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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS

"Disaster Nationalism" and Present-day Europe: An Interdisciplinary Conference

Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Prague, 22 and 23 May 2026

Call for Papers

By the late twentieth century, nationalisms across much of the West seemed in abeyance. The demise of the bipolar world order in 1989-1991 heralded new arrangements of political and social identity to such an extent that Francis Fukyama was to propose, somewhat prematurely, that "the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (4) was within view. In Europe, the Yugoslav wars notwithstanding, the European Union promised a cosmopolitan supranationalism which while intermittently contested, has altered how the peoples of the nations within the bloc experience everyday life, mobility, culture and bureaucracy. The EU seemed to mitigate the potential of violent nationalist conflicts, and produce spaces for compromise and co-operation as was most evident in the case of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland.

More generally, nationalisms, whether cultural or political, by the end of the twentieth century were impacted by the burgeoning force of globalization and in this zone new pressures, challenges and antagonisms surfaced. Dani Rodrik argues in *The Globalization Paradox*, that this led to "the fundamental political trilemma of the world economy: we cannot simultaneously pursue democracy, national determination, and economic globalization" (xviii). Only two of these elements, he suggests, fully function at any given time, resulting in frictions in the concept and consequences of globalization.

It is in this context that we are now witnessing the spectacular return of nationalism(s) to global politics and public discourse. Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey describe a "conjuncture" as "a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape" (57). The factors contributing to this conjuncture are complex and multiple. Following the global recession of 2008/9, it has become increasingly clear that, despite small-scale revivals of traditional forms of ethnic nationalism, the resurgent nationalism significantly differs from its nineteenth- and twentieth-century precursors. This is not only caused by the rapid development of mass communication (especially Internet advertising, social networks and profiling of their clients) that has opened democracy to manipulations by marketing strategies and disinformation, but chiefly by the transformation of nationalism itself. Instead of its former ethnic, racial, cultural or even civic forms, the contemporary version, prominent in the U.S. or U.K., as well as India, Brazil or the Philippines, is a fluid and ever-mobile convocation of contrarian views that have been provocatively called "disaster nationalism" by Richard Seymour.

Seymour maps how "disaster nationalism" originates in deepening feelings of crisis and precarity, ecological, economic and political, which spreads at speed through social and virtual networks. To the expanding number of people across different classes it offers

"compensation in superiority" and fictions of renewed social unity in the return to equally fictional homogeneous ethnic national communities. Integrating catastrophic and post-catastrophic narratives, it represents the downfall of democratic civilization as a thrilling and hopeful moment of social history, presented as a promise of new stability and order. Understanding nationalism in the 21st century demands a new analytic framework that recognizes diverse forms of nationalism, as well as the harnessing of nationalism for imperial aims by Putin's Russia. The conference will attempt to initiate an interdisciplinary dialogue comparing the impact of "disaster nationalism" on different European regions and their recent transformations, with a particular focus on cultural and artistic responses to nationalist discourse. The suggested areas of interest are:

- Devolution of the U.K. and Brexit
- Expansion of populism in Western and Central Europe
- Opposition to sub-state nationalism in the EU countries (e.g., Catalonia, Flanders)
- Putin's dictatorship and its effort to redraw the political map of Europe
- Disasters as opportunities: political strategy, opportunism, and myth-making
- Conduits of new nationalisms: digital media and political discourse
- Solidarity practices in cultural spaces
- Gender, sexuality, and new nationalist agendas
- Resonances of identity conflicts fomented by new forms of nationalism in literature, theatre, visual arts and the new media

Contributions are welcome focusing on identity conflicts fomented by new forms of nationalism and their resonances in literature, theatre, visual arts and new media. Apart from identity conflicts, the preferred focus of contributions are diverse sources and practices of resilience, chiefly against the apocalyptic, violent and retaliatory tendencies of what Seymour labels "disaster nationalism."

Keynote speakers:
Professor Luba Jurgenson (Université Paris-Sorbonne, Department of Slavic Studies)
Professor Murray Pittock (University of Glasgow)

Abstracts of presentations (300 words, 20 min. maximum) and round table proposals (90 minutes, containing the names and affiliations of speakers, and their topics) should be submitted by **31 January 2026** at martin.prochazka@ff.cuni.cz.

Registration will open on **1 March 2026**.

Works Cited:

Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, 16 (Summer 1989): 3-18.
Dani Rodrik, *The Globalization Paradox: Why Global Markets, States, and Democracy Can't Coexist* (Oxford: OUP, 2011)
Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," *Soundings*, 44 (2010): 57-71.
Richard Seymour, *Disaster Nationalism: The Downfall of Liberal Civilization* (London: Verso, 2024).

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