

## **THE NEW NATIONALISM AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR (LAWRENCE ROSENTHAL AND VESNA RODIC EDS., PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, LONDON, 2015)**

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*The New Nationalism and the First World War* attempts to provide an overview of the state of the world, especially at the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, from a holistic perspective. This was an era fraught with difficulty and uncertainty as far as societies were concerned. Numerous crucial social elements were transformed at a dramatic pace and these ‘modern times’ had a significant effect on whole societies, not only in Europe, but around the world. For a long time countries remained under the influence of liberalism, while later on socialism came into the picture. While liberalism and socialism occupied the majority of the socio-political agenda, opposing views remained on the fringe. Unexpectedly, after time these fringe movements coalesced and emerged as ‘new nationalism’.

On the one hand, the book generally explains how this new nationalism rejected liberalism and socialism and considered these two different notions to be the same. On the other hand, it also explains how this new kind of nationalism co-opted useful elements from liberalism and socialism in order to strengthen its foundations. Moreover, the book provides a historical account that shows how nationalism served as an important catalyst for World War I, and how it maintained its effect even after the War, shifting historical forces towards World War II.

The book presents readers with a broad picture in order to clarify the road taken by different countries. With the spectrum that covered the end of nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, people also started to change their mind-sets. While supporters of ‘outward’ nationalism looked for the enemy ‘outside’, inward nationalism, which sought the enemy inside, also gained momentum during this era. Furthermore, people felt closer to those with whom they shared the same language and culture, but considered the rest ‘others’ who

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did not share the same values. At the same time as these changes occurred in societies, people became increasingly less tolerant of 'others'.

*The New Nationalism and the First World War* provides a general picture about the situation through a historical perspective using evidence from case studies. The book is well written and the chapters are easy to follow. It begins with an introduction, which is written by the editors of the book, presenting the main arguments contained in the chapters which are written by different authors to explain the process of nationalism in different countries during the above-mentioned era. The first section is called 'The new nationalism and the (re) building of nations' and covers Britain, Italy and Poland in a number of separate chapters. The Britain case discusses the way the country became ready to be part of the war in 1914. The Italian case gives the reader a brief overview of how Italy left behind liberalism and democracy as a policy and moved towards nationalism, which ultimately ended up in Fascism. The Polish case also explains how radical political leaders used anti-Semitism, anti-socialism and political authority as a political weapon.

The second part is called 'The new nationalism and shifting notions of tradition,' and is mostly focused on Hungary and France. In the Hungarian case, the author attempts to describe the increasing anti-Semitism in the country. In France, the author explains the anti-revolutionary movements which supported the monarchy, starting with 'the Dreyfus Affair'. These movements influenced not only the political sphere, but also social life in general. The third part, 'The new nationalism at the crossroads between east and west', focuses outside Europe on an investigation of the new nationalism in Turkey and Japan. In the Turkey chapter, the author describes the nation-building process which took place after the Ottoman Empire lost the majority of its European lands and population. The chapter on Japan mainly covers the ultranationalism of the country, and describes how this movement influenced Italy and Germany in Europe.

In all the cases the effect of the press, journals and newspapers is easily discerned. Moreover, beside political elites and powers, the effects and interests of intellectuals such as writers, journalists and novelists cannot be neglected. All kinds of opinions, ideas and trends spread throughout nation states. Furthermore, with the widespread use of photography, it became easier to influence and persuade audiences. In this context, the impact of the news or articles became stronger than in the past.

The case studies highlight the discontentment of the era's social thinkers and artists about rationality. Fringe political activists and artists argued that modern life was overly 'rational' due to its industrial enterprise-like structure. Nonetheless, liberalism and socialism represented two separate worldviews; their attachment to rationalism was the same. For the new nationalists, modern

life failed entirely to represent human nature. From their point of view, human nature was heroic, and the heroic could not be found in parliamentary regimes. On the contrary, it could be seen in authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, the heroic could, presumably, be seen in times of war. The idea of considering war heroic encapsulates how countries justified themselves in order to declare war.

Although the case studies inform the audience about new nationalism, some questions remain unanswered. The authors put forward specific country cases as evidence to explain the incidence of rising nationalism. Therefore the argumentation contained in the book needs to be improved to clarify why the authors included some countries explicitly (e.g. Poland and Hungary) but excluded others (such as Germany and Russia). For instance, in the introduction the importance of the war veterans in Weimar Germany was mentioned (p. 13) as one of the most important elements of the new nationalism's revolutionary classes, so readers might expect to read detailed information about their appearance in Germany. Nevertheless, further details about them cannot be found in the book.

Despite some restrictions, the book provides a step-by-step snapshot of the incidents which led countries to World War I and, later, World War II. It is therefore an informative and remarkable book which should increase understanding about the specific reasons for the World Wars.