

Valér Veres

Nation and Migration in Europe – Review
Csepeli, György, Örkény, Antal (2021): *Nation and Migration: How Citizens In Europe Are Coping with Xenophobia.*
Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 224 p.

The book is part of a rich body of work by Csepeli and Örkény, employing a sociological approach to national consciousness, national ideologies and nationalism. This volume represents their second major work, yet it stands as the first comprehensive, separate volume examining the relationship between national identity and xenophobia from a European perspective, while also attempting to classify the national identifications of peoples in European countries into typologies. This book links the national problem with the issue of migration. As the authors point out in the introduction to the volume, the concepts of nationality and migration were not linked in the 1970s, and the nation, along with national identity, was not a significant topic of sociological or social psychological research. Since then, partly because of the intensification of migration processes, but also because of other phenomena, the problem of nationality and xenophobia have become central issues in European societies, bringing the link with migration to the forefront.

Drawing on the experience of their own work, the authors argue that national identity has a broad, public emotional foundation in sociological or social psychological terms, upon which elements of attitudes, values and knowledge are built akin to a pyramid (Csepeli–Örkény 2021. p. 15). Placed at the top of the pyramid are the ideological elements of national identity, which are developed and maintained by the elite, the power group in society. The thesis of the hierarchical construction of national identity has been previously presented in earlier works, mostly elaborated in the volume “Nemzet által homályosan” (Csepeli 1992).

The research perspective of the authors initially focused on Hungary, before extending it to surrounding countries and the 1995 ISSP survey was used as a basis for examining the issue of national identity in a European context.

The range of research questions explored in this volume is broader, with particular emphasis on the following:

Firstly, building on the concepts of István Bibó and J. Szűcs (1983), they attempt to demonstrate the divergence in the national problem along three different historical regions of Europe – a divergence that persists to the present day. Using newly collected data, they also seek to provide empirical evidence of the dichotomy between the cultural nation and the civic nation, a distinction that has been extensively examined and discussed in the literature. This is followed by a research effort to explore new manifestations of xenophobia, highlighting their primary connection to migration, which is also a key research topic of this volume. To conceptualize this, they adopt the GFE theory (Zick et al. 2008), which posits that manifest prejudice and discrimination are explained by the hypothesized existence of general affective and cognitive patterns that predispose groups to potential conflicts (ibid. 18).

Perhaps the most important research question of the book is how attitudes toward other groups, shaped by migration experiences, vary across different European regions following Szűcs' categorization. In Western Europe, where there's sustained everyday interaction with immigrants, the cognitive argumentative power of 'otherness' is necessarily weak. In Eastern Europe, however, the fears generated by – in the authors' words – 'populist politics and media dominated by the central political will demonise and disperse the presence of migrants' (i.m. 20)

The volume has four major chapters. The first chapter (The Rise of Nations: Modernity and Nations Coming into Existence) is a theoretical chapter. While some elements of this framework have already been explored in Hungarian in the authors' previous works, the conceptualization presented here may introduce new elements to English-speaking readers. There are separate subchapters on the three historical regions of Europe, discussing about social entropy, ethnonational minorities in modernity, and ethnopolitics and globalization. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the interrelationships between these concepts and can serve as a valuable educational resource.

The second chapter (National Identity in Europe: The Knowledge Base of National Identity) is built upon a synthesis of theoretical and empirical findings. Drawing from previous papers (Csepeli 1992, 1997, Csepeli and Prazsák 2015, Csepeli and Örkény 2018, Hunyady 1998) and recent research, the chapter presents the variations in the social construction of knowledge about the nation and national identities in Europe.

An interesting feature of the first part of the chapter is that it uses an 18th-century Styrian tourist guide for a historical analysis of stereotypes which reveals 'surprisingly' accurate portrayals of different European nations. The authors, linking previous research findings from the Carpathian Basin (Csepeli, Örkény and Székelyi 2000) with the historical stereotypes mentioned above, observed that stereotypes of national and ethnic groups align along an east-west axis. Groups living in the "East" are perceived as less competent but morally more solid, whereas those in the "West" are seen as highly competent but morally weaker.

In the third chapter (Attitudes toward Immigrants in Europe: The European Crisis and Xenophobia), the authors tested the aforementioned GFE syndrome of Zick et al. (2008) to explore the connections between xenophobia, national identification and prejudice. In doing so, they seek to answer some of the research questions formulated earlier, which we will revisit later.

In the fourth and final chapter (Migration, New Minorities, and the Social Integration of Migrant Groups), the issue of migration is examined from a sociological perspective. The chapter begins by reviewing the recent history of the phenomenon, followed by an account of existing types and global trends. The results of several empirical studies are also presented in the volume, from a comparative perspective.

A library of literature addressing the issues raised has been produced over the past decades, offering a plethora of theoretical and empirical models. The theoretical explanatory concepts and empirical models featured in this volume are the outcome of a deliberate selection process. However, efforts have been made to use models that allow empirical comparisons between countries with an older migration history and those in Central and Eastern Europe.

In a brief summary of the volume, the authors present their conclusions and answers to the research questions. Without presenting them exhaustively – as the aim is to ‘tease’ the reader – we highlight a few ideas that the authors have found important to summarize. They point out that nationalism has considerable potential in European countries, noting an increase as one moves from West to East. Regarding xenophobia, they observe a decline on average between 1995 and 2013. However, in Western Europe, it started from a lower starting point, while in Central and Eastern Europe higher levels of xenophobia remained at relatively high levels despite the downward trend.

In the context of migration and the national problem, the authors argue that the emergence of new minorities due to the migration processes in the last century has altered the potential for inter-group conflict in some countries. The new Muslim minorities from outside Europe have introduced new elements into the pattern of group-focused enemy images (GFEs) that were common in Europe. Along with fear and anxiety, the migration experience has further shaped the perception of a causal link between terrorism and Muslim identity. Additionally, migratory pressures have emerged unevenly across the eastern and western halves of Europe. Paradoxically, in Eastern European countries, where new minorities resulting from immigration have not emerged, levels of xenophobia have reached unprecedented heights. Furthermore, both in the West and the East, right-wing radicalism and populism have exploited the negative anti-minority sentiments and fear-based political opportunities presented by the emergence of the new immigrant minorities.

We can only recommend this volume to all those who wish to explore in depth any of the issues raised, or even to think further the examination of these problems and seeking potential solutions.

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