

**Hazon, Yoram. 2018. The Virtue of Nationalism.
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(Hardcover).**

The crawling shift from the unipolar towards a multipolar or even 'multi-order' world also brings about the ethical reassessments of the key concepts in international relations. Yoram Hazon, who is among the leading Israeli conservative scholars and an occasional commentator in the US media outlets such as *The Wall Street Journal* or *The New York Times*, took a bold but, after Brexit and Donald Trump's victory, intellectually lucrative step to defend the international system based on nationalism as its driving force. In *The Virtue of Nationalism*, Hazon argues that nationalism is one of the two juxtaposed ever-present visions of the world order – the other being imperialism. In his opinion, nationalism is, unjustly and contrary to the empirical evidence, perceived as a principle that is more parochial, destructive and dehumanising, reduced to its simplistic interpretations that link it to the horrors of the 20th century. In fact, he claims that it was European imperialism and its inherently universalistic logic that produced the unprecedented violence in the World Wars.

Between the Introduction and Conclusion, the book consists of three uneven parts: *Nationalism and Western Freedom*; *The Case for the National State*, which consumes a half of the entire book, and finally *Anti-Nationalism and Hate*. Hazon introduces us to his intentions by emphasizing that the stigma should once again be removed from nationalism as it was during the Eisenhower's or Raegan's presidency.

In the first part, he briefly goes through the main Western imperial and nationalist eras. The Roman Church being the imperial one, the Protestant Westphalian the nationalist, and the Liberal Lockean imperial, which in his opinion is the key source of today's discredit of the order based on nationalism. For the author, Lockean Liberalism seeks to destroy the two principles of the Westphalian Europe, which is widely praised in the book. The first being "the moral minimum required for legitimate government" envisioned in the protection of the sovereign's people, their families and properties, "justice in the courts (...) and the public recognition of the one God", and the second, "the right of national self-determination" (p. 24). The Lockean utopian vision of the universally rational person is Hazon's ultimate argument against such a form of liberalism, for: "In reducing life to the individual's pursuit of life and property, Locke did not merely offer an impoverished and unsuccessful account of human motivation and action. His political theory summoned into being a dream-world, a utopian vision, in which the political institutions of the Jewish

and Christian world – the national state, community, family, and religious tradition – appear to have no reason to exist.” (p. 33). Hazony is convinced that there is a straight utopian line stretching from Locke over Rousseau and Kant all the way to Ayn Rand and John Rawls, which provides legitimacy for today’s liberal imperialism.

The author is convinced that nationalism had not inflicted more harm on human life in comparison with the universalistic nature of the liberal imperialism, for the latter, in its dogmatic views of identity, is blind towards the collective self-determination. Collective identity is for him empirical evidence, as much as it is the individual identity. A person is prepared to sacrifice life for a family because s/he considers it to be the continuation of the self, which is the logic that stands behind nationalism. It is also the inevitability of ethnic realism. Those nations that try to resist the overarching liberal interpretation of the human nature are to be subjugated to the empire by military power, but also by their cultural denigration as parochial, close-minded and tribal. In its wideness, the empire is intolerant of alternatives. That was the case during the peak of the unipolar world, but in Hazony’s perspective, it is also the case in today’s German-dominated Europe. Germany is not his ideal-type nation but the very embodiment of the empire which is always based on the initial ethnic first-class citizenry.

In *The Case for the National State*, the Israeli scholar claims that nationalism is the middle ground between the principle of anarchy and the principle of empire. The first is based on tribal loyalties and mutual familiarity of the members, and is thus “devoted to the unique needs and interests, traditions and aspirations of particular community that is different from all others” (p. 102). However, such a community is prone to less predictable and never-ending tribal warfare, which in an empire is resolved through loyalty “towards the abstraction of the state” creating “a large space of domestic peace” (p. 102). Hazony claims that intolerance towards the ‘unique needs’ is resolved in the world order based on nationalism as much as it is the case with the loyalty to the unfamiliar. His own utopian ‘Order of National States’ would rely on seven principles, many of which could already be found in the main post-WWII international charters and treaties. The key, claims Hazony, is to avoid federalism and escape the ‘trap’ of subsidiarity, where a federal state gradually crumbles its units’ independence, which has been the main feature of the European Union since its establishment.

Finally, in *Anti-Nationalism and Hate*, Yoram Hazony makes a case for Israel, which in his opinion serves as a scapegoat and depiction of universalistic hypocrisy. While supporting other ‘non-European’ peoples’ struggle for independence and tolerating their internal ethnic intolerance (Turks and Kurds) labelling it as infantile and therefore innocent, liberal Europe detests nationalist Europeans believing that their own kind should know better. According to this perspective, after using nationalism as loyalty towards the unfamiliar, Europeans should proceed to the next Kantian ethical step and show loyalty to the entire humanity. Israel, with its strong national unity and determination is therefore an outcast. This is particularly the case among the intellectual elite of the West, due to the fact that their ‘liberal universalism’ perceives potential national peculiarities, which

Israel undoubtedly has, as threats to the governing order. Hazony, in his Schmittian *Weltanschauung*, asserts that ‘universalists’ are blind to the empirics and the fact that international politics are impossible to be freed of the reality of ethnic attachments until, and if, an external threat emerges. Thus, they are prone to an order that is more intolerant and more violent.

The convincing part of Yoram Hazony’s book lies in the discreditation of the universalistic moral authority that the contemporary empire persistently claims. It has been a topic often processed in the course of the last three decades. Yet, Hazony provides new ‘anti-Enlightenment’ assessments in the era where the ratio is defined in an overly dogmatic sense. Particularism of the dominant universalism is the key message for academic debates that *The Virtue of Nationalism* emits. However, it is the very strength of the book that is also its weakness. While debunking universalism, Hazony does not resist the temptation to pack his own particularistic message as universal. ‘His’ definition of the nation is perennialistic and biblical. It is one that still consists of tribal loyalties and contains the universal prescription of the national state’s emergence. He got caught in the same trap he has put out for the empire, claiming a utopian vision of the nation and the nation state. Hazony’s standards for the nation imply that it should be something like Israel – small but large enough, cohesive and internationally influential. Ironically, it is a world where territorial disputes seem to have been resolved. Moreover, although the author wishes for the future order (without making a differentiation between the world order and an international order) to be carved out of the free market consisting of sovereign national units, it seems that he overlooks the fact that the current world and empires are also products of the initial “free” political market.

Finally, nation/empire dichotomy simplifies the world in a dangerous way, presenting the ‘purified’ solution from the past as the easiest and most humane way of organising the very complex and hardly capturable phenomenon which international order happens to be. As discussions on whether we are entering multipolar, multi-order or even ‘bi-multipolar’ world are thriving, treatises such as the one provided by Yoram Hazony should not be placed outside of their purpose. They serve as fuel for the ideological legitimisation of one of the many forces that are entering or re-entering the international scene.

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