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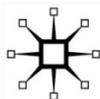
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THE PROBLEM OF TRIESTE AND THE ITALO-YUGOSLAV BORDER: Difference, Identity and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe

The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics, 1870–1919

Glenda Sluga
University of Sydney

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For Anna-Sophia

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The history of this book has coincided with the history of a daughter, whose own background is, to say the least, transnational. It is all for her.

Foreword

We are very pleased to publish this pioneering study of the idea of the nation in the Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series.

What is a nation? How did the idea of nationhood develop, and how, in particular, was it conceptualized at the end of the First World War when the principle of national self-determination seemed to have ushered in a new epoch of world history? Are all people entitled to have their own national entities? What differentiated more mature nations from others? When there were so many divergences among national groupings, what justification was there for conceptualizing a world order on the basis of the nationality principle?

Glenda Sluga explores these questions in the context of “transnational conversations” before and after the war in which intellectuals and statesmen from many countries took part so as to clarify the meaning of what was called the nation. She pays particular attention to the development of psychology as a discipline and shows how writings in this field gave scholarly authenticity to ideas about “national consciousness” and provided the basis for judging which nationality groups deserved to determine their own fate as independent nations. The nation was seen as a “psychological reality” whose validity was to be certified by science (in this instance psychology). If national consciousness could not be said to have been fully developed among some people, they presumably did not deserve to translate their nationality into nationhood. But for those with a clear national psychology, self-determination would equate with democratic self-governance. Modern nationhood was thus given meaning as a psychological reality, a product of a transnational science.

Because the principle of national self-determination was enshrined at the Paris peace conference (1919), the subsequent history of world affairs has tended to be understood as an interplay of national policies and ambitions. It is as if nations were the key to the “international community” – this very term reveals the centrality of nations. But we shall gain a fresh understanding of international affairs if we view nations as psychological constructs, as this book suggests. Whose psychology are we talking about? Men’s or women’s? Conservatives’ or liberals’? Nationalists’ or anti-nationalists’? These are fascinating questions that suggest the fragility, even the artificiality, of national entities. This is an important perspective and enables us to view nations, not as some immutable givens but as variable groupings just like many other

communities that exist in the world. Nations, in other words, become comprehensible as transnational phenomena.

Akira Iriye
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Cambridge, MA
July 2006