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REVIEWS

PRIKAZI

ZLATKO HADŽIDEDIĆ, *NATIONS AND CAPITAL: THE MISSING LINK IN GLOBAL EXPANSION*, NEW YORK, NY: ROUTLEDGE, 2022.

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True to its title, Zlatko Hadžidedić's book provides an interesting and theoretically well-backed overview of the intertwined relationship between capitalism and nationalism. Divided into two concise parts – the first of which is dedicated to examining the concept and theories of nationalism, while the second demonstrates how capitalism picked and nurtured nationalism as a tool of its self-perpetuating growth – *Nations and Capital: The Missing Link in Global Expansion* sets forth to fulfil an ambitious goal of explaining the origins, history, development and the current socio-political state of the globalized capitalist world that we find ourselves in. Instead of reviewing the development of capitalism through its independent segments, such as industrialism (as done by Ernest Gellner) or mass-militarization (as accomplished by Charles Tilly), Hadžidedić attempts to understand the advancement of capitalism as a whole, using nationalism only as a prism through which he conducts his analysis. In many ways, Hadžidedić succeeds in accomplishing this challenging task, or at the very least, he provides well-developed arguments worthy of careful consideration.

The main argument is made apparent rather quickly, even though it is mostly developed only within the second part of the book, with the first part largely concentrating on providing a well-organised and thought-out theoretical literature review. The thesis goes as follows. In its essence – the author claims – capitalism represents a mode of wealth accumulation which inescapably leads to the development of nationalism, since it is through nationalism that those who are the most successful in accumulating wealth can provide their less fortunate/lower-class 'compatriots' with a false sense of shared interests and belonging. Whereas the purpose of unequal exchange and accumulation of wealth in socio-political and economic systems that preceded capitalism was to develop a social hierarchy that ultimately provided social security to almost all of the involved members of society (including those who found themselves at the bottom), with capitalism, unequal exchange became self-perpetuating and boundless, making the gap between the higher and the lower classes progressively bigger, with lower classes losing even the basic guarantee of social security (as a result). With the

emergence of the idea of nationalism and the institutions of the nation-state, capitalism managed to seemingly bridge this ever-growing gap between the upper and lower classes, without changing the capitalist-based fabric of society itself; one that relies on increasing the wealth of the already wealthy. This was achieved by emphasizing cultural, ethnic and linguistic belonging in place of social status. Compatriots were said to be born equal, with equal rights and the same political goals (with the preservation of the nation being the utmost of these goals), regardless of the blatantly unequal distribution of their wealth and other socio-political features that emphasized their dissimilarities and a lack of common interest.

Yet, while lower classes of different nations remained and still remain divided and in conflict with one another (as a result of their adherence to their respective nationalist ideologies, all of which are distinctly territorial and competitive in their nature), the capitalist elites found no issue with utilizing such a situation to accumulate even greater wealth, by cooperating trans-nationally and disregarding national identities, borders and boundaries. Such uneven globalization contributed to the creation of an even wider gap between the upper and lower classes. In order to bridge this gap, the nation-state evolved from its initially liberal-democratic to a more authoritarian globalist neo-liberal form, one which favours global capital over the interests and rights of its citizens.

However, although such reasoning provides a sufficient account of the emergence of nationalism as an ideology, and perhaps even nation-states (as institutional vessels that help to define and implement numerous distinct nationalistic ideologies), it does not say enough about the formation and development of diverse proto-national/cultural identities which already existed

by the time early modern capitalism stepped onto the historical scene. In other words, it often seems as if Hadžidedić downplays the importance of national, cultural and/or territorial identity as a factor of societal cohesiveness (when compared to class belonging); a factor which was already in place before the institution of the nation-state and the modernist idea of nationalism emerged, and which certainly played an important role in state formation as such.

If national identity and the rudimentary sense of ethnic, cultural or linguistic belonging did not exist in the first place (at least in a rudimentary form), capitalist elites would not have been able to misuse it in ways that the author rightly identifies and describes, because it wouldn't have been available to them. This does not go to say that Hadžidedić denies the existence of primordial collective identities based on cultural and territorial kinship, it just alludes to the fact the author seems to accept them as historical happenstance, without sufficiently dwelling on why it is that this form of identity – rather than any other form – not only emerges on its own (without the malicious aid of capitalist elites), but also serves as a good platform for organising larger territorial communities. Namely, could it be that there is something inherently valuable in the sense of national belonging (even if it is in large part subjective, socially constructed and perhaps even ultimately disadvantageous to certain portions of each nation); something that capitalism strives to exploit, transform and utilise to serve its interests, rather than something it simply generates to fulfil its goals? It seems that Hadžidedić largely overlooks or downplays potential answers to this issue. Admittedly, he never sets out to provide an answer to the stated question. Still, a book dealing with the phenomenon of nationalism (and its relationship to capitalism) would benefit from such a discussion.

However, all in all, it should be stressed that even without paying particular attention to this segment of the discussion on the emergence of nationalism, *Nations and Capital: The Missing Link in Global Expansion* still represents a worthy piece of academic literature

and an immersive work, one from which both students and scholars dealing either with nationalism or capitalism can benefit. It is an interesting read that certainly stimulates academic discussion on the matter at hand.

