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SPECIAL ISSUE: Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms

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Forging a national essence is the business of nationalists. That of nationalism's historians and theorists is to identify the historical and social parameters within which such forging (and, usually, considerable amounts of forgery) became at once possible and necessary. How did nations - new types of political communities founding a qualitatively new world order, an 'international' order - come to be? And how did they, and the international order, develop together, each shaping and being shaped by the other?

If the corpus of the historiography and theory of nations and nationalisms which was the result of attempts to answer questions thrown up by their emergence and development was distinctly non-cumulative, full of reversals and dead-ends, this was thanks to a still deeper, structural, problem: the political (and geopolitical) processes which created nations, nationalism and the international order was inextricable from the contemporaneous development of capitalism and civil society. How well one set of phenomena was understood depended not only on how well the other was, but also on whether their relative importance and mutual relationship was correctly judged. This happened rarely. Instead a division of scholarly labour - between a study of nations and nationalisms largely focused on culture and a political economy of national (and international) capitalist development - emerged. This proved fatal to understanding nations. For the entanglement of capitalism and the nation-state, of class and nation, of the universalism of the law of value and the particularity of the various ways in which its inexorable operation has been dammed and channelled by national political economies remains central to understanding both.

This special issue is an attempt to discover the analytical possibilities that lie in cancelling this division of labour. Minimally it shows, from a variety of disciplinary and political perspectives, how little sense it makes.

TWQ - setting the agenda

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