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Chapter 2, The Political Geography of Economic Nationalism

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Abstract: This chapter surveys the key political geography concepts that underpin the diverse expressions of economic nationalism across the world and through different historical moments. Recognising that economic nationalism cannot be conceptualised as doctrine comprised of essential elements, the chapter theorises economic nationalism as a political discourse that operates through mobilising various narratives or storylines about political space, grouped around the three conceptual nodes of the nation, sovereignty, and geopolitics. Since economic nationalism cannot be explained outside of specific historical contexts, the chapter illustrates how these conceptual nodes have been mobilised by actors in many contexts, often with starkly divergent political and material implications. Specific examples are drawn from around the world to showcase the sheer diversity of expressions of economic nationalism, which the tools of political geography can help to elucidate.

Keywords: political geography, nation, the state, sovereignty, territory, geopolitics

2.1. Introduction

This chapter surveys the key political geography concepts that underpin the diverse expressions of economic nationalism across the world and through different historical moments. From the perspective of critical political geography, nationalism is a discourse that is malleable and infinitely varied. This discursive approach is also reflected in Andreas Pickel's (2003, 2005) foundational argument that economic nationalism cannot be reduced to an essential set of traits. Rather, as a generic discursive structure, nationalism is a 'political contention in the context of particular historical conditions; nationalism is a combination of discourse, action and structure' (Pickel 2003, p. 115). And crucially, it 'can accommodate almost any doctrinal content' (Pickel 2003, p. 122). Whether advocates of economic nationalist policies are supporters of free market liberalism or state-controlled communism, or anything in between, their overarching agenda is to promote economic policies in the *name* of the nation. This does not mean that policies actually benefit the 'nation,' however defined, but rather that the nation becomes a foil for the discursive claim that a policy or action is laudable, necessary, or otherwise correct and worthy of adoption.

But economic nationalism does not arise everywhere and its eclectic expressions may ebb and flow across time. The questions of when, where, and to what effect economic nationalism is expressed therefore demand a geographic perspective that keeps space, time, and context in sharp focus. As a discourse, economic nationalism hinges not only on the contextual construction and contestation of the 'economy' and the 'nation' more broadly, but also on the infinite intersections with specific cultural and historical identity narratives, their social and spatial expression within in a given country, as well as how specific groups, institutions, and individuals claim the *right* to express their opinions about the 'proper' configuration of economic policies within 'their' country. This chapter outlines how these concepts and the storylines of economic nationalism they underpin have been mobilised by actors in various parts of the world, often with starkly divergent political and material implications.

To understand the political geography of economic nationalism, it must be seen as a relationship of power/knowledge that involves actors at multiple scales – from ordinary citizens, activists, entrepreneurs, government officials, and foreign and domestic policy experts alike. Some speakers may claim a privileged place in discussions that form the basis of economic nationalism, while other speakers are disqualified from expressing their views in a particular context, based on credentials, class, citizenship status, nationality, race, gender, or any number of other factors. All of these discursive acts (rhetorical and material) are necessarily *emplaced*. That is, they cannot be understood apart from the spaces and places where they take place, and which they take as their object – in turn constituting political space. Over the past 50 years, political geographers have developed a rich vocabulary to explain such variations across space and time, showing how general phenomena like nationalism touch down in different places, for different people, and at different moments in time.

In considering the political geography of economic nationalism, I thus outline how it operates as a political discourse that mobilises various narratives or storylines about political space. Expressions of

economic nationalism revolve questions of the political geography of wealth distribution, which can be grouped around three conceptual nodes explored here: (1) *the nation* (who gets to benefit from economic policies and practices); (2) *sovereignty* (how discourses of control are territorially inscribed and mediate the distribution economic goods); and (3) *geopolitics* (how the state/nation positions the relationship between domestic and foreign economic policies and practices). These three nodes – the nation, the territorial state, and geopolitics – are the most significant themes in political geography today and help show how such a diverse array of actors are able to draw on the discursive toolkit of economic nationalism to tell stories about the economy, wealth, power, identity, sovereignty, and space.

2.2. Conceptual nodes

2.2.a. The nation

The first conceptual node that underpins economic nationalism is that of the 'nation.' Since nations are defined in myriad ways around the world, critical scholars of nationalism have largely adopted Benedict Anderson's (1983) broad framing of the nation as an 'imagined community.' How individuals are included or excluded from a given community is inherently political, but as these criteria coalesce into a discourse of nationalism, people are socialized to think of themselves as part of the broader community: 'Through this process individual experiences are colonized by collective ones to join them in the communal story' (Paasi 1996, p. 55). From the most banal daily practices to the most sensational public discussions, people are constantly reminded of these communal stories and how they do or do not belong within them. These broader practices take the form of economic nationalism when the questions turn to who gets to benefit from economic policies and practices, as well as how individuals narrate or perform the nation through their personal economic decisions, and by judging those of others.

Beginning from the micro-scale, we see that people routinely build national communities around consumer choices. This is especially visible in foods that people buy, which are understood to have a particular national orientation, such as American hot dogs, Russian borscht, Italian pasta, Georgian khachapuri, or Ethiopian injera. Consuming these items becomes a ritual that allows people to feel 'authentically' part of the nation and, in many cases, to feel that they are supporting the nation through their economic choices to 'buy local' or from a national brand (Caldwell 2002; Ichijo 2017; Ichijo and Ranta 2016; Foster 2002; Goff 2005; Hirsch 2011; Kania-Lundholm 2014; Klumbytė 2010; Koch 2021; Mlekuž 2020; Özkan and Foster 2005). This kind of 'food nationalism' or 'gastronationalism' can thus be positioned as a way to bolster the national community in opposition to globalizing forces that might introduce new kinds of food or foreign brands that are perceived as threatening group identity and tradition (DeSoucey 2010). Economic nationalism is thus visible in the extent that individuals and governments work together to ensure the success of national cuisines, commodities, or brands – the discursive work to define such 'national' food being just as important as the actually policy supports given to various actors within this sector.

Other mundane practices like dress allow individuals to perform their membership of the national community by wearing traditional national clothing or buying clothes, trinkets, or other decorative items emblazoned with nationalist iconography. As Robert Foster has traced these processes in his research on advertising landscapes in Papua New Guinea, arguing that:

> The ads […] qualify commodities as somehow Papua New Guinean, as embodiments and/or possessions of 'the nation.' They imply, furthermore, that to consume these commodities is to appropriate the quality of Papua New Guineaness as an attribute of one's person. The consumption of national commodities, then, nationalizes the person. At the same time, each ad implicitly construes the nation as a community of consumption, a collectivity of nonintimate people whose shared consumption practices and fantasies express and constitute their nationality. Membership or citizenship in this community is acquired through acts of consumption so qualified, by participation in the 'lifestyle' represented in the ad. (Foster 2002, p. 66)

As other scholars of 'consumer nationalism' have shown, the decisions to buy such items can be either intentional or thoughtless. But even when consumerism is unreflexive, it can nonetheless 'contribute to the reproduction of nationalism' (Castelló and Mihelj 2018, 568; see also Cohen 2003; Culcasi 2016; Edensor 2002; Foster 2002; Frank 1999; Gerth 2003; James 1983; Kalinina 2017; Kemper 1993; Koch 2020a; Lekakis 2017a, 2017b; Molnár 2016; Seliverstova 2017; Swett 2014; Suyarkulova 2016; Volčič and Andrejevic 2016; Yoshino 1999). Whether consumers politicize their decisions or do not, this form of economic nationalism is an important avenue by which individual experiences are colonized by the collective story – of who 'we' are, what 'we' do, what 'we' value, and how 'we' award or withhold the financial rewards of membership within the nation.

The group-making effect of economic nationalism is also visible in various expressions of resource nationalism. Resource nationalism is 'a political discourse, applied to political and economic thinking about how a state and its population should manage and distribute profits derived from natural resources' (Koch and Perreault 2019: 611). State institutions typically manage the profits from resource extraction and one popular vehicle for this purpose is the 'sovereign wealth fund.' These funds ostensibly pool and invest resource rents in the service of the nation. Found in places as diverse as Norway, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Alaska, they are typically positioned as a 'responsible' way for state planners to manage resource wealth for current and future generations – either as a kind of national endowment whose interest is regularly paid out, a development investment engine, or a simply 'rainy-day' fund when commodity prices are low and state coffers need support.

Sovereign wealth funds uniquely emphasize the popular interest – often specifically defined *intergenerationally* – while simultaneously delegating special authority to planning elites to take responsibility of managing the community's 'patrimony' (Balding 2012; Castelli and Scacciavillani 2012; Cumming et al. 2017; Dixon and Monk 2012, 2014; Xu and Bahgat 2010). Some funds, like Norway's Government Pension Fund, invest exclusively abroad, with the idea of maximizing returns for citizens through the international financial system. Others take a mixed approach and, in many cases in the Arabian Peninsula for example, invest heavily in domestic infrastructure and development projects, while also making strategic investments in foreign corporations, sponsoring sports teams, and more (Haberly 2014; Kéchichian 2010; Koch 2020b; Seznec 2012; Woertz 2012; Young 2020). If, as Jones et al. (2015, p. 186) note, discussions about resource use 'inevitably raise questions of fairness and justice that go beyond the timespan of the current generation,' these funds mobilize the idea of intergenerational justice for a delimited national community.

Yet sovereign wealth funds are largely controlled by a managerial elite. The extent to which debates about how their reserves are managed depends on the prevailing political system in a country, with more democratic states like Norway having more popular input than less democratic states like Saudi Arabia. But because sovereign wealth funds are most common in nondemocratic states, they are susceptible to coming under control of a narrow group of economic and policy elites *acting in the name of the nation*, but often prioritizing their personal interests (Grigoryan 2015; Lenihan 2014; Monk 2009). Whoever actually profits, this form of economic nationalism reinforces communal boundaries – constructing the 'nation' as a group whose members are defined as those entitled to reap the profits of national wealth. Specifying the beneficiaries of this wealth involves one set of questions about the nation as a community, but it also implies another set of questions about the territory from which wealth originates.

2.2.b. Sovereignty

If resource nationalism in general and sovereign wealth funds in particular hinge on the idea of preserving a nation's 'patrimony' for future generations, this can encompass far more than the resource rents alone. Rather patrimony includes an inherited estate, property, or even more broadly, a quality or characteristic inherited from one's predecessors. As a doctrine, though, nationalism 'holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (Gellner 2006, p. 1). Today, the territorial state is the hegemonic political unit that spatially defines national patrimony, and state sovereignty is the hegemonic script to assert a nation's rightful claim to that patrimony. Sovereignty can have multiple spatial expressions, but in the contemporary state system, it denotes a state's absolute authority over a defined territory, which is

recognized by other states (Weber 1995, p. 1). From this perspective, the state is not an *a priori* entity, but the 'effect' of a wide range of practices and material relations (Koch 2015; Kuus and Agnew 2008; Mitchell 19991, 1999; Moisio 2013; Moisio et al. 2020; Murphy 2002, 2013; Paasi 1996). Sovereignty is a political discourse that is inextricable for the territorial state, but it is also mapped onto the nation: 'it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson 1983, p. 6).

The political geography of economic nationalism thus revolves around questions of how control is territorially inscribed and how spatial discourses mediate the distribution of effects from economic policies and practices. As geographers have long argued, a 'nation's territory is not a simple block of space but a complex set of relationships between local, regional, and national levels of social practice and geographic imagination' (Agnew 2013, p. 136). In Thongchai Winichakul's (1994) famous formulation in *Siam Mapped,* the territorial 'geo-body' is a key element of nationhood: 'Geographically speaking, the geo-body of a nation occupies a certain portion of the earth's surface which is objectively identifiable. It appears to be concrete to the eyes as if its existence does not depend on any act of imagining' (Winichakul 1994, p. 17). Of course, he goes on to argue, this concreteness is a fiction, but one that is discursively produced through a range of discursive tools like the map. Or, as Benedict Anderson describes it, the visual effect of a 'map-as-logo' produces territories as if they are 'a detachable piece of a jigsaw puzzle. As this 'jigsaw' effect became normal, each 'piece' could be wholly detached from its geographical context' (Anderson 1983, p. 175).

The fusion of nationalist sentiments and mythified histories with a territorial state, 'is what gives nationalism such symbolic power immediately related to the sites and circumstances of everyday life' (Agnew 2013, p. 134; see also Herb and Kaplan 1999; Kaiser 2002; Penrose 2002). These bonds also need to be created in the economic realm for people to see the value of land to their livelihood and, then, to scale this up to a communal story of the nation's survival. As Colin Williams and Anthony Smith (1983, p. 508) suggest, this process is relatively new and that 'the idea that a territory might constitute a 'resource deposit', which belongs by right to a particular political or ethnic community, rarely surfaced before the late eighteenth century.' But with the concurrent rise of nationalism and the fetishization of territorial sovereignty in Europe, it did not take long for new political visions of independency and autonomy to arrive. Once the idea of territorial sovereignty took root, they argue, 'it was inevitable that nationalist movements should make the struggle of the community for exclusive possession of "its" scarce resources an important element in their outlook and programme. But the nationalist vision does not stop here, it proclaims the ideal of self-sufficiency or autarchy, as the economic counterpart and basis for autonomy' (Williams and Smith 1983, p. 508-509).

Doctrines of autarky – policies of economic independence or self-sufficiency applied to a national community – are now quite familiar. Yet they are necessarily fictional for, like nationalism generally, they cannot exist outside of the 'universal codes of nationhood' (Billig 1995, p. 80). Economic nationalist doctrines of autarky thus constitute an international ideology that requires constant reference to this international order, as political actions 'occur within particular national and transnational economic, political and cultural systems' (Pickel 2003, p. 122). Autarkic visions are so common, though, because they are aspirational. They work through a kind of populist vision, used by state- and non-state actors alike, who deploy the discourse of sovereignty to claim the *right* to act independently. Territory, in these discursive claims, becomes the medium through which this freedom is to be expressed. Autarky thus implies a spatial unit – not only as a realm in which independence is to be exercised, but also as a tract of land that in itself *accords* these actors that right: in 'our' land or jurisdiction, we can do as we wish because no one else has a higher authority. This is what Williams and Smith (1983, p. 509) refer to as 'the ideal of the good life as consisting of communal freedom from external constraint, and in the capacity for the community to direct its resource distribution as it thinks fit.'

Nationalist aspirations of independence thus fuse with ideals of the 'good life,' which is imagined to reside in a territorial homeland – and an idealized space where the community can be free and where its resources are reserved for this community alone. National homelands are thus valued not simply as economic assets, but as guarantors of autarchy. The nationalist claim to a territorial homeland through discourses of sovereignty and autarky raise important questions about *who* gets to speak in the name of the

nation, and how the benefits and harms of economic policies and practices are distributed. As noted above, the case of sovereign wealth funds highlights the fact that some political actors are able to use the language of resource nationalism to advance their interests over those of the national masses. In such cases, the conflation of the national community with the state can help to justify the spatially unequal distribution of economic goods. This is especially apparent in the case of Russia after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. When the state was dissolved, Soviet industries and natural resource holdings were privatized on a colossal scale. This led to the rise of a class of oligarchs who presided over a mass phenomenon of 'kleptocratic plunder' (Lanskoy and Myles-Primakoff 2018) of what had previously been understood as the wealth of the 'nation' (McFaul 2001).

This 'shock therapy' privatization agenda proved extremely unpopular in the 1990s, so when President Vladimir Putin came to power in 1999, he immediately began to reassert state control of the natural resource sector, with the state slowly regaining control through new national firms and ousting foreign and private companies (Domjan and Stone 2010). Putin had actually been an early advocate of state ownership of Russia's oil, gas, and metals sectors, having argued as much in his dissertation, *Mineral and Raw Materials Resources and the Development Strategy for the Russian Economy* (Putin 1997). He there claims that, in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, natural resource economies are Russia's best hope for future development and rebuilding the country's international prestige and global influence. Much has been read into Putin's thesis (and some question whether he actually wrote it at all), but the text is important in that it exemplifies the logic of economic nationalism in resource-rich Russia, which positions the state rather than private companies as the 'proper' beneficiary of resource wealth.

Of course, Putin was not speaking in a vacuum. His justification for the (re)nationalization campaign in the natural resource sector mobilized the tropes of nationalism, autarchy, and territorial sovereignty, which resonated with the longstanding Russian nationalist discourse linking national pride to images of the extraordinary natural abundance of the 'motherland' (*rodina*) (Bolotova 2004; Eldarov et al. 2015; Josephson 2013; Kotkin 1995; Labban 2008; Rogers 2014, 2015; Tynkkynen 2019). In Putin's framing, reasserting state control of resource reserves was justified through the language of sovereignty in the name of the nation, and by appealing to the aspiration of national independence. Of course, the 'nation' has never benefited in a manner that matches this grandiose rhetoric, as the pattern of 'kleptocratic plunder' remains firmly entrenched in Russia today (Maddow 2019; Walker 2018). The power of economic nationalism is, like all discourses, its inherent flexibility – something that autocrats and democrats alike can mobilize to advance their political agendas through *state* institutions but in the name of the *nation.*

2.3.c. Geopolitics

Geopolitics is the third and final conceptual node of political geography, which underpins the logic of economic nationalism. Here the issues intersect with the ideas of the nation and sovereignty, relating to how actors claiming to speak on behalf of the nation or the state define the relationship between domestic and foreign space, and between domestic and foreign economic realms, policies, and practices. The prevailing geographic approach to these issues is 'critical geopolitics,' which frames geopolitics as 'a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics in such a way as to represent it as a 'world' characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992, p. 192). Ordinary people also participate in these acts of spatializing international politics, and the discursive circuits of 'popular geopolitics' can be extremely important in shaping policies and political rhetoric (Dittmer 2005, 2010; Dodds 2000; Ó Tuathail and Dalby 1998; Saunders and Strukov 2018; Sharp 2000). Since economic nationalism storylines can be used by actors at all scales and in all sectors, a critical geopolitics approach calls attention to how these actors deploy its discursive power in constructing identities, pursuing interests, and crafting moral cartographies to guide political action in an interconnected world. Often these relations are securitized, fixating on danger and threats to the nation and its independence, but they can also be framed in a more positive manner around diplomacy, international cooperation, investment and growth, or development.

On the security end of this spectrum, economic nationalism can be used to justify a wide range of protectionist trade policies, such as the anti-China agenda pursued by the administration of U.S. president

Donald Trump. In this case, Chinese companies such as Huawei and the popular social media platform TikTok were labelled as posing national security threats to the United States. Similarly, the Trump administration expanded the government's effort to tackle Chinese corporate espionage – framing it not just as national subversion, but also as a threat to U.S. companies' profits and thus the American economy. In these securitizing narratives, the U.S. government is framed as a protector of the nation's private corporations, conflating the state and economic actors. Likewise, the state and companies based in other countries are conflated, as in the China example, where the question of whether or not Chinese firms have a direct association with the Chinese government is often glossed over and they are quickly treated as equivalent. Of course, as Timothy Mitchell has famously argued, the state/society and state/economy divides are constructs that define how economic orders are maintained and thus: 'We must take such distinctions not as the boundary between two discrete entities but as a line drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a social and political order is maintained' (Mitchell 1999, p. 77; see also Mitchell 1991, 2005). Constructed as these divides may be, the line itself is a resource that specific actors can use to their advantage – exploiting government subsidies or legal regulations that bolster their power or access to profits as may suit.

More generally, boycotts of another country's companies (or 'buycotts') are a well-established example of how the geopolitics of economic nationalism works by simultaneously demonizing an 'other' and valorising the 'self' (Boström et al. 2019; Fischer 2007; Goode 2016; Lekakis 2017a; Neilson 2010; Tinsman 2014; Wengle 2016). As Castelló and Mihelj (2018, p. 567) explain, 'The political intentions of nationalist boycotts tend to be more immediately observable, as they usually arise in response to specific political actions of individual states.' In this way, central governments and corporate elites work together with the general population to securitize economic nationalist policies. Yet more general 'buy domestic' campaigns are nonetheless highly political and allow individuals to align themselves 'with recognizably protectionist economic policies and attitudes, such as supporting domestic industry or the creation of domestic jobs' (Castelló and Mihelj 2018, p. 567). These forms of economic nationalism thus work to craft individuals as geopolitical subjects – individuals working in the service of the nation by simply buying the 'right' brand or product.

Such narratives also pull consumer decisions into a geopolitical realm, teaching people to view their choices through the political geography of the territorial state and its borders. As Paasi (2010, p. 23) explains, individuals are thus instructed in 'what are the legitimate and hegemonic national meanings attached to these borders and what are the pools of emotion, fears and memories that we have to draw on in this connection. These pools of meanings can be labelled as *emotional landscapes of control*.' Economic nationalism works both through and constructs these 'emotional landscapes of control,' which are constantly shifting. That is, these landscape shift as material, social, and political situations change over time and space, and as actors with different discursive resources seek to harness them to their benefit. Such was the case with the anti-China campaign during the Trump administration: he and his supporters pursued it with fervour while the administration was in office, but it was bound to recede after he left office and lost access to the same discursive resources afforded by the presidency.

On the less security-centric end of the spectrum, the geopolitics of economic nationalism can encompass the ostensibly positive dimensions of diplomacy, international cooperation, and economic development. State or nation 'branding' is one prominent example of this, which many scholars have analysed through research on tourism, sports and mega-events, iconic urban development schemes, and their related economic development agendas (Aronczyk 2013; Broudehoux 2004, 2007, 2016; Bunnell 2004; Chanavat 2017; Eggeling 2020; Govers and Go 2009; Grix and Lee 2013; Kaneva 2012; Koch 2013, 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Koch and Valiyev 2015; Orttung and Zhemukhov 2017; Ren 2008; Szalai 2019; Tomlinson and Young 2006; Trubina 2014, 2015; White 2011, 2017).

As this scholarship has illustrated, one of the main ways that economic and political elites justify spectacular projects and events – and the huge expenses taken directly and indirectly from state coffers – is that they can promote national pride. In addition to the symbolic capital of hosting something like the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup, or investing in an impressive series of stadiums like the Bird's Nest in Beijing (for the 2008 Olympics) or the 9 new stadiums under construction in Qatar (for the 2022 World

Cup), these venues are framed as providing a significant stimulus to the national economy – during their construction, at the events, and in the future, as the business community is said to be made aware of the host countries as 'modern' places to bring their capital.

Most research suggests that these expected financial rewards are grossly exaggerated, but the broader effect of these narratives is to perpetuate a geopolitical worldview built on economic nationalism: national pride is both the object and the outcome of such branding projects. As Volčič and Andrejevic (2016) illustrate, state-sponsored branding campaigns are never confined to state-actors alone. As with the case of political consumerism noted above, these storylines unite state and corporate actors, public and private interests, and elites and ordinary citizens. Thus, 'the way in which the state conceptualizes and mobilizes conceptions of national identity in the current conjuncture needs to be thought *alongside* the ways in which commercial entities piggyback on and exploit conceptions of national identity for commercial ends – as well as the ongoing relationship between commercial media and the state' (Volčič and Andrejevic 2016, p. 4, emphasis in original). Nation branding efforts cut across these many sectors, while also serving as a way to engage the general population, enlisting them 'as participants in the 'co-creation' of a brand identity in the name of both national allegiance and economic self-interest' (Volčič and Andrejevic 2011, p. 602).

Most of the research on nation-branding tends to focus on its use in efforts to legitimate domestic spending and economic development agendas of a particular sort – typically favoring elitist, high-profile, and high-dollar projects. Yet nation-branding also works with the language and logics of economic nationalism in justifying state spending on development abroad. Most recently, this is visible in the case of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which involves heavy investment in foreign infrastructure and economies across the world (DeBoom 2020; Han and Webber 2020; Hoh 2019; Jia and Bennett 2018; Lin et al. 2019; Sidaway et al. 2020; Zeng 2019). The BRI discourse is diffuse and nebulous, meaning different things in different places. But it is consistently shot through with Chinese nationalist scripts, in which Chinese economic success is imagined as the hallmark of its move 'from periphery or semiperiphery to the center of the international system,' and which the Communist Party has sought to export 'overseas so as to consolidate China's reputation and responsibility as a major power' (Lin et al. 2019, p. 513). Chinese geopolitical culture is thus a culture of economic nationalism. Specific as the BRI case may be to contemporary China, it is a continuation of other imperial imaginaries, including the United States government's longstanding romance with conducting foreign policy directly and indirectly through linking its corporate sector and its international development efforts (Domosh 2005, 2006, 2015; Latham 2000, 2011; Melillo 2015; Vitalis 2007). Examples from other places in the world abound, but a consistent feature of economic nationalism in these diplomatic and developmentalist agendas is that corporate and financial networks, which routinely extend overseas, are discursively enfolded in the political geography of the territorial state system.

2.3. Conclusion: Political geographies of economic nationalism

At the height of academia's fixation with the topic of globalization in the 1990s, many predicted that nationalisms would begin to fade and give way to new modes of identification through consumer culture. 'It is hardly the case, however,' Foster (2002, p. 111) memorably remarked, 'that nationality as a collective identity is destined to dissolve in an acid bath of global consumerism.' Nationalisms have an uncanny ability to morph and adapt to new circumstances, and economic nationalism is no different. Tracing the political geography of economic nationalism shows how its discursive power comes from working with ancillary concepts, storylines, and geographic imaginaries that allow actors to mobilize it in different moments and places. Nationalism studies therefore tend to be highly place-specific and political geographers have historically emphasized the need to ground our research in specific empirical contexts, recognizing that 'the key *location* of a national(ist) border does not lie at the concrete line but in the manifestations of the perpetual nation-building process and nationalist practices, and the roots of these manifestations have to be traced to the histories of these practices and iconographies' (Paasi 2010, p. 22, emphasis in original).

To understand these diffuse nation-building processes and nationalist practices, political geographers have developed a rich conceptual vocabulary to trace and explain how general phenomena like nationalism 'touch down' – curiously reproducing themselves across space and time. The three conceptual nodes explored here all revolve around how political space and identities are constructed and acted upon as communities negotiate questions of wealth distribution. For the idea of the 'nation,' we see related questions of who gets to benefit from economic policies and practices, while 'sovereignty' opens up issues of control and the use of territory to inscribe and mediate the distribution of effects from economic policies and practices. 'Geopolitics' builds from both of these discourses, as people grapple with the question of defining the state/nation's position on the world stage, and how this affects or should affect domestic and foreign economic policies and practices.

Rather than seeking to definitively define 'the' political geography of economic nationalism, I have sought to show how this approach raises questions that might guide future studies of economic nationalism, as it continues to morph in curious and unexpected ways. In a recent article, I highlighted a number of similar questions for scholars investigating resource nationalism, which can be productively adapted to the broader phenomenon of economic nationalism. When considering its expression in any setting, past or present, researchers might ask (following Koch and Perreault 2019, p. 615):

- How are national economies constituted politically, economically and culturally?
- How is economic nationalism deployed, contested and negotiated by various actors? What sectors of society are engaged in producing discourses of resource nationalism and at what spatial scales?
- Through what discursive forms and political projects is economic nationalism expressed?
- How does economic nationalism articulate with discourses of territorial, racial, gendered, classed or other subjectivities? What sorts of 'imagined communities' does it invoke?
- What do expressions of economic nationalism tell us about the relationship between the state and resources?
- What forms does economic nationalism take in different political systems (liberal/illiberal, statist/decentralized, left/right)?

Economic nationalism is a powerful lens on international politics because it calls our attention to the multiplicity of actors in building and enacting policies that extend well beyond the formally-defined arena of statecraft. We may yet live in a world dominated by territorial states, but 'states' are not the only relevant actors in global affairs. Countless people from elites to ordinary citizens, working in the state or corporate sectors, are both buyers and sellers of the economic nationalist storylines about the economy, wealth, power, identity, sovereignty, and space. It is thus that 'individual experiences are colonized by collective ones' (Paasi 1996, p. 55), and we learn to locate ourselves in this discursive landscape. That locational act is the root of our many political *geographies* of economic nationalism.

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