proposals representative of a new far-right political family? Should criticism of multiculturalism, as reviewed by Bar-on, be considered cooperation with the very edge of legitimacy, on the verge of becoming a danger to democracy? Does not the desire to preserve the

customs, language, tradition, and religion, presented by Polyakova, simply describe examples of the longstanding conservative view on national identity?

To begin answering these questions, one must first note that the connection between the conservative worldview and national ideology has existed since the nineteenth century. According to Adams (2011, 59), conservatism that is based on patriotic and republican nationalism has simultaneously developed as a significant political stream in France and Britain and stood between left-wing revolutionaries and right-wing reactionaries. The Conservative Party in Britain represented this national worldview in the twentieth century, while in the Fifth Republic in France there was a parallel concept known as “Gaullism.” In the twenty-first century, national ideology is at the basis of the conservative worldview. Roger Scruton (2014, 15), a leading conservative philosopher, noted that in conservatism, national boundaries are “precious.” In his book *How to be a Conservative*, Scruton (2014, 33–4) pointed to nationalism as the first ideological “truth” of conservatives. According to Scruton, at the core of national conservative ideology are the civic legal system and various cultural factors such as language, local customs, and traditions. On the other hand, there is a clear border with ethnicity.

When we ask ourselves the question, to what do we belong, and what defined our loyalties and commitment, we do not find the answer in a shared religious obedience, still less in bonds of tribe and kinship. (Scruton 2014, 36–7).

Although Scruton clarifies that religion is at odds with democratic politics as a national base, he does argue that the nation-state should favor religion, pointing out that those “precious” national boundaries are rooted in Western culture, which itself evolved from Judeo-Christian traditions, which he calls “even more precious.” (Scruton 2014, 15) Accordingly, Scruton clarifies that conservative nationalism is not multicultural. The chapter he devotes to the “truth in multiculturalism” is full of criticism toward this policy, much harsher than the skepticism expressed by the aforementioned conservative leaders:

Our political class has at least recognized that this is a recipe for disaster, and that we can welcome immigrants only if we welcome them into our culture, not beside or against it. But that means telling them to accept rules, customs and procedures that may be alien to their old way of life. (Scruton 2014, 91–2)

Scruton continues by repeating that conservative nationalism requires a common cultural basis consisting primarily of a national language and old customs that shape the public sphere. “We do not require everyone to have the same faith, to lead the same kind of family life or to participate in the same festivals. But we have a shared civic culture, a shared language and a shared public sphere” (Scruton 2014, 91–2).

The conservative ideology thus contains both civil and cultural national factors, which are expressed as a base for group identity and are dominant in the public sphere. If Scruton's position is representative of contemporary conservatism, then the preservation of national language, protection of traditional civil customs, respect for the nation's religious heritage, and concern about a multicultural reality are examples of national policy identified with the conservative right. The reasonable possibility that far-right groups will also support these proposals does not make them radical, racist, or fascist in and of themselves. It may actually indicate that those radicals are actually quite conservative.

From Dichotomy to Axis

The existing overlap in the culture zone of nationalism creates a conceptual stretch to the point that "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism lose their meaning. The projection of normative judgment based on these concepts may impose an inaccurate and unfounded restriction on the limits of democratic legitimacy, exemplified in the difficulty in distinguishing radical and conservative proposals or positions that should be placed at the extreme right of the political map from moderate positions closer to the political center. This does not mean that the concept of "ethnic nationalism" is not useful, but rather that its narrow interpretation must adhere to and identify primarily with the biological basis of nationalism. Nationalism based solely on immediate heredity excludes anyone who is not of a certain race, skin color, or descent. This is an extreme base for national identity that contradicts fundamental values of democracy and should be viewed normatively. Therefore, it is possible to continue to use it as an endpoint that attests to a type of fundamentalist nationalism.

At the same time, adherence is also required to the narrow interpretation of "civic nationalism," which emphasizes common trust in the general political framework of the state. This kind of nationalism does not stipulate membership in a national culture but does require the observance of the law and a commitment to the nation's civil institutions. According to Stilz (2009, 257), this flexible national base may not require linguistic homogeneity but nevertheless sets forth various conditions for obtaining citizenship with the purpose of strengthening the constitutional structure of the state. Citizenship is therefore in and of itself the central symbol of this type of nationalism.

The cultural zone between these two bases has already been conveniently detailed by both Weber and Brubaker and put into practice by Scruton, arguing that conservative nationalism combines a civic (dependent on trust

in shared civic institutions), lingual (common language), and historical (common customs) bases of national identity. This kind of nationalism also rejects the biological-ethnic basis of nationalism, keeping a distance from the creedal base (which is contingent on religious affinity) as well.

As shown in Figure 4, the lingual, historical, and religious bases express a gradual aspiration for cultural homogeneity. But as they can be purchased, they are more flexible than ethnic nationalism. Nationalism based on the linguistic group requires learning the language. History-based nationalism may add a behavioral requirement in the public sphere, preferencing the traditional customs of the national group over practices that contradict them. Religious nationalism is the closest to ethnic nationalism because it requires not only years of learning the language and local customs but also at least partial commitment to a certain creed.

Thus, an in-depth confrontation with criticism of the concept of ethnic nationalism details the dichotomy of nationalism into an axis, and each step expresses a more demanding form of nationalism. Since the ethnic basis requires racial homogeneity, it will generally also contain a demand for cultural homogeneity, which includes religious affinity, shared customs, and language. This is an extremist ideology that, as noted, is not accepted by the conservative right and is in contradiction to modern democracy.

Another point to be addressed is that “civic nationalism” does not represent the left end of the axis, as suggested by Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou (2012, 508). While civic nationalism is open and pluralistic compared to ethnic nationalism, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Just as ethnic nationalism will demand cultural homogeneity in most cases, it will also contain an acceptance of the constitutional structure of the nation-state and trust in shared political institutions. The national ideology that is opposite to ethnic nationalism is one that does not see any merit in nationalism. Such anti-nationalism is characteristic of revolutionary anarchist and Marxist factions (Spencer and Wollman 2002, 8–9; Szporluk 1988, 14) and so constitutes a more logical starting point than civic nationalism to be linked with the extreme left.

Placing “anti-nationalism” at the left end also helps in showing that nationalism is more central to the thinking of the right. Patriotism and the national interest may play a role across the political map, but there is no ideological stream in the political right that is not national at all.² In this way, a complete convergence of nationalism as an ideology and location on the political map emerges, as presented in Figure 5.

The values that various right-wing party families attribute to nationalism constitute the basis for an ideological comparison. A high number of interface points in conservative and radical nationalist concepts can attest to the need to reevaluate the conceptual distance between them and perhaps redefine them. On the other hand, the existence of clear ideological differences in these values establishes the existence of an ideological distance separating conservatives from right-wing radicals.

The possibility of movement along the axis, especially on the same political side, can be theoretically addressed as manifestations of a “contagion” process, which is opposed by the performance of “cordon sanitaire.”

“Contagion to the right” is characterized by the attempts of various moderate parties to approach the extreme-right electorate (van-Spanje 2010, 565). According to Downs (2002, 32), contagion can occur by legitimizing right-wing parties that have so far been excluded from public discourse or by adopting rhetorical or policy applications stemming from the ideology of these parties. In light of the “axis of nationalism,” contagion of a conservative right-wing party can be seen in a call for the implementation of a policy that is based on ethnic nationalism in its limited biological sense, deviating from the conservative worldview. An empirical example was found by Joppke (2003, 448), who examined citizenship laws in several European countries and concluded that the central (conservative) stream of the right was carrying out policy based on a return to biological ethnicity. A graphic representation of this contagion is shown in Figure 6.

2 It is possible to argue that Libertarianism has almost no national component, as it is strictly individual. While this is philosophically plausible, any political formation of Libertarianism, such as the American “Libertarian Party” is shown to promote a clear national view.

By its very name, which implies the spread of a harmful virus, contagion is considered normatively obscene. As a political strategy, it is interpreted as cynical behavior that changes the values of veteran parties in order to gain electoral power (Bale et al. 2010, 422). Ideologically, it legitimizes and centralizes ideas that are contrary to modern society and democracy (Kallis 2013, 232–3). But just as major parties can catch the virus of extremism, they can also distance themselves from it. The attempt to combat contagion is appropriately called “cordon sanitaire,” a term that indicates the importance of cardinal sanitation to prevent infections. In politics, it is performed by putting up ideological and institutional defenses against ideas, people, and institutions that seek to undermine public trust in the democratic system.

At the party level, cordon sanitaire includes opposing any coalition or parliamentary cooperation with the object of sanitation. Ideologically, this requires a consistent identification of those extreme ideological elements that excludes a party or a politician from receiving any legitimacy, placing “active barriers to the diffusion of extremist discourses and rhetoric” (Kallis 2013, 239). An example of ideological isolation is visible in Scruton’s categorical rejection of tribal nationalism and, to a lesser extent, in his reservation of creedal nationalism. A graphic illustration of the performance of cordon sanitaire is presented in Figure 7.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Nationalism is, in a sense, a form of collective egoism, an essential stage in the process of creating a unique “We” that distinguishes a group from other groups. The complexity of discussing the ego in moral terms as a useful or otherwise perilous tool for the individual and for humanity can imply similar complexity when discussing nationalism.

There is no need to specialize in psychology to know that unhinged egoism creates problems in socialization. Perhaps an expert would add that absolute

egoism may indicate the existence of a dangerous psychosis. But it is equally difficult to think of a man without ego. It is also reasonable to assume that in the early stages of development, there are those who would explicitly encourage the development of an ego, which requires an individual to focus on themselves and to develop unique traits, skills, and preferences that may come at the expense of recognizing similarities to other people who are also worthy of developing their self.

Since nations are built in the image of human beings, it is not surprising that almost identical things can be said about the development of a national identity. It appears to have positive normative potential when it collects characteristics in its developmental stages, but while some of them continue to serve the national community, once it crystalizes, this collective ego is required to restrain itself by setting boundaries to that “ego” we call “nationalism.” This study suggested a few basic actions in this direction and developed a theoretical tool to advance the debate on the legitimate borders of a national ideology.

The entire axis of nationalism rests on a threshold condition, recognizing the general right of distinct groups to self-determine. Therefore, a national group whose right has been recognized and has received autonomy due to this right is not entitled to consider itself the only group worthy of self-determination and keep it from other groups. Such hierarchical positions may stem from an extreme perception of the uniqueness of the “We,” which is more representative of the extreme right. But a complete rejection of the concept of national rights pulls the rug under the exclusionary group’s own right to exist. Since it is doubtful whether this position can be regarded as a national ideology at all, it seems even more extreme than biological nationalism.

On the other end, recognition of the national rights of distinct groups means that a group is also not allowed to completely abolish its own individuality, which distinguishes it from other groups, without pointing to a national alternative. After all, the abolition of any national alternative brings this position back to the “anti-nationalism” realm, which is not a legitimate national ideology.

Between these two extremes, the “culture zone” reign strongly, encompassing different positions according to the degree of rigidity they pose as a precondition for recognition of a national group. The more lenient will not require individuals to have the same tradition nor seek to impose a common or unique language to support their right to be part of the group. The most lenient will not even assume the necessity of a political organization agreed

upon by members of the group. To be considered a national group, the only condition is sharing a land and a demand for autonomy.

On the other end, the most rigid will not recognize these group's rights until it is clear they not only have the ability to maintain distinct political institutions, but that they share a dominant linguistic dialect, preferably unique to members of the group. Similarly, those that support full cultural nationalism, usually conservatives, will ask whether a group shares customs, historical events, and even religious characteristics that distinguish members from their neighbors.

The "axis of national ideology" can be used in this manner as an empirical tool that compares ideological responses to groups whose nationalism is in the process of crystallization, such as the European national identity, or groups with firm national aspirations that are not sovereign, like the Kurds, Palestinians, Catalans, and Tibetans. Empirically, the axis offers a more accurate understanding of different national ideologies. This, in turn, is intended to bring about a clean analysis of political reality and a clear normative judgment. By sharpening the ideological factors at the far end of the axis, outside the limits of legitimacy, a series of comparative empirical studies can be conducted between political parties, organizations, citizenship and immigration laws, and historical developments. In addition, the possibility of movement on the axis opens a window to follow ideological currents that may cause a "contagion" effect, opposing other streams that pose ideological barriers in front of them.

A misunderstanding of the "culture zone" should be avoided. Reliance on cultural factors to promote nationalism, such as striving for a unified language or protecting local traditions, does not deserve to be condemned in and of itself, as it does not necessarily contrast human rights or substantive democracy. But this should not be interpreted as promoting any national approach. The axis of nationalism only marks the legitimate boundaries of democratic polemics. Moreover, the inclusion of cultural nationalism within these borders does not mean that any form of linguistic or tradition-based nationalism is now clear. The obligation to renounce any sign of biological nationalism, proportionally depart from religious nationalism, and also reject anti-nationalism merely signifies the first most primal step, a necessary but not sufficient condition, to characterize a legitimate form of nationalism.

It is important to think of additional conditions that subsequent studies can develop in correlation with a left-right axis that will complement the "axis of national ideology." For example, the degree of tolerance toward pluralism can build a hypothetical parallel axis, where the extreme left aspires absolute

pluralism, “multiculturalism” in the purest sense, while the extreme right’s desire is for absolute homogeneity, or “nativism.”

From the point of view expressed in this study, the normative problems of pure multiculturalism are the unavoidability of irredentism and tolerance toward human rights violations that comes from alternative customs. On the other end, absolute nativism must involve the elimination of other cultures, including the languages and rituals of minority groups, sectorial parties, and civil society organizations that promote pluralism. It may also trigger the nation-state to reject pluralism of opinion, manifested in free speech, becoming intolerant to opposition parties, and eventually preventing any peaceful transfer of power. These opposite extremes characterize revolutionary politics. Between them, one can find competing perceptions of a cultural policy that on the right side is more prone to cultural homogeneity, such as a “melting pot” policy, and on the left is more prone to multiculturalism, such as “affirmative action.”

Additional conditions that should be considered as democratic limitations on nationalism are linked to the actions of nation-states in the international arena. These may not have a direct correlation to a left-right axis and can be used to limit any kind of national aspiration. For example, it is obvious that a military action designed for an imperialist purpose is an act that marks an immoral national perception. But a grey normative area does seem to be apparent regarding the use of “soft power” and “hard power,” especially aiming at achieving enlightened goals, such as spreading tolerance and freedom in the world. This is yet another national perception that can raise serious normative problems attesting to the complexity of contemporary kinds of nationalism.

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