



## СОВРЕМЕННОСТЬ В ФОКУСЕ ФИЛОСОФИИ

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### WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE NEW NATIONALISM?

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**Abstract.** What are the limitations of the New World Order created by the rise of transnational regimes and global business begun after the Second World War and reaching a crescendo in our new century? Are there limits to the proffered vision of globalization as a positive force, supported by its own set of mythologies and values?

Is the so called New Nationalism or New Populism that in 2016 brought us Brexit in Europe and the election of Donald Trump in the United States a reaction to the excesses of the new world order? Are there any progressive aspects of those movements or are they fundamentally revanchist?

**Key words:** nationalism, populism, Trump, Brexit, globalization, localism

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I shall address these questions in the context of current political movements, primarily the MAGA movement of President Trump in the United States. At the outset, I must try to imagine how some Europeans must worry about the rise of Trumpism. As the French political philosopher Pierre Manent points out, the idea of the European Union has been, even from its earliest days, something more than a trade union [1]. It represents a collective transformation of the hearts and minds of Europeans, who for decades have been led into bloody conflict by ideas of blood, place, and faith, best described as nationalism. The wish to create a new Europe is at its heart a wish to create a new European who is tolerant of cultural differences and who thinks of himself as a citizen of Europe or indeed of the whole world. Although from time to time, the rank and file rejects that vision, the project moves on, because it must. The new multi-cultural Europe will become a model for the whole earth.

To those who feel that way, Trump sounds dangerous. It is very easy for them to see him as a proto-fascist, someone who questions the premise that nationalism needs

to be reconstructed from the ground up. At the very least, Trump sounds like he will try to set back international cooperation. His criticisms of NATO, his pulling out of the Paris Climate Accord, his reversal of the Obama deals with Iran and Cuba are examples.

I am going to offer a different view, one from inside the USA, indeed from inside the MAGA movement. Despite whatever might happen from day to day in the Trump administration, his election was the product of forces that are not unique to the United States and that will continue to shape politics for the rest of the decade and beyond.

The noted Marxist historian, Benedict Anderson, admitted candidly in 1983 that the Communist effort to create an international movement of the proletariat, which tried to define itself in ideological rather than national terms, failed. The end of the era of nationalism was not anywhere in sight. Despite the definitional and ontological problems that the conception of nation has, he noted that it robustly endured. Though an “imagined identity”, nationalism is for most people a very real thing, something for which they will sacrifice their very lives to protect [2. P. 3].

That reality was behind the momentous events of 2016. Nigel Farage and his UKIP party led a revolt against the Brussels bureaucrats that resulted in the vote for Brexit. In Italy, Matteo Renzi’s center left government fell after he called a referendum on constitutional reforms and the populist Movimento5stelle gained ground. But the greatest shock wave of all occurred on the evening of November 8. Donald J. Trump was elected president of the U.S., with more electoral votes than any Republican since George H.W. Bush in 1988 and only 7% fewer electoral votes than Barack Obama in his second election. The New York Times had predicted on that afternoon of Election Day that Trump had a 15% chance of winning. The polls suddenly turned from blue to red, and by 10:45 pm that night, the same publication put Trump’s chances of winning at greater than 95%.

What followed in ensuing months, after exactly one day of apologies from the main stream media to the effect that they had perhaps focused on the wrong predictors, was a vociferous effort to blame Trump’s victory on something else.

There was the charge of racism, attached to Trump because he opposed illegal immigration, made up largely of Hispanics. A CNN commentator, Van Jones, who called Trump’s election a “whitelash” — an embarrassingly unartful attempt at a neologism. Mr. Jones, himself a Black man, seemed to be suggesting that racist Americans had reacted against Obama, whom they had voted for twice, because they had remembered they were racists. He did not explain how voting for an old White man was racist but voting for an old White woman would not have been. The racist charge was fueled when President Trump in August 2017 commented on rioting that had occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, at a “Unite the Right” rally, focused on protesting a town plan to remove a statute of Confederate war hero, Robert E. Lee. Some in the city government found the statute of Lee a bitter reminder of the injustices of slavery, which the Confederate States refused to abandon. The rally also included neo-Nazi and White supremacist groups. They were met with aggressive counter protesters from the left. In the aftermath, one counter protester was dead, and Trump was accused of siding with the White extremists because he insisted on saying there was fault of both sides.

Right alongside the racist accusation was the “sexist” one. This stemmed not from the fact that Trump’s companies lead their industries in the numbers of female executives or in measures of women’s pay but about some locker room talk surreptitiously recorded in the back of a bus eleven years earlier. That logic of course came right from the Hillary campaign that did little but level personal attacks on Trump, lulled by a sense of entitlement and inevitability, as new revelations from inside her campaign now indicate.

The leading theory as of this writing, among the Trump-deniers, is that Russia somehow hacked the election. Several Obama-leftovers in the Intelligence Services, have disclosed this hypothesis, mainly through a series of leaks to the press. Yet they admit that no voting systems were sabotaged. No votes were changed. The accusations vaguely suggest that the Russians engaged in disinformation campaigns and may have given Hillary Clinton’s emails that were hacked, because they were stored, in violation of government — laws and policies, on private, poorly-secured email systems or hacked emails from her campaign to WikiLeaks.

Trump, like all presidents elect, engaged in overtures to foreign governments. His enemies, who are legion, are claiming he colluded illegally with Russia against the interests of the U.S. Again, there is no hard evidence of this. Currently a special prosecutor, who is not a member of the Trump Administration, is investigating those allegations.

Other responses to Trump’s victory were more substantive and highlighted the deeper significance of Brexit and the MAGA movement in America. French political scientist, Jean De Munk, wrote an article in February 2017 entitled, *Néron à la Maison Blanche, ou la fin du néolibéralisme* [3]. The article showed how Trumpism was not limited to the U.S. His statements were similar to those of another political theorist, Mark Blyth, whose comments on “global Trumpism” have drawn notice. Blyth was smart enough to see that there are rightwing and leftwing versions of Trumpism, and pointed to Greece’s SYRIZA party as an example of the latter [4].

There are many causalities of the dominant economic and political system that the left likes to style as “neo-liberalism”. The middle class in many Western countries over the last thirty years has lost ground economically, and more and more wealth has been gained by smaller and smaller percentages of the population.

In the U.S., the Democratic party has responded to this with an effort to build a coalition of minorities and affluent White urban dwellers, ignoring its traditional bases of White middle class working men and women but wildly enthusiastic in pursuing issues like gay marriage and transsexual bathrooms. All the while the Democrats like the Republicans have worked closely with elites in promoting economic policies that make the globalist dream of free movement of goods, free movement of capital, and free movement of labor a reality. Consistently they have ignored localism, community, and solidarity in the natural and traditional ways those things function in societies. So we all are now part of virtual, ideologically-defined “communities” which exist no place for no real people. In a strange jumble, the social groups that have the least social cohesion and stability are relentlessly referred to as “communities”.

Much of the international human rights regime regrettably has played into this. We are crazed about our own rights, and now also about the rights of people from foreign

lands who are seeking benefits from our citizens. By contrast, Trumpism and the MAGA movement talk of duties, obligations, and responsibilities. Is this fascism or it is simply part of the reality of any polity?

Jean De Munk and his kind acknowledge the crisis of neoliberalism and wish we would embrace a socialist answer to the problems. But many countries are losing faith in such an approach. As I write Greece's SYRIZA party is poised to be thrown out by a conservative party. This drives the left rather crazy. They in moments of candor refer to those on the other side as a "basket of deplorables: racist, sexist, homophobic" and think them "irredeemable", to use Hillary Clinton's words. Or, if they are in a patronizing mood, they'll pity their opponents for being led astray by leaders like Trump, whom they consider charlatans, and comfort themselves in thinking his victories are short-lived.

Their hatred of Trump is blinding. De Munk referred to Trump as puerile and vulgar, a drooling madman. Meanwhile he described Obama as elegant, sophisticated, a hero of the American dream. But this hero led his party off the cliff for the last eight years. Democrats suffered a net loss of 1042 seats nationwide during Mr. Obama's eight-year tenure. That embodiment of the American dream enriched himself through his office, amassing a fortune of approximately ten million dollars. The madman, by contrast, donates his entire presidential salary to charity.

Outrageous claims about President Trump's motives, personality, or sanity seem like childish responses to a reality that the De Munks of the world never really saw coming. The failures of capitalism are seen by them as part of the scenario outlined by Marx about the eventual collapse of capitalism. Their apparent sympathy with Trump voters is at best pity. The poor souls really think Trump is going to help them. After the collapse of Soviet Communism, the leftist theorists are still waiting for the inevitable dialectic shift in which the proletariat finally rises.

Trump's appeal is populist, reformist, communitarian, and nationalist. It is not primarily racist, or sexist, unless we agree to the tendentious claims of critical theorists that tell us our unconscious acts color even our most altruistic public efforts. Too often the terms "racist" and "sexist" are the Molotov cocktails of today, hurled at the opposition by fanatics. Trump won a larger percentage of the Hispanic and Black vote than the "racist" Romney did in 2012. Trump's reformist agenda is the boldest we have seen in a generation. It is part of a worldwide movement to correct the excesses of globalization, which has led to economic dislocation brought about by the creation of worldwide production chains, "free trade" which is not free at all but highly regulated by prolix treaties and agreements, an integrated world banking system, and the disruption of local industries by automation and cross-border competition.

That Americans should feel like that might seem strange to persons from other lands. How is it that Trump, or any American politician, can complain about the New World Order that the United States, more than any other single country, is responsible for creating? Isn't the system a product of the American Century?

Herein is the complexity of the New Nationalism. Trump in fact does complain that the New World Order leaves out the majority of Americans. They can look at shut-

tered factories, falling middle class wages, and the rise of a new class of super-rich that is controlling and more of the nation's wealth as proof. They also see that the political class cooperates explicitly with global business and produces deals like NAFTA or the admittance of China into the WTO that do not seem to make any sense to them.

They can also react to the seeming loss of sovereignty that international agreements made by the political elite threatens. Obamas' hallmark international deals — Paris, Tehran, and Havana — were all made without the approval of Congress (which is why Trump could reverse them). The MAGA movement shares this zeal for national sovereignty with populist left movements around the world.

It seems that people want to feel they have a say in their own political affairs. They want localism, rooted in a land they have inherited in which their forebears' bones are buried. The fact that Italians, Austrians, or Romanians might feel that way is obvious because of the way their home lands have been transformed by political machinations in the recent past. That Americans can join them in feeling the same way in a secure, separated land which is the center of an empire is an irony that should speak to us of the power of the things the New World Order tries to deny.

Trumpism is also an attack on bureaucracy and government overreach and inefficiency. That a man who had never held any political office was able to win the presidency remains deeply objectionable to the whole class of professional politicians, media members, lobbyists, pollsters, and operatives — a group Trump refers to as “the swamp”. Right now they have the support of many members of the government who are working to subvert the president's agenda and even to remove him from office. Their loyalty to the status quo is greater than to any political party. They have made Washington one of the most affluent cities in America and see Trump as a threat to their continued success.

The MAGA movement also threatens traditional news media, which through newspapers, TV, and radio, have for decades played a major role in interpreting events for people. With new disruptive technologies like You-Tube, Twitter, and Facebook, people can see and hear things for themselves. Often they have different opinions of those events than others, who happen to be working for the news media. Newspapers in America are in sharp decline, as is the consumption of TV news. The New York Times and the Washington Post, once bastions of American political journalism, today only continue to exist because they are supported by the revenues of new technologies which enrich their wealthy new owners. Jeff Bezos pours his Amazon millions into the Post, and Mexico's Carlos Slim, his telecom dollars into the Times. Trump routinely denounces the mainstream news media as corrupt, bias, outmoded, and finds ways to go directly to the people, for instance through Twitter.

So there is much more to Trumpism than economics. But for commentators like De Munk and Blyth the more is racism and sexism. This is a stunningly, ideological approach that shows their continuing reliance on Marxism, and the distorted cultural variants of the Frankfurt School that throw into the toxic mix elements of Foucauldian psychoanalysis, revisionist history, and agnosticism.

Advocates of Trump's MAGA movement would respond by saying it is about love not hate; unity not division; solidarity not scapegoating. Americanism not internationalism. And they would say it is not unique. They would find certain affinities with Nationalist movements across the political spectrum from Greece's SYRIZA, or Italy's

Movimento 5stelle to the Lega Nord in Italy, the Alternative for Germany, UKIP in the UK, the FPÖ in Austria, the PVV in the Netherlands, the National Front in Belgium, and the PNR in Portugal. Marine Le Pen and the French National Front, Andrzej Duda in Poland, Viktor Orbán and Fidesz in Hungary, and Miloš Zeman in the Czech Republic. And on the edges of Europe there are Recep Erdoğan in Turkey, and Vladimir Putin in Russia.

What can we say of China and the New Nationalism? China has long interacted with the West, most dramatically by adopting a Western political and economic system in 1949 and since then, making something uniquely Chinese of the social system that now blends aspects of socialism and capitalism. Certainly there is a deep sense of community and responsibility to the society, suggested by the ancient Confucian terms *Li* and *Yi*. Perhaps it might be necessary when compiling lists of countries where the new nationalism is rising, to put China on the top. In China, Xi Jinping is not commonly referred to as “President Xi”, but as “Chairman Xi”, and favorably compared to Chairman Mao, still revered as the great Chinese national leader. China still sees itself as the Middle Kingdom, as the One Road, One Belt initiative suggests.

The assertions commonly made about globalization need be checked lest we miss the new wave of localism, national identity, emplacement in our own unique cultures, a rejection of being citizens of the world in favor of being citizens of real, not virtual places — villages and towns, cities and countries — not the United Nations, the European Union, the North-American Trade Zone, or the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Economic agreements that facilitate global trade or international security arrangements that ally the interests of nations in self-defense are essential, as they have always been. Much has been gained by the increased commerce among nations and the brisk exchange of ideas among cultures. Yet critics assert that the business models have become social models, outlines for more than the exchange of goods and capital. What needs to be reexamined is the myth of globalization. It is based on several assumptions.

The myth of globalization is based on the idea that artificial political and legal structures, imposed from the top down, can create a new way to self-identify for persons. Human exchange has always been part of history. It has always brought about change in the way people think of themselves. Just how they thought of themselves would be as varied and as unique as the persons and cultures involved. By contrast, today the prophets of globalization offer us more limited options, and we are all supposed to think like them. Everyone is supposed to like Big Macs. Everyone is supposed to listen to American music on their Chinese-made iPhones. Everyone wants to drive the same cars, see the same movies. Pop culture, defined by commercialization, is manufactured, sold, and consumed. It creates a simulacrum of a culture, superficial, perfect for 140 character tweets, or 60 second videos, but unable to meet the larger needs for society that humans have had for millennia.

Rich and lasting cultural symbols grow organically over generations. They are refined by thousands of individual choices and passed on only because they work to make life better. They cannot be made in factories or produced in the halls of the United Nations. They must grow from the ground up.

When Trump says “America first”, but then adds that he expects other nations to act the same way, is that a return to the dark ages of international conflict? When he addresses the Arab and Islamic Summit in Riyadh and says we are not going to tell you how to live. We’ll put our interests first, expect that you’ll do the same, and look together to make deals. Could his transactional approach to international relations be a welcome relief to the mad nation building of the Bush era Neo-Cons? So, for example, if President Trump tells Chancellor Merkel that Germany is not paying its fair share of NATO expenses, is that damaging to international relations or does it add a frankness and realism to the discussion and in the long run improves NATO?

The MAGA movement is also a reaction against mendacity, which takes the form of political correctness and mock concern for the poor of the world. In fact, much of political correctness functions to add a moral simulacrum to the greed-based culture of the global economy. So Bill Gates, after giving away billions in a much publicized campaign in which he urged other billionaires to join, somehow becomes massively *wealthier* after that and magically retains his title as the world’s richest man. Some find unbelievable both him and Warren Buffett who talks about wanting to pay more taxes but somehow keeps getting richer and richer all the while.

Political correctness is an assault on thought itself, not just on expression. We are told we cannot say plain things to people; we must follow speech codes or we must feel guilty for wrongs committed in the past; or we must not express our adherence to traditional morality. It is not that all of these things are bad in themselves. Sensitive and polite people would certainly not wish to offend others in their speech. But the aggressive moral police of the new world order wish to disallow the rights of those who do not believe what they believe. They do not even want to hear other viewpoints and would, if they were able, punish their opponents for even thinking differently. Political correctness is an example of a top down approach to civility and harmony, not far removed from Communist re-education camps. A demand, not an offering; an imposition, not a crudesence; the work of prigs and spoiled children not of persons of virtue.

And so the new nationalism carries with it the marks of a popular movement, full of passion and commitment to something that seems anything but imaginary. Those that would see it only in a negative light fail to see that it, not the New World Order, might be a more vigorous expression of today’s political sentiment.

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## **ЧТО НОВОГО В НОВОМ НАЦИОНАЛИЗМЕ?**

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В статье поднимается вопрос: не является ли так называемый Новый национализм или Новый популизм, породивший Брекзит и избрание Трампа, реакцией на эксцессы нового мирового порядка, сформировавшегося после Второй мировой войны, и есть ли какие-то позитивные аспекты в этом движении или оно является чисто реваншистским? Для многих, кто ценит мультикультурализм и толерантность, Трамп выглядит опасным, в нем легко увидеть протофашиста, подвергающего сомнению необходимость реконструкции национализма. В статье предлагается другой взгляд на это явление, согласно которому оно является продуктом сил, которые будут определять политику не только в США, как минимум, в следующем десятилетии. С этой точки зрения трампизм, охватывающий разные течения по всему миру, является всего лишь естественной реакцией среднего класса на кризис неолиберализма и глобализации, реакцией справа. Это атака на бюрократию Нового порядка и политкорректность, а также на господство традиционных средств массовой информации. Это движение в защиту локальности, солидарности и традиционных ценностей, популистское, реформистское, коммунитарное и националистическое, но не расистское или сексистское, как его представляют критики слева.

**Ключевые слова:** национализм, популизм, Трамп, брекзит, глобализация, локализм