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The Nation-State and Its Enemies: Toward Reflection on the Future of Europe¹

Book review: Magdalena Ziętek-Wielomska, Adam Wielomski, *Państwo narodowe i jego wrogowie*, Fundacja Instytut Badawczy Pro vita bona, Warszawa 2020, pp. 340.

Państwo narodowe i jego wrogowie (eng. *The Nation-State and Its Enemies*) by Magdalena Ziętek-Wielomska and Adam Wielomski is a collection of essays that encourage freedom from stereotypes and myths in thinking about the European political structures. The authors address their considerations to the middle-class representatives considered as put at risk in their existence (p. 15). They argue that the main threat is the European Union as an alliance of two great forces directed against the nation-state and the middle class, namely big corporations and socialists. The authors see the support for the endangered large social groups in Europe in a strong, sovereign, and independent nation-state (p. 15). Thereby, the essays encourage more informed participation in politics, based on informed decisions, leading to the development of the existing social and political structures in Europe.

The volume consists of the introduction defining intellectual motivations and two parts. Whereas the first part concentrates on the idea of the nation-state and its enemies (four chapters), the second considers these concepts in relation to Poland (six chapters). Throughout these ten chapters, Ziętek-Wielomska and Wielomski inspire reflection not only on the significance of the past for shaping contemporary social and political structures but also on the future of Europe, the European Union, and its member states. The authors discuss the existing plans and attempts to build a New World Order, as well as the drift of world politics towards and to Asia. They pose questions about the position of Europe in the new

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balance of power and reflect on the probability of the scenario of reducing Europe's role and making it the periphery of the Middle Kingdom (p. 116). The accompanying forecasts for a near end to the Euro-Atlantic order are convincing as well (cf. Kamprowski, 2013). They show possible aspects and directions of the Polish political scene's changes.

The book offers a discussion on the main lines of criticism of the nation and the nation-state in the modern European Union, namely liberal, socialist, and conservative. According to the authors, these circles agree that the nation-state should be abandoned as an institution, and the nation itself poses a threat to federal projects due to its nationalist potential, assuming the community's interests are considered more important than the interests of a supranational group. However, these circles propose various positive programs. Liberals favor creating a world state based on the freedom of trade and the movement of capital and services. The European Christian Democrats strive to create a pan-European federal state. Finally, social democrats and socialists prefer a structure similar to that of the Christian Democrats, but they expect it to be more integrated and unitary (p. 21). The authors show the aspirations of the European Union's rulers, which are a manifestation of the pursuit of these ideas, including the transformation of the Europe of sovereign states into the Europe of regions, and the presentation of national consciousness as one of many identities, next to regional, sexual, or ethnic (p. 22). An analysis of these ideological approaches' essential features contributes to the discussion that the traditional left-right division is of no importance for understanding the diversity of views on the nation-state (p. 110).

Ziętek-Wielomska and Wielomski argue that in the political struggle with nation-states' supporters, the so-called historical arguments based on wrong premises often appear. The manipulation of history draws upon the assumption that nationalism and nation-states are responsible for two world wars' atrocities. As the authors assume, it is a false thesis because Germany's goal that caused these wars was to create an empire. On the one hand, Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler planned to build a transnational empire and unite the European continent in a form that did not correspond to other nations, which caused their armed resistance. On the other hand, the second great aggressor in World War II, the Soviet Union ruled by Joseph Stalin, was also not a nation-state but a classic multi-ethnic empire with the dominant ideology of proletarian internationalism. According to the authors, these were wars in defense of the nation-state against imperialism, not wars caused by nation-states and nationalism (p. 20). However controversial the presented arguments may seem in the context of the established stereotypes, they undoubtedly could inspire readers to revise their views, especially to reconsider the ideas underlying contentious politics.

Furthermore, in the book, we will find essential and topical questions about the enemies of European great spaces (cf. Osiewicz, Skrzypek, 2020; Rak, 2020; Rezmer-Płotka, 2020), including whether the United States and the European Union are doomed to hostility (p. 119). Instead of ready-made answers, Ziętek-Wielomska and Wielomski present the historical, ideological, economic, and geo-economic background of the US-European conflict.

They encourage readers to reconsider its nature, though not through the prism of political stereotypes distributed by the mass media and state textbooks.

Along with the growing popularity and scope of the use of militant democracy mechanisms in Europe, the need for understanding the practices of creating enemies against which militant democracy measures aim to increase. By delving analytically into these practices, researchers gain a possibility to understand the dynamics of shaping power relations in political structures. The analysis of the Polish nation state's crisis, introduced in the book, considerably contributes to the studies on Polish militant democracy (cf. Bäcker 2020). Importantly, it is not another study of external but internal threats and enemies (p. 251). Ziętek-Wielomska and Wielomski point out that the fourteen-year existential conflict within the Civic Platform-Law and Justice solidarity had only a personal basis, i.e., the personal dispute between Jarosław Kaczyński and Donald Tusk over the presidency in 2005 (p. 253). The study exposes the ruling elites' political interests as the reasons for distributing political ideas that discursively legitimize militant democracy.

To sum up, *Państwo narodowe i jego wrogowie* helps understand not only the idea of a European community of sovereign nation-states but also the arguments of its opponents. Finally, the book is worth reading as a supplement to the authors' earlier work on the aggressive rhetoric used by the globalists against the nation-state (Ziętek-Wielomska, Wielomski, 2017). Although these books search for answers to questions about nation-states' survival in times of pan-national aspirations, they show different aspects of building sovereignty. The latest volume is essential for comprehending the political interests of supporters of large-scale concepts to build supranational structures.

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