Radical nationalism

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ABSTRACT

Radical nationalism is a political ideology centred on tying an imagined people to a bordered territory. It grows from nationalism's root system into a diversity of political manifestations aimed at sealing the people-territory bond. By theorizing radical nationalism, this article outlines a political-ideological approach that opens new pathways for studying the so-called far right. The article draws on Michael Freeden's conceptual-morphological theory and delineates how nationalism's thin-centred conceptual core – people and territory – can thicken into a full-bodied political ideology: from football and flags to systemic discrimination, deportations, and mass violence. In response to the empirical observation that radical nationalism nurtures historical and contemporary actors across the left-right spectrum, the article offers a political-ideological lens for transhistorical analyses of various political manifestations that sprout and flourish from the exclusionary roots of the modern nation-state.

Introduction

In trying to grasp the peculiar nature of 'the far right today,'[1] scholars have come to manufacture analytical taxonomies to the point of 'terminological chaos.'[2] This over-production of terms and concepts is a legitimate response to an acute observation: the proliferation of politics relating to ethnic, cultural, and national belonging. By departing from the conceptual inflation of the 'far right,' we offer a new approach to capture this phenomenon's ideological entanglements and transhistorical facets. Through the conceptual-morphological theorization of Michael Freeden, our article introduces *radical nationalism* as a political ideology that motivates historical and contemporary actors at both ends of the left-right spectrum.

Although scholarly analyses of the 'far right' have produced invaluable knowledge in populism and extremism studies, this concept is primarily concerned with the present-day and by definition focused on right-wing actors. Intrinsic to the umbrella concept of the 'far right' is that contemporary *populism* becomes compartmentalized apart from overt racism and historical fascism. This now-focus entails a presentist research agenda,[3] in which fascism becomes a past phenomenon and 'populism is a purely analytic category.'[4] This limitation makes researchers into populism reluctant

to explore political-ideological connections between Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler and contemporary political figures like Donald Trump,[5] Marine Le Pen,[6] Victor Orbán,[7] Matteo Salvini,[8] or Jimmie Åkesson of the steadily growing Sweden Democrats.[9] As a result, the alarmed scholarly understanding of populism, viewed as a renewed threat to liberal democracy,[10] comes to a halt after making oblique connections to the heyday of fascism, reducing it to a traumatic flashback, a rhetorical reminder of the discarded politics' perilous potential.

Arguing for a comprehensive ideological and transhistorical approach to these political phenomena, Federico Finchelstein asserts that 'fascism and populism are genealogically connected.'[11] In a notable attempt to produce such a genealogy, Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin have set out to couple populism with nationalism. Their use of the concept of *national populism* implies historical linkages between contemporary political developments and the ideological features of nationalism. However, Eatwell and Goodwin underline that the rise of national populism does not 'signal a return to fascism.'[12] This premature assessment degrades the transhistorical value of their concept and seemingly aligns with the political use of populism as, in the words of María Lara, a 'paradigmatic insult.'[13] It illustrates how this type of analytical positioning, as argued by Benjamin De Cleen and Jason Glynos, 'risks reifying populism.'[14] Symptomatic of this is the way Eatwell and Goodwin claim that national populists 'raise sometimes uncomfortable but legitimate issues that would otherwise remain unaddressed.'[15] To exemplify a 'legitimate issue,' they mention 'the scale and pace of ethnic change,' subsequently arguing that anti-racist critique may 'stifle important debates around immigration and Islam.'[16] Their declaration that national populism is on the rise due to a justifiable claim that 'elites' have failed to acknowledge the fears of the 'people,' echoes the right-wing populist adherence to the idea of an authentic, identifiable people, a unitary whole, implying that certain individuals and groups cannot have equal rights to the national territory.

In political-ideological terms, however, populism is recurringly characterized as a *thin-centred* ideology by simply orbiting the 'antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite,'[17] prescribing a politics focused on, as argued by Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Kaltwasser, the tension between the general will of 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite.'[18] But rather than designating a solely right-wing phenomenon, the antagonistic nature of populism also predisposes it, as famously argued by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, to mobilize the political left.[19] Populism can, in this sense, be understood as a *discourse*[20] characterized by 'down/up antagonism between "the people" as a large powerless group and "the elite" as a small and illegitimately powerful group.'[21] Rogers Brubaker argues that this 'discursive and stylistic repertoire' is intrinsic to state politics, which means that populism is always 'a matter of degree.'[22]

The concept of populism has notable analytical qualities, just like the umbrella concept of the 'far right,' due to its elasticity and broad applicability. Just like sidestepping the generic definition of fascism has been helpful in unearthing heterogeneity and transnational interconnectedness of the fascist movement in interwar Europe,[23] flexible deployment of 'populism' and 'far right' might become handy on empirical ventures into uncharted terrain. But for transhistorical studies of interlinked phenomena, such as fascist metamorphoses in the post-war era, it is beneficial, we argue, to also be equipped with a political-ideological toolkit.

Neither 'populism' nor the 'far right' should be considered full political ideologies. Populism has no manifesto, no iconography of sages, no memorials of foundational events, neither a self-aware history nor a functional historiography.[24] Populism has been called a 'phantom ideology;'[25] it is hardly ever analysed as a full political ideology, although critiques have been voiced against this 'orthodoxy among populism scholars.'[26] The political-ideological charging of populism most commonly derives from the qualifier 'right-wing,'[27] despite observations that left-wing populism is becoming a significant political force across Europe.[28] The left-right dualism is similarly at work when the *far right* is delineated as the 'rightmost end of the ideological left-right spectrum.'[29] While the umbrella concept of the 'far right' has the analytical benefit, as highlighted by Andrea Pirro, of capturing both 'the "(populist) radical" and "extreme" variants of right-wing politics,'[30] it cannot, by definition, capture left-wing political currents oriented towards national redistribution, economic equality, and overall 'anti-capitalism.'[31]

Furthermore, as long pointed out by fascism scholars,[32] the left-right spectrum is not empirically verifiable nor analytically valuable for studying historical fascism. The analytical disarray from the left-right reduction leads to puzzling conclusions by which 'radical right parties' paradoxically can be described as 'left-leaning.'[33] The imprecision from the defining left-right positioning also pertains to notions of the 'extreme right.'[34] Typically referring to a far-out position 'on the right of the right,'[35] the pejorative connotations of 'extremism' has the semiotic function of separating and banishing an undesirable political phenomenon from the acceptable mainstream.[36] It has become what Uwe Backes calls a 'stigma word'[37]; it is highly rejectable by the very actors it aims to categorize and serves rather as discursive 'boundary-work' to fortify political norms.[38]

In other words, the political features ascribed to 'populism' and the 'far right' stems primarily from the instrumental *use* of these concepts rather than from the core of a political ideology. Nevertheless, if populism conveys a power claim based on an imagined people deprived of influence, as argued by Jaakko Heiskanen, it is, by that token, intrinsic to the political logic of the modern nation-state. Moreover, if populism expresses the state's 'principle of representation,' Heiskanen continues, *nationalism* corresponds to the interlinked 'principle of popular sovereignty.'[39] By demonstrating how populism and nationalism are 'underlying logics' that constitute the modern nation-state,[40] Heiskanen opens a pathway for theorizing how the roots of nationalism can grow into a full-blown political ideology.

We call it *radical nationalism*, a political ideology centred on tying an imagined people to a bordered territory. It grows from nationalism's root system into a diversity of political manifestations aimed at sealing the people-territory bond. In the following pages, we employ Michael Freeden's conceptual-morphological approach to sketch its contours. We outline how the *thin-centred* conceptual core of nationalism – people and territory – can *thicken* into a full-bodied political ideology. Our theorization builds on the critical observation that since nationalism is fundamental to modern state-building, political devotion to the promise of nationalism always comes with 'differences of degree.'[41] We theorize radical nationalism as a political move from thin-centred to thickened nationalism, from football and flags to systemic discrimination, deportations, and mass violence. The intensity of this move stems from the degree of nationalistic commitment, the preoccupation with sealing the bond between an imagined people and

a bordered territory. We use the qualifier *radical*, with the organic connotations from the Latin noun *radix* [root], to conclude that nationalism – when firmly rooted in its conceptual core – can flourish into a full-grown political ideology that nurtures a rhizome of past and present actors across the left-right spectrum.

Thin-centred nationalism

Nationalism is generally understood as a set of ideas originating in the early modern period and consolidated through the establishment of modern nation-states.[42] This view was epitomized in the 1980s by three influential nationalism scholars – Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm – who respectively traced nationalism's origins in capitalist industrialization,[43] the invention of book printing,[44] and the advent of mass communication.[45] A shared assumption in these groundbreaking works is that nationalism conveys an ideology that, in the Marxist sense, is scaffolding the social superstructure and licencing capitalist exploitation.

Departing from this superstructural understanding of ideology, Michael Freeden's conceptual-morphological approach to political ideology offers a sophisticated analytical tool to empirically dissect and register the workings of nationalism. In Freeden's theoretical approach, political ideology is understood as a set of political concepts that become temporarily stabilized, or *decontested*. These concepts are located on an axis between the centre and periphery, from core concepts via adjacent concepts to peripheral concepts. The political concepts are constantly changing as they travel across the centre-periphery axis.[46] According to Freeden, a core concept 'is present in all known cases of the ideology in question,' thus 'indispensable to holding the ideology together,' while an adjacent concept is 'crucial in finessing the core and anchoring it – at least temporarily – into a more determinate and decontested semantic field.'[47]

Freeden himself argues that nationalism is a 'thin-centred ideology,'[48] lacking the all-encompassing aspirations characteristic of full-bodied political ideologies. Nationalism does not address fundamental political issues such as the distribution of resources and individual freedom; it has no principal ideas about 'the desired relations between the public and private spheres.'[49] Nevertheless, Freeden continues, nationalism is frequently linked to 'host ideologies,' such as socialism or liberalism, in order to 'reflect the features of the host.'[50] In this view, nationalism's thin-centred character makes it appropriable for full-bodied political ideologies. 'Nationalism oscillates,' Freeden argues, 'between being a distinct thin-centred ideology and being a component of other, already existing, ideologies.'

Our conceptualization of *radical nationalism* builds on Freeden's observation that nationalism, in varying degrees, informs the conservative, liberal, and socialist politics at play in the nation-state arena. Freeden theorizes that 'a thin-centred ideology implies that there is potentially more than the centre,'[51] which in our case signifies that nationalism has the potential of thickening into what Siniša Malešević labels 'a fully-fledged ideology.'[52] This thickening is fed by the dedicated political commitment to the nationalistic promise of sealing the people-territory bond. According to Freeden, nationalism is constituted by a political desire to institutionalize the prioritization and valorization of the nation and thus determine the boundaries for national belonging through time and space.[53] Building on Freeden's observation, we argue that nationalism crystallizes into

two core concepts, *people* and *territory*, which corresponds to Gellner's definition of nationalism as congruence between 'the political and the national unit.'[54] These core concepts can be stabilized and reinforced through articulation with other political concepts; the people-territory prerogative can, for instance, be claimed in reference to religion, culture, or race. This is the move from thin-centred to thickened nationalism.

Thickened nationalism

Political actors of nearly all stripes, from governmental parties to anti-colonial movements, typically depend on nationalist ideas – but they also compromise with these ideas to varying degrees. The premise of nationalism's people-territory complex could, for instance, be challenged by ideas about international solidarity, human rights, multilateral development cooperation, or the global market. Political actors endorsing these values give way to a thin-centred nationalism. Michael Billig describes it in terms of *banal nationalism*: a nationalism that becomes 'common sense' and is expressed in everyday life without its mediators reflecting on it.[55] Cheering for the national football team in the World Cup, or hanging front-porch flags, produce normative naturalization that both masks and fortifies nationalism.[56] Billig offers, in this sense, a way to 'remember' nationalism, making it identifiable and thus analysable, by focusing on the 'unwaved flags' of the everyday.[57]

This line of research has developed into the sub-field of *everyday nationalism*, a more agency-oriented approach focused on the conscious rather than the subconscious aspect of nationalist identity formation.[58] It studies everyday life as a 'place of banal and mundane processes' that, according to Rhys Jones and Peter Merriam, always has the potential to become more pronounced, or 'hotter.'[59] Whereas everyday nationalism focuses on human agency rather than superstructural aspects of banal nationalism,[60] it brings to the fore 'the continuum between banal and hot,'[61] what we theorize as a move from thin-centred to thickened nationalism.

From this theoretical viewpoint, nationalism is always a matter of degree. Whereas historically discredited 'hot' nationalisms are commonly rejected as extremist aversions, everyday reproduction of nationalist ideas, as shown by Hernández Burgos with regard to the Franco regime, is a prerequisite for hot nationalism.[62] The functions and effects of nationalism solidify, as argued by Jon Fox, at the spatial and temporal 'edges of the nation.' Fox conceptualizes the spatial edges as 'the borders (and border-crossing practices) that can make an otherwise implicit nationalism explicit,' whereas the temporal edges refer to 'the historical and developmental moments when nationalism vacillates between its hot and banal variants.'[63]

In other words, the conceptual core of nationalism – an imagined people's claim to a geographical territory – fortifies precisely at the nation's spatial and temporal edges. Nationalism thereby becomes more apparent and threatening to individuals and groups not considered as belonging to the nation. Militarized border control is the most blatant example of nationalistic demarcation,[64] but the edges of the nation can also be experienced through the 'gate-keeping function' of dominant majority groups,[65] and these rituals of exclusion depend on the banal nationalism of the everyday.[66] Minna Liinpää argues that a privileged majority may not pay attention to routinized nationalistic practices, such as passport controls, while such practices are both striking and

inescapable to negatively racialized minority groups; 'those deemed not to belong to the nation are routinely reminded of this.'[67] Since 'the nation merely becomes *louder* for ethnic and racialized minorities,' Liinpää concludes, 'there is not much difference between nationally "ordinary" and "extraordinary" contexts.'[68]

Since the exclusionary nation-state politics is always a matter of degree, nationalism mainly manifests as a thin-centred ideology – but with the inherent potential of thickening into a more full-bodied political ideology. When nationalist ideas are actively 'remembered,'[69] they articulate with other political concepts that can lead to an extension, or thickening, of the conceptual core. Political actors who self-identify primarily as nationalists ratify this ideological thickening. Whether democratic parties, violent organizations, or Lone Wolf terrorists, these actors may be understood as adherents of *radical nationalism*; they are rhizomatic sprouts that flourish from nationalism's people-territory core, nurturing a political ideology that is no longer diluted but distilled, cleansed, and purified.

Examples of full-grown radical nationalism in contemporary history include the infamous regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. They represented a revolutionary form of radical nationalism generically recognized as *fascism*.[70] Michael Freeden argues that the 'particular attraction between fascism and nationalism lies in the fact that both locate the concept of the nation in their respective cores.'[71] Fascism is infused by the struggle for national rebirth, what Roger Griffin calls a 'palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism.'[72] The temporality of the fascist imagination pictures a nation threatened by racial impurity or cultural degeneration, prompting an urgency to save the nation from further decline before it is too late.[73] This imperative is illustratively catalysed by the gendered nature of nationalism: the grounded depiction of the nation as fragile and threatened, in need of protection.[74] Iris Young details how this 'logic of masculinist protection' lies at the very heart of nationalism.[75] Aligned with the revolutionary appeal of fascism, the logic of masculinist protection discards the 'empty present' and craves national resurrection through the rise of the 'New Man.'[76] This mobilizing demand for national rebirth is propelled by a political imperative: a call for action to resurrect paradise lost and make the nation great again. Although that political imperative comes in different degrees, where the farthermost expressions include brutal acts of terrorism,[77] Griffin argues that national rebirth is a 'key feature of fascist temporality' that 'goes hand in hand with a belief in the immortality of the nation or race.'[78,79] This lethal form of radicalization showcases, as Noga Wolff puts it, 'an ultimate expression of the dangerous potential inherent to nationalism.'

Whereas fascism represents a revolutionary form of radical nationalism, more reformist expressions of this thickened political ideology can be found in parliamentary politics across Western democracies. Freeden argues that 'in extreme illiberal forms, nationhood is defined by means of artificially imposing outsider status on *any* unwanted group,' which leads to politics of exclusion in which 'an arbitrary criterion – race, religion, occupation, culture – is invented.'[80] In radical nationalism, exclusion of Others is no longer regarded as an ideological abomination; it is nationalism purified and distilled into a political ideology rooted in the idea of an imagined people's absolute right to a bordered territory. While everyday nationalism, as a thin-centred ideology, is typically conflated with other political ideologies, such as socialism's concept of justice or liberalism's concept of freedom, the purification of nationalism renders a distilled extract

of the people-territory claim.[81] When injected into the length and breadth of socio-political arenas, this purified form of nationalism becomes a thickened political ideology.

Radical nationalism

The move from thin-centred to thickened nationalism, from the intrinsic logic of the modern state to a political ideology in its own right, can be captured by the (in) famous qualifier *radical*. In the political grammar of journalists and scholars alike, the adjective 'radical' is commonly used as a synonym for 'extremist.'[82] While pertaining in this sense to fringe phenomena and far-out positions, well away from an imagined political main-stream, the term *radical* also has a deeper meaning. Deriving from the Latin word for root [*radix*], it serves to denote, as pointed out by Paul McLaughlin, 'fundamental orientation towards roots, foundations, or origins in the socio-political arena.'[83] In this etymological sense, we use radical to spotlight the political orientation towards the roots of national-ism: the dedicated commitment to sealing the people-territory bond, purifying a diluted nationalism into its full potential.

The qualifier is indeed related to the notion of *ultranationalism*, a crucial feature of Griffin's influential definition of generic fascism. However, the prefix 'ultra' here acti-vates similar connotations as the adjective 'extremist'; it is deployed to capture 'forms of nationalism which "go beyond," and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal institutions.'[84] By contrast, the use of *radical* does not demarcate ideological distortion or anomalous outgrowth but instead a political dedication to nationalism in its pure form. By retracing the origins of a diluted or thin-centred ideology, what we identify as the core concepts of people and territory,[85] radical nationalists become recognizable through their devoted political agenda to secure an imagined people's exclusionary right to a bordered territory.

This dedication inevitably pertains to exclusion mechanisms endemic to the people-territory connection, a predicament of the modern nation-state.[86] But since nationalism comes in different degrees, commitment to the politics of exclusion can be less or more radical. In this sense, anti-colonial and socialist-oriented movements for national libera-tion can be nationalistic without being radical – if the conceptual core of the people-territory bond is merely instrumental and not centred on the predominant political goal. Radical nationalism, by contrast, reinforces the exclusionary logic that lies at the heart of identifying an imagined people and securing its claim to a bordered territory. The gradient of intensity in appealing to this exclusionary logic means that radical national-ism can manifest as political parties, carefully abiding by the rules of parliamentary democracy, as well as overtly racist organizations and Lone Wolf terrorists, regardless of their economic orientation on the left-right spectrum.

The analysis of radical nationalism is, in extension, an empirical enterprise; the ideology is used differently by all those who consider themselves radical by returning to nationalism's ideological core.[87] The methodological value of approaching radical nationalism as a political ideology, therefore, depends on the context and research question. But to capture the range of ideological entanglements and transhistorical facets of the so-called 'far right,' analytical attention to radical nationalism is vital. In the following pages, we draw on our research to illustrate how the political-ideological

approach to radical nationalism has enabled us to study different branches of Swedish radical nationalism conjointly.

The radical nationalist rhizome in Sweden consists of various political manifestations.[88] One of these, what we call race-oriented radical nationalism, interconnects historically with the ideological facets of fascism. Today's most blatant manifestation in Sweden is the Nordic Resistance Movement. First established in 1997, the Nordic Resistance Movement constitutes an organization focused on valorizing what they denote as the Nordic race, drawing on ideas forged by interwar fascists in Sweden and Germany. Members of the Nordic Resistance Movement are relatively few in number, but the organization has received substantial media coverage due to its violent actions. The Nordic Resistance Movement has a quite tarnished relation to the party of the Sweden Democrats, which poses a challenge to any scholar focused on ideological connections between them.

The Sweden Democrats represent a culture-oriented manifestation of radical nationalism, distinguished from the Nordic Resistance Movement by downplaying race as a ground for national belonging. As a political party receiving one-fifth of the votes in the Swedish election of 2022, it has become the most powerful manifestation of radical nationalism in the country's history. The Sweden Democrats were founded in 1988 as a merger between a small anti-taxation party and an anti-immigration activist group. It describes the ideological position as nationalist and 'social-conservative'[89] in response to a perceived threat of mass immigration.[90]

Although the Sweden Democrats and the Nordic Resistance Movement frequently distance themselves from each other, they have been organizationally interconnected throughout their entire history (the Nordic Resistance Movement was even founded with financial and administrative support from leading members of the Sweden Democrats).[91] But their interconnectedness becomes even more visible through a political-ideological lens: both organizations adhere to the political ideology of radical nationalism. The orientation towards nationalism's root system is clearly outlined in the Sweden Democrats' official party programme, in which the nation binds people together

> ... over time and space, and creates bonds between the dead, the living, and the unborn generations, as well as between young and old, social classes, political camps, and geographic regions.[92]

In this declaration, the nation is subsequently defined 'in terms of loyalty and a shared identity, language, and culture,'[93] where the concept of *culture* includes 'language, behaviours, customs and holidays, institutions, arts and music, clothing, religion, rituals, games, values and norms for laws and moral systems.'[94] To the Sweden Democrats, the weal of the nation is the point of departure for political themes such as economics, religion, social welfare, defence policies, and environmental issues. The latter is seen as crucial since 'the values of beauty embedded in nature are necessary to cater to our spiritual needs' and because the national 'we' has a responsibility to 'hand over our homeland, country, continent, and planet' in good shape to 'our children.'[95] These political concepts complement the understanding of the nation for the Sweden Democrats. Following Freeden's theorization, political concepts can be decontested, or stabilized, by concepts in their vicinity. In this case, the concepts of *language*, *religion*, *identity*, and *nature* are adjacent to the

ideological core. They serve the stabilizing function of decontesting the nationalist core concepts *people* and *territory*. These adjacent concepts are, in turn, decontested by even more peripheral concepts, in this case, *social welfare, economics, games, music, institutions, clothing*, and *arts*.

Comparably, the Nordic Resistance Movement also pertains to radical nationalism but with a different emphasis. On the organization's website *Nordfront*, the Nordic Resistance Movement categorizes itself as *nationalist*, but here by highlighting *race* as the defining feature:

> We are race-conscious nationalists. By this, we mean that race – biological heritage – explains several cultural and socio-economic differences between different peoples and races. We also believe that our people and race have unique values and should be preserved. [. . .] We believe that compliance with the principle 'one people, one country' enables the establishment of sound and harmonious societies.[96]

The Nordic Resistance Movement adheres to the conceptual core of nationalism – *people* and *territory* – which, in the above quote, is linked to the adjacent concepts of *race*, *biology*, *culture, socio-economics*, and *society*. This entry on the *Nordfront* webpage, entitled 'What we represent,' also links the concept of *nature* to the conceptual core of nationalism. It outlines how division into different races denotes a natural order and that 'Nature is hard and judgemental.'[97] In other words, whereas *nature* for the Sweden Democrats is animated and in need of nurturing, it represents for the Nordic Resistance Movement an expression of origin, divisional power, and unquestionable order.

These two examples from the radical-nationalist landscape in Sweden illustrate how adjacent and peripheral political concepts decontest nationalism's conceptual core of people and territory. The concepts of *nature* and *culture* are adjacent for both actors, whereas *race* only appears in an adjacent position to the core of the Nordic Resistance Movement. How these two political actors employ and decontest the political concepts that encircle the core demonstrates how nationalism can thicken into a more full-bodied political ideology, into radical nationalism, which illustrates a critical pathway to study these political actors conjointly.

Conclusion

To depart from the presentism and left-right dualism that typically characterize scholarly studies of populism, extremism, and the broader far right, this article offers a political-ideological approach. Rather than launching yet another analytical concept, the article theorizes radical nationalism as a political ideology predominantly centred on tying an imagined people to a bordered territory. By growing from nationalism's root system of people and territory, radical nationalism shoots into a rhizomatic diversity of political manifestations across the left-right spectrum, including democratic parties as well as violent organizations and Lone Wolf terrorists. Attention to the political ideology of radical nationalism thereby enables historically informed analyses of various political actors that share an exclusionary commitment to seal the people-territory bond.[98]

Our outline of radical nationalism builds on the observation that 'nationalism and populism are symptomatic of the coupling of two political principles within the

territorial frame of the modern state: the principle of political representation and the principle of popular sovereignty.'[99] This theorization reaches beyond the dualism of 'good and bad nationalisms,' acknowledging that nationalistic politics express 'differences of degree and emphasis rather than principle.'[100] Hence, whereas thin-centred nationalism is typically conflated with other political ideologies, it always has the potential to become more purified and less diluted. The conceptual core of thin-centred nationalism thickens through the political commitment to reinforce this root system, as a *radical* urge to secure an imagined people's exclusionary claim to a bordered territory. In this move, adjacent concepts are linked to the core, and nationalism thickens into the full-bodied political ideology we call radical nationalism. It can manifest differently; radical nationalism can emphasize *race* or *culture*, but also, as we illustrated with the case of the Sweden Democrats and the Nordic Resistance Movement, draw on various politicized ideas about *nature* to stabilize the ideology's conceptual core.

The modern nation-state depends on establishing boundaries and borders vis-à-vis peoples not considered part of the nation, a nationalist idea that entails divisional and exclusionary mechanisms to justify territorial claims. Nevertheless, nationalism is constantly negotiated and challenged by migration and ever-changing populations. Even though political parties typically seek to control the state apparatus and secure the national borders, some actors are more willing to compromise with nationalism by negotiating with other political ideologies. In response to this betrayal, the disloyalty to the nation, culture-oriented parties like the Sweden Democrats and race-oriented organizations like the Nordic Resistance Movement engage in a shared political struggle of securing an imagined Swedish people's exclusionary right to a geographical territory bordered by militarized immigration control. Their commitments to radical nationalism are not, following our theorization, anomalous deviations from mainstream politics; these are sprouts from the roots of the modern nation-state that flourish into fully-grown political programmes.

Notes

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13. M. Lara, 'A Conceptual Analysis of the Term 'Populism', *Thesis Eleven*, 149 (2018), pp. 31–47, at p. 31.

14. B. De Cleen and J. Glynos, 'Beyond Populism Studies', *Journal of Language and Politics*, 20 (2021), pp. 178–195, at p. 178.

15. Eatwell and Goodwin, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, p. 53.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

17. B. Stanley, 'The Thin Ideology of Populism', *Journal of political ideologies*, 13 (2008), pp. 95–110, at p. 102.

18. C. Mudde and C. Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 6.

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