

STATE OF THE FIELD

Nationalism and Media

Michael Skey 

School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Loughborough University, UK
Email: m.skey@lboro.ac.uk

Abstract

The study of media nationalism has had a curious history. Some of the “classic” studies of nationalism have placed the media at the heart of their work but say very little about media theory or research. More recently, studies of populism and nationalist parties have talked quite a lot about the impact of digital technologies but have very little to say about nationalism. This piece first provides a brief overview of some of these classic studies before noting how insights from the study of media, and in particular audiences, began to filter through to nationalism research in the 1990s and early 2000s. It then addresses both the discursive and digital turns that influenced wider debates around the relationship between media and nationalism over the past decade or so, before outlining the limitations of such work and possible avenues for future research.

Keywords: nationalism; national identity; media; communication; digital

Barring the odd exception, the relationship between media and nation has warranted relatively little sustained attention from scholars of either the media or nationalism. Those who study nationalism have either tended to underplay – or, in some cases, overplay – the media’s influence, while showing little interest in wider theories of media and communications. Alternatively, communication and media scholars rarely engage with debates within nationalism studies. In the latter case, the default position seems to be to mention, in passing, that nations are imagined communities before moving on to discuss other, presumably more important, matters.

More recently, the rush to make sense of populist movements and parties has led to a lot of interesting observations about how fake news and misinformation fuel nativist resentment. Such studies generally do not have much to say about nationalism, which is usually conflated with extremism. Some of these contemporary approaches will be addressed in the final part of this article, notably as they draw in wider debates concerning the impact of digital technologies on social solidarities and forms of organization. To begin, the first part of this article outlines how the relationship between media and nation was addressed by some of the “classic” theories of nationalism; we will then note subsequent critiques and developments. The second part addresses the arguments of those who posited the end of national frameworks as a result of intensifying processes of globalization, which were often seen to be linked to the emergence of new communication technologies.

Classic Studies of Nationalism

The classic literature was vitally important for not only taking the study of nationalism seriously but also placing the rise of nations within a broader socio-economic and political context. In short,

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nations were seen as the outcome of particular (usually modern) historical processes and efforts were made to answer the key questions of *what and when is the nation?* Interestingly, the role of media in these broader processes was either largely ignored, as in the case of Hans Kohn or Elie Kedourie, or placed at the heart of any analysis as in the case of Karl Deutsch or Benedict Anderson, some of the most influential early theorists of nationalism.

Of those who emphasized the importance of media, it is also worth noting that there was a tendency to privilege structure or form over content. This can be most strongly seen in Gellner's much-cited reflection on "the facility of modern communications" (1993, 126):

The media do not transmit an idea which happens to have been fed into them. It matters precious little what has been fed in to them: it is the media themselves, the pervasiveness and importance of abstract, centralised, standardised, one to many communication, which itself automatically engenders the core idea of nationalism. (1993, 127)

In communication and media studies, a focus on the ways in which technologies shape human interactions and social structures is commonly labelled "medium theory." Closely associated with the pioneering work of Marshall McLuhan, these approaches challenge the idea that content should be front and center when trying to assess the media's influence and, interestingly, they find an echo in two classic studies of the nation by Karl Deutsch (1966) and Benedict Anderson (1991). In *Nationalism and Social Communication*, Deutsch emphasizes the significance of channels of communication – alongside the growth of markets, industries and towns – in allowing group members to "communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects" (1966, 97). Anderson's work is particularly interesting; not only is it the most cited study of nationalism of all time, but it tends to be used by others to support a view that privileges the importance of content or representations in firing the national imagination (see Skey, 2014a for a critique). Yet, as Sabina Mihelj (2011, 22–23) has argued, *Imagined Communities* says much more about the impact of standardized and centralized facilities of communication that lead, in the case of print-capitalism, to the fixity of vernacular language and the shaping of temporal rhythms, both in the everyday and the eventful.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that the focus of these authors is on structures of communication, given their wider association with an approach that seeks to locate the development and spread of nationalism as a feature of modernity. Beyond ethno-symbolist critiques of this modernist program (which remain beyond the scope of this paper), it is worth flagging one or two other critical voices as they focus more specifically on the place and power of media. First, approaches that view technologies as the drivers of social change have been critiqued for offering a "one-size fits all" model that fails to take into account the varying ways in which such facilities are utilized, adapted, or, in some cases, rejected. For instance, at particular times and places, newspapers underpinned local, religious, or class-based community rather than national, forms of community (Mihelj 2011, 23–24), so we cannot simply assume that media "will automatically engender the core idea of nationalism" (Gellner 1993: 127). In a related argument, Philip Schlesinger (1991) noted that many of the classic theories of nationalism conflated nation and state and, in the process, failed to observe the complexities of both socio-political and media landscapes in many parts of the world. A good example of this tension comes from the ways in which various states have used the media to support particular languages and linguistic groups, with the printed word and then radio and television becoming the center of struggles over linguistic rights and national belonging (Mar-Molinero 2002; Simpson 2008).

A second key criticism was that content, of course, matters. As numerous empirical studies have demonstrated, what gets fed into the media is actually quite important, whether in relation to ordinary, eventful, or crisis periods. In the first case, Billig's (1995) *Banal Nationalism* suggests that is often the most taken-for-granted features of media content that represent both individual nations and a wider inter-national order as normal and natural during routine periods. In the second instance, Dayan and Katz's (1992) *Media Events* argues for the power of television in integrating

(national) societies in profound moments of celebration or commemoration and points to the importance of their “semantic meaning; they speak of the greatness of the event” (1992, 10; see also Skey 2009). Finally, there are numerous studies that highlight the manner in which media content and, in particular, news reporting shifts during periods of crisis or conflict. Research in Europe (Mihelj, Bajt, and Pankov 2009), the Middle East (Nossek and Berkowitz 2006), and Brazil (Jiminez-Martinez 2020) indicate that media outlets use much more hyperbolic and exclusionary language, which is *designed* to generate a distinct sense of “them” and “us” during these periods.

This leads us to a final criticism of the classic literature. When it comes to making sense of the relationship between media and nationalism, we hear a fair amount about what the media does to people but almost nothing of what people do with media. A second wave of research, drawing directly on insights from the burgeoning field of audience or reception studies, sought to redress this balance.

The Discursive “Turn”

In her book, *Mediating the Nation* (2005), Mirca Madianou draws a distinction between approaches that emphasize the power of the media in inculcating (Deutsch 1966; Anderson 1991) and sustaining (Billig 1995) a sense of national identity among the masses – and those that focus attention on the ways in which culture shapes people’s responses to media. In the latter case, the key text is Liebes and Katz’s *Export of Meaning* (Liebes and Katz 1993), which is a study of audience responses to the US television series *Dallas*. Focusing on groups in Israel, the United States, and Japan, it is argued that the show was “appropriated in different ways according to ... ethnic and cultural background” (Madianou 2005, 20). Liebes and Katz’s work was part of a new wave of research within media studies (Seiter, Borchers, Kreutzner, and Warth 1989) that emphasized the critical reception of media texts and challenged the idea that viewers were passive consumers of the media. The tenets of reception studies also filtered through to research on the nation. Feminist scholars such as Lila Abu-Lhugod (2008) and Purnina Mankekar (1999) conducted research to show how gender shaped the ways in which audiences responded to narratives of nation, while others made related claims with regards to ethnicity (Liebes and Katz 1993) and class (Morley 1980). Elsewhere, language scholars rightly noted how in multi-lingual states, many linguistic groups were often excluded from mainstream programming outright if the state privileged a dominant language for mass media content (Githiora 2008).

These studies were not only important in highlighting the diversity of experience within a given nation but also focused attention on questions of dominance and power. In relation to media, this meant thinking more critically about how the nation was represented – *and* in whose interests. If the dominant vision of India was defined in terms of Hinduism and the caste system, how might Muslims and other marginalized groups construct their own narratives of belonging and community, whether national or otherwise? If Britishness was primarily articulated in relation to the mores and values of white, middle-class men from England, what did that mean for ethnic minorities, women, and those in other regions (Morley and Robins 2001)? Asking these types of questions encouraged scholars to not simply assume that media operate as a unifying force but to investigate whether, and in what ways, the media might bring people together – or alternatively generate further divisions within a given social setting (Skey 2014; Skey Kyriakidou, McCurdy, and Uldam 2016).

Such an approach was broadly in keeping with the discursive “turn” underway in much of the social sciences at this time. Nations were no longer seen as stable and homogeneous entities, naturally-occurring “units of analysis” that provide the basis for academic enquiry. Instead, they were increasingly conceptualized as discursive formations (Calhoun 1997) or frameworks for “understanding and interpreting experience [and] making sense of the world” (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, and Grancea 2006, 207). Some, such as Billig (1995), argue that national frameworks still matter and that the mass media remains crucial in underpinning them, primarily through the

routine ways in which it frames stories in national terms and, in the process, addresses national audiences.

Alternatively, an influential, and rapidly growing body of work, argues that nations were not only contingent and contested but are also becoming increasingly obsolete in an era defined by intensifying processes of globalization. Scholars such as Anthony Giddens, Kenichi Ohmae, Robert Cooper, and Ulrich Beck note the growing interdependency of the global economy and the overpowering of borders by movements of people and products and thus posit a new era of cosmopolitan relations. It is perhaps not surprising to note that the media was often viewed as a key driver of globalization (See Rantanen and Jimenez-Martinez 2019 for an overview) whether in relation to the rise of global media corporations (Zhao and Chakravartty 2007), new types of hybrid media culture (Kraidy 2005), the tastes of trans-national audiences (Aksoy and Robins 2000), or the expanding networks of political activists (Bennett 2004). But it is the rapid spread and popularization of a set of relatively novel communication technologies, built around the production and dissemination of digital data, that is seen to represent the greatest threat to the primacy of the nation, leading – so the argument goes – to a new type of global, networked society (Castells 2011).

Nations in the Digital Age

According to its most celebrated proponent, Manuel Castells, the contemporary era is defined by networks – and a network logic – that is built around the production and management of information and comes to overpower both traditional hierarchical structures (state, religion, political parties) and parochial forms of identity and solidarity. It is perhaps not surprising to note that the nation-state features is one of the key losers in this transformation and that recent nationalist-populist uprisings are seen as a partial response to it. Interestingly, arguments concerning the power of the internet to underpin a new type of society are not so far removed from those which, as we noted above, emphasize the mass media's role in inculcating novel forms of national community and organization. They have also been subject to similar critiques, notably that, in viewing technologies as primary causal agents, they ignore both individual agency and the wider socio-cultural contexts in which such technologies are developed, employed, enjoyed, or rejected (Van Dijk 1999).

Beyond those who attribute epoch-defining properties to digital technologies, there are a number of other arguments worth noting when it comes to the place and status of the nation in a digital age. Many have pointed to the impact of the growing mobility of human populations in challenging national frameworks of meaning and practice (Karim 2003; Rantanen 2005). The primary focus has been on diasporic groups who live in one country but maintain relations with another through family and/or cultural links, using a growing range of communication technologies (satellite television, mobile phones, email, VoIP). A number of brief points are worth making here. First, as studies of “long-distance nationalism” (Fuglerud 1999) have argued, such groups may use media to actively promote national allegiances and priorities rather than undermine them. Second, while diasporic media do, of course, contribute to the growing complexity of many media landscapes, their impact is often negligible beyond the communities that support them. Third, while they are seen to generate “critical distance” among users (Aksoy and Robins 2000), the challenge they represent to national frameworks is not always clear given that they often continue to define themselves in national terms (Boczkowski 1999; Poblocki 2001; Miller and Slater 2000).

Elsewhere, a second significant strand of research has emerged in relation to the recent rise – and political successes – of populist leaders and parties around the globe. Here, the argument is that digital media have had a central role in allowing previously insignificant groups to spread virulent and exclusionary nationalist rhetoric, thereby challenging more liberal narratives of national community and undermining established social and political institutions (Udupa 2019). There is plentiful talk about the resurgence of nationalism and much concern about how to deal with these “new” forms of nationalist sentiment (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018).

Much of this work has been provocative, not least in highlighting the agency of media users in creating content (participation) and the shift towards more extreme claims and counter-claims (polarization) in a media environment defined by information overload and the power of algorithms. Put simply, it is divisive, emotion-laden content that usually gets liked, shared, and pushed. The problem, however, is not so much how these scholars discuss media but how they understand nationalism. For example, Christian Fuchs's (2018, 2020) recent books about nationalism and the internet focus on the political sphere and, more specifically, the activities of right-wing, authoritarian groups, thereby associating nationalism with extremism.

This is a commonplace in studies of the “new” nationalism in the west (Norris and Inglehart 2019), but similar issues can also be found in relation to studies of digital nationalism in other non-western settings. For instance, much of the work on Chinese digital nationalism has tended to focus on more “extreme” examples, such as online attacks against Japanese or Taiwanese “targets” (Liu 2006; Wu 2007). Even Florian Schneider's (2018) commendable book on China, which covers an impressive range of topics, including search, hyperlinks, and regulation, still uses two extreme cases – the Nanjing Massacre of 1937–1938 and contemporary disputes over islands in the East China Sea – to showcase key arguments. Elsewhere, a recent study of cyber-nationalism in Pakistan focuses on a terrorist attack on a school during a time of “national crisis” (Kalim and Janjua 2019).

The problem here is not studying the links between nationalism and extremes per se but rather *only* discussing nationalism in these terms (Mihelj and Jiminez-Martinez 2021, 332). This is a critique that Billig directed at the academy and policymakers over two decades ago in the aforementioned *Banal Nationalism*. Reducing nationalism in this way matters for two crucial reasons. First, rather than simply viewing nationalism as an exclusionary political ideology, it is much better understood as an established belief system, broadly accepted by many people around the globe, which suggests that “the world is (and should be) divided into identifiable nations, that each person should belong to a nation, that an individual's nationality has some influence on how they think and behave and also leads to some responsibilities and entitlements” (Skey 2011, 5). Second, the articulation of this idea cannot be simply reduced to the activities of right-wing politicians and their online followers. It is also about, for example, everyday, seemingly innocuous, conversations about holidays, food, and sport (Skey and Antonsich 2017b). Just as importantly, the extreme outbursts *only* make sense in relation to the unremarkable stuff that seems to generate much less concern or interest (Skey and Antonsich 2017a, 324–325). So, what of this “unremarkable stuff”? Is there any evidence that national frameworks routinely continue to inform communication forms and content, or are new ways of organizing, producing, and engaging with media coming to the fore?

Where Is the Evidence?

When trying to make sense of the place of the nation in a digital era, “news” seems like an obvious place to start. First, it represents a key plank in many of the original arguments around the significance of mass media to national imaginaries; and, second, there is no doubt that digital technologies have fundamentally altered the ways in which news is collected, collated, presented, and engaged with. In many parts of the world, the popularity of many traditional news sources has fallen dramatically, and consumption practices have also transformed (Siles and Boczkowski 2012). For instance, a number of studies (Boczkowski 2010; Soffer 2013) have pointed to the impact of rolling news and time-shifting and video-on-demand on the simultaneous consumption of media products, thereby undermining the link between ritualized forms of practice and (national) imagination (Anderson 1991). At the same time, much remains familiar in terms of journalistic practices (Sonwalkar 2005), news content (Berger 2009, Hafez 2007, Soffer 2013), and audience preferences (Tunstall 2007). As Guy Berger observes, “it would ... appear that many news institutions in cyberspace still retain the character of prior media in regard to three

features: preferencing local and national news, domesticating news about other countries, and reflecting imbalanced flows between First and Third World countries” (2009).

If we look beyond news to other types of content, it is not hard to find evidence for the continuing salience of nationally inflected content and priorities across a range of media and locales. In relation to television, empirical studies have been conducted across a host of formats, and settings, including soaps (Kumar 2010; Munshi 2012; Gamage 2018; Negra, Pike, and Radley 2013), comedy (Medhurst 2007; Perkins 2010), drama (Dhoest 2004a), lifestyle (McElroy 2008; Hutchings and Miazhevich 2010), reality programs (Dhoest 2004b; Volčič and Erjavec 2015), documentaries (Roy 2007; Roosvall 2009), and sport (Tzanelli 2004; Visacs 2011). Even the rapid growth of digital television platforms with a more global purview, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, has not necessarily diminished the salience of national frameworks (Lobato 2019). Netflix, which looks to position itself as a global television internet company, often privileges locally produced content alongside its big-budget US productions; further, it has to contend with national-level regulations (quotas, obscenity laws, and public service broadcasting protections) and has a restricted presence and appeal in many parts of the world (Lobato 2019, 144–161).

When it comes to the activities of other large-scale commercial producers, the increasingly globalized flows in programs, formats, and genres around the world has been used to evidence the emergence of a more global media culture. These connections are significant, not least in generating networks of trans-national media workers, but “cultural proximity” (Straubhaar 2007) is still an important factor in determining which products succeed in overseas markets. As Albert Moran has argued, in relation to TV formats, modifications are generally required to suit the preferences of audiences and the demands of regulators. As a result, the production, regulation, and reception of these “global formats ... continue[s] to be anchor[ed] ... in the ongoing reality of the national” (2009, 158).

This argument is also borne out by studies into promotional culture, where marketing campaigns are often “localized” to suit national preferences and mores (Zhou and Belk 2004). Similarly, the literature on place branding has pointed to the ways in which nations are also being aggressively marketed on a global scale in order to attract inward investment and build political alliances (Kaneva 2011; Anholt 2016). Hosting and participating in mega events is a key plank within many of these campaigns, and, while such events are often global in nature, they are also generally framed in terms of competing nations operating within a taken-for-granted *international* framework (Grix and Lee 2013; Jansen and Skey 2020).

Finally, given the interest in user-generated content, in general, and the topics of digital identity and community, in particular, (see Baym 2015 for an overview), it is perhaps surprising to note that relatively little of this work has explored the extent to which the practices of ordinary users may be informed by national categories, preferences, and sensibilities. What research does exist can be broadly divided into two areas: the first addresses everyday posts and interactions, often using qualitative approaches, and tends to explore the way certain individuals represent themselves as (more or less) national (see, for example, Zhao, Massey, Murphy, and Fang 2003; Kim and Yun 2007; Sasada 2006; Mainsah 2011; Bouvier 2012; Soffer 2013; Szulc 2017; Trost 2018). The second focuses on more ecstatic forms of nationalism (Skey 2009) and tracks a wider range of users through network and sentiment analysis to demonstrate the salience and resonance of the nation during moments of widespread media coverage and heightened emotional registers, whether sporting (Yu and Wang 2015), political (Kjeldsen 2016), or involving other types of “national” media events (Stewart 2020). It is worth reiterating that, while these two bodies of work are often seen as distinct, there is a good argument for theorizing them in relation to each other. Just as Billig (1995) argues that banal forms of nationalism make ecstatic events meaningful, so do ecstatic events illuminate the banal, temporally structuring disparate lives, providing a sense of communal release and a significant bank of “shared” memories. Just as importantly, it is widespread media coverage of such events that represents the nation (albeit for a limited period) as a concrete community that can be seen, heard and idealized (Skey 2006, 148).

The (National) Architecture of the Online World

If media content in the digital era is still showing a good deal of evidence for the continuing significance of national frameworks, what of studies that address the overall structure of the online world and how it is developed, organized, and regulated?

Research into the architecture of the internet is growing apace but tends to focus on technical issues. Those interested in the study of nationalism have, however, begun to examine the ways in which the digital environment recreates national distinctions and ways of thinking, identifying three key mechanisms: “the architecture of the internet domain name system, the bias of algorithms engrained in digital platforms and the formation of national digital ecosystems (Mihelj and Jiminez-Martinez 2021, 335).

The first of these is perhaps the most obvious and widely studied (Shklovski and Struthers 2010; Szulc 2016, 2017) and points to the development and continuing use of country-level domains as part of the domain name system. As part of this system, website and email addresses are clearly distinguished for each nation (e.g., uk for the United Kingdom) and contribute to the nationalization of online spaces and communications.

The second mechanism, algorithmic bias, refers to the manner in which search engine outputs, and other forms of recommendation, are shaped by both wider structural (ownership, regulation, commercialization) and personal factors (preferences, membership of networks, and social categories). Much of this work has focused on gender and ethnicity, but there is also evidence to suggest that national frameworks impact these processes, with search engines providing different information to users depending on where they happen to be located. The biggest digital platforms, such as Google and Amazon, have country-specific versions (google.nl or amazon.co.uk) and often incorporate other features that are framed in national terms, such as the Google Doodle referencing national holidays or particular historical events.

A further example of this feature comes from Schneider’s in-depth study of the Chinese case (2018), where the state tightly regulates what users can and cannot see so that some specific search terms are banned and others are carefully managed. For instance, searching Tiananmen Square on Baidu, the main Chinese search engines, produces very few results compared to a related search on Google (Schneider 2018, 68–69). These measures are often justified in terms of the public good and the need to protect citizens from damaging foreign influences.

Early visions of a global network where users from around the world could effortlessly interact have, then, proved somewhat fanciful. This is partly about the continuing significance of linguistic and cultural differences – even in places where Western digital platforms have superseded local alternatives. For instance, Danny Miller and his colleagues’ (2016) sprawling ethnographic study of social media users in different countries points to the importance of local preferences and traditions that shape the everyday uses and understandings of such technologies. In the case of Brazil, they argue “social media helps Brazilians to become even more Brazilian than they were able to be in the past” (Miller et al. 212).

Elsewhere, we see the emergence of online national ecosystems, often linked to powerful states outside the West. China is the most obvious example of this, with state-regulated commercial organizations providing Chinese alternatives to all of the main US platforms. Russia is another example where “local” social networking sites such as Odnoklassniki and VKontakte continue to attract more users than the main “Western” alternatives (Baran and Stock 2015). However, the development of these types of “ecosystems” are not simply linked to online spaces controlled by more authoritarian regimes; they are also evidenced by the ways in which websites are linked to each other. For instance, Halavais’s (2000) ground-breaking study of hyperlinks, almost two decades ago, showed that most websites linked to others within the same country, and these patterns have been confirmed by others (Bharat et al 2001, Segev, Ahituv, and Barzilai-Nahon 2007).

There is one final argument that is worth flagging in relation to this topic and that concerns developments around “artificial intelligence” and what Paul Goode has labelled “AI Nationalism”

(2021). As for studies of identity and community (noted above), while there has been huge interest in the topic of AI in both the social and computer sciences, the question of how national frameworks might shape the development of such technologies, and their potential impacts around the globe, have been notable for their absence. Goode notes how states increasingly compete, between themselves and against corporations, to manage and manipulate data to both reinforce their own internal authority as well as promoting themselves on a global scale. He also argues that AI nationalism could be particularly troubling in exacerbating existing divisions within a nation through the building of systems that incorporate cultural biases that privilege some at the expense of others. Finally, he suggests that nationalism scholars should pay more attention to AI from a methodological perspective, a point that will be picked up in the final section where I offer a few suggestions on how the relationship between media and nation might be more productively explored through further research.

Theorizing and Studying Media Nations and Nationhood in the Contemporary Era

This article began by arguing that the relationship between media and nation has been neglected by scholars of both nationalism and the media. Books directly addressing this relationship can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand, and while journal papers are more plentiful they are often limited by the ways in which they understand and/or theorize the nation. In broader terms, it appears that arguments made in the early 2000s around the death of the nation seem to have been an over-exaggeration. This is not to suggest, however, that processes of globalization have not had profound impacts on people's everyday lives and, in particular, the ways in which they identify, and engage, with others. Therefore, what we require are theoretical approaches that are able to navigate a path between, on the one hand, theorizing nations as contingent and contested while, on the other, exploring the ways in which they are treated *as if* they are real, concrete entities with a meaning and significance in numerous people's lives (Skey 2011, 9–21). In the latter case, we also need to actively investigate when, and why, national frameworks come to matter in relation to both routine interactions but also in moments of crisis or celebration. There is an established literature dealing with such everyday (practice theory, mundane reason, ethnomethodology, presentation of self, tacit knowledge, entitativity) and eventful (rituals, solidarity, emotions, affect) issues in a range of disciplines across the social sciences, and scholars of nationalism should be encouraged to engage with these approaches in a much more concerted manner (Skey and Antonsich 2017a).

Likewise, those in media studies need to move beyond Anderson's celebrated aphorism concerning "imagined communities," to think more fruitfully about the ways in which research around, say, media practices, events, rituals, and users, as well as affordances and affects, could open up new avenues for theory and research in relation to the nation. Elsewhere, in terms of method, we now have available a range of naturally occurring data, including in the cases of media users, original posts, links, likes, and comments, which could be productively exploited through a range of micro and macro perspectives from discourse and content to network analysis. Studies of big data are being used to inform analyses of gender, racism, and social movements – why not nationalism beyond the standard stuff about Trump, Brexit, and the Five-Star Movement?

Finally, there should be a greater interest in trying to bring these range of insights and features together to think more critically about how they continue (or otherwise) to inform a taken-for-granted understanding of the world as a world of nations. As I have argued before (Skey 2014b), making a distinction between the mediation of individual nations and the mediation of nationhood may offer a particularly productive way of theorizing the continue power of nationalism in the contemporary era. Individual news stories, advertising campaigns, or Weibo posts may offer fascinating insights into the ways in which a particular version of this or that nation is articulated, by whom, and for what purposes. But these often frantic, sometimes ferocious debates around

national belonging and entitlement rarely challenge the legitimacy of nationalism as an established and, often taken-for-granted, framework for making sense of the world.

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