

**Athena S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby eds., *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations***

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groups, and the incumbent elites' ability to manipulate their relations (p. 22), we can predict the dynamic of opposition during prolonged economic crises.

According to Lust-Okar, an "opposition group's inclusion or exclusion from the formal political sphere, and the structure of contestation within which a group acts, influences the incentives that the opponents face when deciding whether or not to challenge the incumbent elites." (p. 68) In a unified structure of contestation, inclusive and exclusive, we find that as an economic crisis drags on the opposition is increasingly willing to challenge the government since they do not expect to be repressed more severely if they join with more radical groups to demand political reform. However, in a divided structure of contestation, the dynamics are quite different since some groups are allowed into the system while others are not. Included opponents that are allowed to challenge the regime pay lower costs for mobilization than illegal opponents do; however, their demands are constrained as they must seek balance between the restrictions of the incumbent elites and popular dissatisfaction. As a result, we are more likely to witness such groups mobilizing early on in an economic crisis in order to relieve popular pressure without creating an unstable situation that may be exploited by opponents outside the system. In contrast, illegal opponents face higher costs for mobilizing against the state, but they are also more capable of capitalizing on the rising popular discontent that usually accompanies prolonged economic crises.

To determine the dynamics under each structure of contestation, Lust-Okar utilizes formal models to build hypotheses and then combines them with case studies from Morocco, Jordan, and Egypt for validation and interpretation. By focusing on the structure of contestation in each of the cases Lust-Okar's theory is borne out through the case studies. She shows how Jordan and Egypt under Nasir and Sadat had unified structures of contestation, and as a result, political opponents were more willing to challenge the incumbent elites as the crises continued. On the other hand, in Morocco and Egypt under Mubarak, there was a divided structure of contestation. In these cases, the legal opposition was unwilling to challenge the state as the economic crises dragged on.

Lust-Okar's contribution in this book is threefold: first, she combines formal models with detailed case studies from the Middle East; second, she contributes to our understanding of the impact of economic crises on political reform; and last but not least, she focuses on the role of institutional rules that govern the opposition, demonstrating that political systems are independent of political regimes — a dimension that is usually overlooked in studies on authoritarian regimes, as the main assumption is that formal institutions make little difference in such regimes.

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Leoussi, Athena S., and Grosby, Steven eds. *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

This important collection of 20 new essays on ethnosymbolism brings together some very strong studies from various theoretical, national, and comparative perspectives. According to the editors of this interdisciplinary and collective effort, the core concept of "Ethnosymbolism" in itself had been coined by Anthony D. Smith in his numerous books, including *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), *National Identity* (1991), and *Nationalism in a Global Era* (1996). (And Professor Smith has written a welcome afterword here.) In their Introduction, in order to articulate the concept of ethnosymbolism in terms of time, space, and culture, both editors argue that: "For a nation to exist, there must be a symbolic representation of a territory such that, when acknowledged and thereby incorporated as part of the understanding of the self, a territorial relation, a territorial kinship, is posited over time." (p. 6) Obviously, these shared symbols of a nation located in a given place have to be defined, negotiated, and accepted by a group or nation.

The first half of the book is more conceptual, theoretical, and interdisciplinary, while the second half gathers twelve case studies related to a specific country or nation, with examples coming from all continents, including (among many themes) post-Apartheid South Africa, the Taiwan/China dilemma, Aborigines in Ecuador, the Middle East, and Israel. In the first section, two authors try to link national culture with national identity and nationalism in a given country, in this case with the classical music of Vaughan Williams in England.

In the first chapter, following Anthony Smith, Danielle Conversi situates and conceptualizes ethnosymbolism in her own terms: “Ethnosymbolism underlines the continuity between premodern and modern forms of social cohesion, without overlooking the changes brought about by modernity. The persisting features in the formation and continuity of national identities are myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols.” (p. 21)

Further on, Conversi's opening chapter also explains that ethnosymbolism relies on what she identifies as “two streams of thought,” understood as oppositions: “instrumentalism as opposed to primordialism, and modernism as opposed to perennialism.” (p. 15) When trying to define more precisely the contents of ethnosymbolism, she indicates that in order to understand this concept, “Myths of ethnic descent, particularly myths of ‘ethnic chosenness’ lie at its core.” (p. 21) Moreover, after providing a critique of this concept, Conversi concludes her overview of ethnosymbolism by stating that among its key elements, the “myth of a ‘golden age’ of past splendor is perhaps the most important.” (p. 22)

Among the most rewarding chapters is Athena Leoussi's (chapter 11) which focuses on the national symbols of seven post-communist countries, including Poland, the Hungarian and Czech Republics, and Slovakia, plus the Baltic states, using Smith's concept of a “dominant ethnies” or “dominant nation.” (p. 161) In fact, the end of the Soviet era was for these countries a unique opportunity to reformulate and redefine their own national identities through their new constitutional preambles and a brand new culture of state. Here, Leoussi presents and discusses each country's renewed identity, highlighting how the “official” past can be reconstructed and reinterpreted. In many ways her solid conceptual framework on the renewed state symbols could be adapted and re-used as well for other cases studies (other countries, other nations). (p. 163)

Titled “The Power of ethnic traditions in the modern world,” Anthony Smith's epilogue is timely. Without commenting on every chapter where Smith is generously quoted, this portion focuses on concepts like nationhood, landscape, religion, and ethno-history. The author revisits and re-conceptualizes the book's main ideas.

Overall, I liked this salient book for many reasons but mainly because it concentrates on a fundamental aspect that is too often overlooked nowadays, especially in political science and international relations: the symbolic dimensions or simply the symbols. (p. 6) For readers who are already familiar with ethnosymbolism, *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism* will surely be an important addition for two reasons: for its excellent conceptual articulation of ideas but also for the diverse applications in the many societies offered here. For the newcomer in either the social sciences or history, this overlooked book is clear enough to give an efficient and useful introduction to ethnosymbolism.

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Parsi, Trita. *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

In *Treacherous Alliance*, Trita Parsi undertakes the daunting task of telling the story of the triangular relationship between the United States, Iran, and Israel from the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 to the present. Geopolitics and a penchant for *realpolitik*, according to Parsi, serve as the foundations of this triad. In the process, he rebuts the popular idea that Iranian-Israeli enmity is based for the most part on ideological and cultural differences, otherwise referred to as a clash of civilizations. “Blinded by the contemporary rhetoric,” Parsi explains, “most observers have failed to notice a critical common interest shared by these two non-Arab powerhouses in the Middle East: the need to portray their fundamentally strategic conflict in ideology. (p. 2)

Ideology and the subsequent diplomacy of emotions were and continue to be used by Israel and Iran to obtain support from other actors and greater geopolitical power. “The conflict between Iran and Israel wasn't sparked by an ideological difference, nor is it ideological fervor that keeps it alive today,” the author explains. “Certainly, this does not mean that the ideologies of these states are irrelevant; at a minimum, the rhetoric they produce makes a political accommodation more difficult.” (p. 262) After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, for example, Israel depicted Iran as the enemy-Other “mad mullah” and characterized its nascent rivalry with Tehran “as one between the sole democracy in the Middle East and a totalitarian theocracy that hated everything the West stood for.” (p. 3) Similarly, Iran sought to define its regional power struggle with Tel Aviv along ideological lines.