NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY IN CROSS-NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Guest Editors' Foreword

IRINA TOMESCU-DUBROW, JOSHUA K. DUBROW AND KAZIMIERZ M. SLOMCZYNSKI[1]

Cross-National Studies: Interdisciplinary Research and Training Program (CONSIRT) of The Ohio State University and the Polish Academy of Sciences

This issue is rooted in the Conference *Nationalism and Conflict: Interdisciplinary Methodological Approaches* held in Warsaw, Poland, December 10 – 15, 2012. The purpose of the Conference was to bring together scholars from different disciplines on the topic of nationalism and conflict. In multiethnic societies, nationalism often leads to ethnic tension that ranges from open domestic conflict to more subtle forms, such as prejudice and discrimination. We invited papers that examine causes and consequences of both nationalism and ethnic tensions. We sought interdisciplinary perspectives on identifying where, when, how and why such tensions emerge, including remarkable instances of absence of tension, and even ethnic cooperation. Extant research on nationalism is seriously constrained by an overwhelmingly discipline-specific approach. To overcome this shortcoming, the conference aimed to explore creative methodologies that (a) recognize elements common across disciplines and (b) allow for the unique contributions of specific disciplines, sociology and political science in particular. Both the articles and opinion pieces selected for this issue of *Studia Sociologia* come from, or are inspired by, this conference.

The substantive questions that become increasingly important are: How is national identity formed in multiethnic societies? To what extent does strong national identity lead to conflict and protest behavior? Under what circumstances is national identity in conflict with supra-national identity? We also pose methodological questions: What are the sources of social science knowledge

---

[1] Institute of Philosophy and Sociology PAN and the CONSIRT program of the Ohio State University and the Polish Academy of Sciences, correspondence e-mail: *tomescu.1@osu.edu*.

about national identities and conflicts? What is the role of public opinion surveys and other types of data? The conference reacted to these and other questions from an interdisciplinary perspective. In broad terms, nationalism is defined here as involving individuals' strong identification with a political, economic and/or social entity, "nation" (Spira, 1999). Under this understanding, it is nationalism that creates national identity, which in some cases equates with ethnic identity. Conceptually, identity is a complex phenomenon. Although research on group identity – ethnic identity in particular – has grown exponentially in the past few decades, there is as yet no consensus on the definition of this concept or how to measure it (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott, 2006). We do not intend to enter into the debate or to offer yet another novel approach to group identity. Tajfel's definition is a good starting point: it says that identity is "that part of the individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group(s) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Taifel, 1981: 255). It contains its affective component and concerns the *degree* to which individuals feel "attached" to a particular collectivity.

Articles in this issue are devoted to diversified topics of nationalism and identity: acceptance of Slovene's minority rights in Italy (Paolo Segatti and Simona Guglielmi), commitment to places of origin of Palestinians from a refugee camp in the West Bank (Dorota Woroniecka-Krzyżanowska), the redefinition of nationhood in Germany in relation to the Muslim minority (Katarzyna Andrejuk), variation in nationalism and support for European Union integration by elites and masses across thirteen countries (Carolyn Smith Keller), the influence of national identity on well-being among youth in Bulgaria and Romania (Radosveta Dimitrova, Carmen Buzea, Vanja Ljujic and Venzislav Jordanov), and national identification of Hungarian minorities living in certain regions of Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine (Valér Veres). All these topics involve social, political and economic contexts where nationalism and identity are manifested. Articles in this issue show that in a so-called age of globalization, with its seemingly relentless cultural, political and economic homogenization, nationalism and ethnic identity have thrived in multiple forms and locales. One general lesson from this issue of *Studia Sociologia* is that nationalism and national identities have not only negative effects, such as forced assimilation of minority cultures into a national majority culture, but also positive effects in a sense of the linkage to European Union integration or influencing well-being of some segments of the population.

The opinion pieces complement the articles in this issue. First, John Mueller deals with the impact of democracy and market capitalism on extreme nationalism and fundamentalist religion. Modernization influences the relationship between government institutions and national and religious identities. Government regulation of ethnicity and religion in the form of unequal treatment by the

state and restrictions on practice and/or legislation for or against specific groups continues. As Fox stresses "[g]overnment restriction and regulation of minority religions is often a sign of the dominant religion's influence in a state" (Fox, 2006: 538). However, these restrictions and regulations make the potential rise of destructive forms of extreme nationalism and of fundamentalist religion unlikely to prevail.

Future studies on nationalism, identity and conflict on the global scale require an improvement in methodology of cross-national studies. Recognizing this need, we include two opinion pieces dealing with methodological issues. Robert M. Kunovich recommends that researchers should measure contextual variables not only for multiple geographic regions but also non-geographic contexts, such as occupations and organizations. Sandra T. Marquart-Pyatt proposes to combine structural equation modeling that includes latent variables with multilevel or hierarchical linear modeling.

We would like to point out that both the articles and the opinion pieces in this issue are diversified with respect of disciplinary approaches. Most papers represent the mainstream of sociology, but some have obvious interdisciplinary tones. John Mueller's opinion piece is as relevant to sociologists as it is to political scientists. Segatti's and Guglielmi's article, as well as that by Smith Keller, belong not only to sociology but also to political science. Woroniecka-Krzyżanowska's study is based on ethnographic materials, and integrates sociological and anthropological interpretations. Andrejuk's analyses of the notions of citizenship and nationhood involve legal analyses of the past and current legislation. The paper by Dimitrova *et al* represents sociology of youth and has clear implications for social and educational policies. In his paper, Veres combines sociology and social psychology. Such diversity of disciplinary approaches is accompanied, in the articles, by variety of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

REFERENCES

Abdelal, R., Herrera, Y.M., Johnston, A. I and McDermott, R. (2006). Identity as a Variable. *Perspectives on Politics,* 4(4): 695–711.

Fox, J. (2006). World Separation of Religion and State Into the 21st Century. *Comparative Political Studies,* 39(3): 537-569.

Spira, T. (ed.) (1999). *Nationalism and Ethnicity Terminologies: An Encyclopedic Dictionary and Research Guide*. Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press.

Taifel, H. (1981). *Human Categories and Social Groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.