

From the *Twenty Years' Crisis* to the climate crisis: Reconsidering Carr's thoughts on nationalism and global reform

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Abstract

A recent debate emerged on the possibility of rendering nationalism compatible with addressing the climate crisis. E. H. Carr's analysis of nationalism and global reform is relevant to this debate. Carr's analysis highlights a negative relationship between nationalism and peace in the international order; a relationship that extends to, and is exacerbated by, climate change. This analysis is relevant to the contemporary debate on nationalism and climate change in three ways. First, it shows that competition over resources, border control and conflict are likely to increase in the climate age. Second, it explains the failure of UN-led attempts to address the climate crisis. Third, it problematises mid-way solutions to render nationalism compatible with addressing the climate crisis – whether these are realist, liberal institutionalist or green nationalist. Carr's work however does not simply present a pessimistic outlook on the climate crisis; it also offers a positive lens to think of the crisis as an opportunity. Times of crisis to Carr are times of opportunity for humanity to re-define its sense of purpose. The emergence of issuespecific climate movements and sector-specific green projects is testimony to the presence of this opportunity today to move beyond nationalism, towards multi-scalar identity frameworks.

Keywords

Classical realism, E H Carr, global reform, IR theory

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Introduction

What is the relationship between climate change and nationalism? On one hand, nationalism exacerbates climate change. ‘Nationalism’ Prasenjit Duara writes, ‘secures its attraction among the people by means of a virtual contract the state makes with its citizens to deliver the fruits of progress and development in exchange for loyalty, discipline and sacrifice’ (Duara, 2021: 614). As such, national elites capitalise on nationalism to legitimate the extraction of the nation’s resources at the detriment of the planet (Conversi, 2020). On the other hand, climate change exacerbates nationalism: resource scarcity and mass displacement, both predicted consequences of climate change, intensify nationalist rhetoric ‘to keep the “barbarians at the gate” through ever more draconian border controls, or by vomiting out excess “alien” mouths to feed’ (Levene, 2022: 88). Given this twofold negative relationship, where nationalism exacerbates climate change and climate change exacerbates nationalism, a debate emerged on the possibility of rendering nationalism compatible with addressing the climate crisis (Conversi, 2020; Conversi and Posocco, 2022; Posocco and Watson, 2022). It is the contention of this article that E. H. Carr’s work on nationalism and global reform is relevant to this debate.

The last 25 years witnessed a renewal of interest in Carr (Babik, 2013; Cunliffe, 2020; Molloy, 2006). A significant strand in this literature emphasised the importance of the social function of nationalism in Carr’s thinking (Gellner, 1992; Kenealy and Kostagiannis, 2013; Pettman, 1998). ‘The primary aim of national policy’ Carr summarises this function, is ‘to minister to the welfare of members of the nation and to enable them to earn their living’ (Carr, 1945: 19). While the social function of nationalism has been widely acknowledged in the literature, nationalism to Carr also plays a psychological function. With a rare exception (Lerner, 2022), this function has been under-theorised. Carr conceptualises human psychology in terms of two drives: the drive for power and social solidarity. Nationalism satisfies both drives simultaneously. It projects the individual’s drive for power outside the nation – that is, in competition with other nations, meanwhile satisfying the drive for social solidarity within the nation. These functions, as they became central to nationalism in the twentieth century, produced a negative relationship with peace in the international order: they led to competition over resources, border control and, finally, total war.

The article argues that Carr’s analysis of the negative relationship between nationalism and peace in the international order extends to, and is exacerbated by, climate change. In particular, Carr’s analysis is relevant to the contemporary debate on nationalism and climate change in three ways. First, it shows that competition over resources, border control and conflict are likely to increase in the climate age. Second, it explains the failure of UN-led attempts, from Kyoto (1997) to COP27 (2022), to address the climate crisis. Third, it problematises mid-way solutions to render nationalism compatible with addressing the climate crisis – whether these are realist (Lieven, 2020; Symons, 2019; Walt, 2021), liberal institutionalist (Ikenberry, 2020) or green nationalist (Conversi and Posocco, 2022). Carr’s work however does not simply present a pessimistic outlook on the climate crisis; it also offers a positive lens to think of the crisis as an opportunity. The Second World War to Carr did not only bring destruction but also offered an opportunity for society to re-define its sense of purpose. Times of crisis are thus times of opportunity

for humanity to re-define its sense of purpose and find alternative outlets to the social and psychological functions of nationalism. The emergence of issue-specific climate movements and sector-specific green projects is testimony to the presence of this opportunity today to move beyond nationalism, towards multi-scalar identity frameworks.

To advance this argument, the article proceeds in two steps. First, it unpacks the problem with the social and psychological functions of nationalism in Carr's analysis and explains how Carr sought a post-national substitute for these functions in his argument on global reform. Second, the article applies Carr's insights to explain the negative relationship between nationalism and climate change, and highlight the opportunity that the current crisis presents for humanity to redefine its sense of purpose.

Carr on nationalism

According to Carr, nationalism in the twentieth century transitioned to a phase where it played two functions: social and psychological. These functions produced a negative relationship between nationalism and peace in the international order: they led to aggressive competition over resources, border control and, finally, total war.

The socialisation of the nation, Carr argues in *Nationalism and After*, is the most fundamental development in the early twentieth century. The end of the nineteenth century, Carr observes, 'saw the development of industry and industrial skills; the rapid expansion in numbers and importance of urban populations; the growth of workers' organisations and of the political consciousness of the workers; the introduction of universal compulsory education; and the extension of the franchise' (Carr, 1945: 18). Consequently, the purpose of the nation was transformed. The 'nightwatchman state' was out; the socialised nation in: 'the primary aim of national policy was no longer merely to maintain order and conduct what was narrowly defined as public business, but to minister the welfare of members of the nation and to enable them to earn their living' (Carr, 1945: 19). Thus, 'for the first time . . . the economic claims of the masses came into the forefront of the nation' (Carr, 1945: 19).

Nationalism to Carr however does not only have a social function, but also a psychological function. Specifically, nationalism serves two psychological drives: the drive for power and social solidarity (Schuett, 2010: 46). 'Man in society reacts to his fellow men in two opposite ways' Carr explains, 'sometimes he displays egoism . . . at other times he displays sociability or the desire to cooperate with others' (Carr, 1984: 123). Nationalism satisfies both drives simultaneously. On one hand, nationalism satisfies the drive for power by projecting it outside the nation. 'The individual seeks strength through combination with others in the group' writes Carr (echoing Niebuhr, 1932), 'if he is weak, he finds compensation for his own lack of power to assert himself in the vicarious self-assertion of the group. If we cannot win ourselves, we want our side to win' (Carr, 1984: 202). On the other hand, nationalism satisfies the drive for social solidarity within the nation: it 'provides a sense of meaning and purpose widely felt to be lacking in modern life' and is thus 'the most powerful known instrument of social solidarity' (Carr, 1943: 115).

While the social function of nationalism in Carr's analysis is widely acknowledged (Germain, 2019; Linklater, 2000; Wilson, 2001), the psychological function is largely

omitted. One exception is Lerner (2022). Lerner argues that Carr, following the social psychologist Gustave Le Bon, held ‘racist and misogynistic ideas about mass politics’ (Lerner, 2022: 996). Carr ‘caricatured the phenomenon [nationalism] as representing solely the negative, irrational and disorderly aspects of mass politics that were most in need of shepherding by rational elite policy-makers’ (Lerner, 2022: 1005), and ‘omitted nationalism’s continued multivalence, including its role in motivating independence movements among colonised peoples’ (Lerner, 2022: 1007). Lerner contrasts Carr with ‘contemporaneous anti-imperialists . . . [who] alternatively theorised nationalism as a vital positive force that could unify disparate peoples suffering under colonial rule in the pursuit and achievement of independence’ (Lerner, 2022: 1004).

Omitted from Lerner’s interpretation of Carr’s analysis of the psychological function of nationalism is the context in which Carr situates his argument: the transition to the social phase of nationalism (Molloy, 2014: 476). In *Nationalism and After*, Carr (1945) employs the term jingoism once (p. 20), and does not link it to the ‘irrationality of the masses’ but situates the term in the context of the third period of nationalism, where the masses can be irrational (in the sense of being manipulated by propaganda; see also Carr, 1951: 75–76), but their support of nationalism also has a rational basis: the social question. This context is important because it clarifies a crucial difference between Carr’s revolutionary socialism and Le Bon’s reactionary conservatism. Carr takes democracy and the economic claims of the masses seriously but sees nationalism as an inadequate vehicle to achieving them. This is a contradiction that Carr observes: the individual’s aspiration for security and economic well-being is sought within a nationalist framework that descends the international order into economic competition, border control and total war. The socialisation of nationalism in the age of mass democracy does not only raise the expectations of the individual that their nation will provide employment, but also means that each nation has to compete with other nations for resources and global markets to enable expansion in production. With economic expansion reaching its limit by the end of the nineteenth century, border control ensued. ‘In Great Britain’ for example, ‘agitation against unrestricted alien migration began in the 1890’s; and the first act controlling immigration was passed in 1905’ (Carr, 1984: 61). And, ‘when in the nineteen-thirties humanitarian pressure demanded the admission of alien refugees to Great Britain, consent was given on the condition that they did not ‘seek employment’’ (Carr, 1945: 23). The resulting aggressive economic competition in the international order, in turn, led to a new type of war: total war rooted in psychological dynamics as well as the social question. ‘The world war of 1914’ thus, ‘was the first war between socialised nations . . . war among socialised nations inevitably became an instrument for securing economic advantages for the victor and inflicting economic disabilities on the defeated. Modern wars are fought to a finish and the loser has no rights’ (Carr, 1945: 28). In short, the social and psychological functions of nationalism reinforced each other, culminating in total war.

Given this background, Carr rejected the universal application of Wilsonian ideal of ‘self-determination’, particularly in the case of smaller powers whose citizens have no protection from powerful nations pursuing aggressive military adventures and beggar thy neighbour policies. ‘Self-determination’ Carr wrote, ‘is one important principle which should be taken into account in deciding the form and extent of the political unit’ (Carr, 1943: 47). The trouble is that self-determination by 1919 ‘came more and more into

conflict with the realities of military and economic power' (Carr, 1943: 50). The reality of military power meant that self-determination did not protect smaller nations and former colonies from concentrations of military power. The reality of economic power on the other hand meant that economically stronger powers used their larger markets and economic might to coerce smaller powers. Carr's concern was thus that 'the economic repercussions of the unrestricted right of self-determination . . . impinge directly on the daily life of the ordinary man' (Carr, 1943: 59). Carr therefore rejected nationalism as a vehicle for peace and prosperity not because he was afraid of the irrationality of the masses in former colonies (Lerner, 2022), but because he saw it as an 'anarchonism', that is, offering only a 'shadow of independence' and ultimately failing to meet the security and economic needs of the individual (Carr, 1945: 37; see also Molloy, 2003: 287–288; Karkour, 2022a). 'Decolonisation' would remain hollow if former colonies were 'placed at the mercy of a fluctuating and unprotected international market' (Carr, 1951: 97). 'The political right of national self-determination' therefore to Carr, 'must be reconciled with the exigencies of economic interdependence' (Carr, 1943: 60).

In sum, nationalism in the twentieth century played two functions according to Carr: social and psychological. These functions produced a negative relationship between nationalism and peace in the international order: twentieth century nationalism descended the international order into economic competition, border control and, finally, total war. The negative relationship was especially harmful to smaller nations and former colonies, as the new realities of concentration of military and economic power threatened the economic and security aspirations of individuals within these nations. Any account of global reform in the future world order, Carr thus argued in the 1940s, ought to take these realities seriously and provide a substitute for the twin - social and psychological - functions of nationalism globally. Carr's vision of the post-war order, as the following section shows, came precisely to account for these realities.

Carr's vision of the post-war order

Carr's vision of the post-war order came precisely to account for the limitations of nationalism in the context of the military and economic realities of the twentieth century. This vision, on one hand, came to address the social needs of the individual irrelevant to national loyalties. On the other hand, it emphasised the psychological function of post-national cooperation.

Carr's vision stands in contradistinction to two alternatives: liberal institutionalism and world government. 'The settlement of 1919' Carr advances his critique of liberal institutions, 'was strongly influenced by the nineteenth century doctrine of the *laissez faire*. Those reared in this tradition were likely to take a limited and negative view of the functions of an international organisation' (Carr, 1945: 60–61). The negative view Carr refers to is the view that neglects the social question, namely that the 'primary function' of the international order is not 'orderly stagnation' but 'to seek by active policies to improve the conditions of life of ordinary men and women in all countries' (Carr, 1945: 61). It is only by addressing the needs of the individual in the age of the socialised nation that a post-national order could be built on solid grounds. Following the Second World War, Carr presents a similar critique of the Bretton Woods negotiations:

‘The explicit or implicit undertone of much current discussion encourages the belief that the whole course of economic evolution in the twentieth century is an error to be retrieved by returning to the universalism of an idealised past. Such a view, which inspired a long series of abortive international conferences from Brussels in 1920 to Bretton Woods in 1944, is both false and sterile’ (Carr, 1945: 46).

In Carr’s view, ‘the political, social and economic problems of the post-war world must be approached with the desire not to stabilise, but to revolutionise’ (Carr, 1943: xxiii). Carr’s ‘impatience’ which Michael Cox points out, ‘with those [liberal institutionalists] who assumed the status quo was always preferable to change’ (Cox, 1999: 646), thus stems from the fact that in aiming to ‘stabilise’ the status quo, they prioritised outmoded assumptions over the creation of democracy under the new conditions.

In addition to liberal institutionalism, Carr rejects the second alternative vision of world order: world government. ‘The sense of the unity of mankind, sufficient to support the common affirmation of certain universal principles and purposes, is not yet strong enough . . . to sustain an organization exercising sovereign and universal authority’ (Carr, 1945: 44). Such ‘sense of unity’ is yet to be realised. Until then, Carr’s realism meant that he took seriously the role of great powers, particularly multinational powers (Scheuerman, 2011: 76), with the aim to create an order that would address the social needs of the individual irrelevant to national loyalties. In examining this aspect in Carr’s work, recent literature identified the influence of David Mitrany on Carr’s thought (Ashworth, 2017: 320). There is no question that Carr was influenced by Mitrany: both men accepted that in its social phase, nationalism was dangerous and needed to be replaced by a multi-layered system of loyalties (see Mitrany, 1948: 356). Thus, on one hand, Carr supported Mitrany’s functionalism: ‘organisations for different purposes’ which ‘can be built up on different international groupings whose scope will vary with the functions they perform’ (Carr, 1945: 62). ‘This variety and multiplicity’ Carr explained, ‘is one of the most important safeguards against the accumulation of exclusive powers and exclusive loyalties under the control of the great multinational units’ (Carr, 1945: 62). Scheuerman summarises Carr’s argument here,

‘Functional organisation contributed to the creation of a postnational social and economic order which alone might successfully undergird stable political organisation beyond the nation state. Simultaneously it checked potentially dangerous centralising tendencies, including the pathological side-effects of a globe likely to be carved up into competing regional power blocs’ (Scheuerman, 2011: 81).

The ‘European Reconstruction and Public Works Corporation’ and ‘European Planning Authority’ were case examples directed towards these functionalist, post-national, ends (Carr, 1943: 251–252).

On the other hand, as Or Rosenboim reports, ‘Carr wrote to Mitrany in 1943, commending him for his theory of functional organisation, but doubting that functionalism could replace the “awkward fact of nationalism” with international cooperation’ (Rosenboim, 2017: 44). To Mitrany, the task is to take care of the social, and nationalism will eventually erode: ‘if Governments have the welfare of their own peoples at heart they could let such organisations get to work; and if the organisations are successful and

their number grows, world government will gradually evolve through their performance' (Mitrany, 1948: 538). To Carr, by contrast, the post-national order cannot simply rely on Mitrany's functionalism, whose function is social, but also needs to provide a psychological substitute to nationalism, namely to satisfy the individual's psychological drives: power and social solidarity. 'The new faith' Carr argued, 'must solve the unemployment problem by providing a moral purpose as potent as was religion in the Middle Ages' (Carr, 1943: 120). Only through this 'new sense of moral purpose', which substitutes nationalism in satisfying the individual's psychological drives, can loyalties be transformed. Towards this transformation, the 'European Reconstruction and Public Works Corporation' and the 'European Planning Authority' should aim not only 'to remedy unemployment' but 'promote practical international cooperation as a psychological substitute for war' (Carr, 1943: 252). After WWII, Carr sought to expand his vision of the post-war order that addresses the social and psychological needs of the individual to the former colonies. Carr chaired a committee sponsored by UNESCO to prepare a report on the 'theoretical bases of human rights' (Dunne and Wheeler, 2019). Carr argued in the report that 'any declaration of rights which would be felt to have any validity today must include social and economic as well as political rights' (Carr, 1948, para.9). Otherwise smaller powers and former colonies, particularly individuals who are citizens of these powers, would suffer economically if left at the mercy of the international market.

Multinationals groupings were not realised the way Carr envisioned. Carr's ideas were not tried and failed however, but rather glossed over by the hegemonic power of the US. This was a deliberate political project: under Hayek, Freedman and others, neo-liberalism came to replace *laissez faire*, all the while playing the function of prioritising liberalism and keeping it safe from democracy (Mirowski, 2009; Slobodian, 2018). The post-1945 liberal institutional order that came as a result failed to provide a substitute for nationalism's twin social and psychological functions globally. Consequently, the Bretton Woods institutions, upon which Carr cast his opprobrium, remain exclusive of the individual in the former colonies, could not satisfy the psychological needs of the individual in Western democracies, and fail to address transnational problems. One such problem today is climate change, to which the following section turns.

Carr's crisis and the climate crisis today

Climate change exacerbates the negative relationship between nationalism and peace in the international order that Carr identified over 70 years ago. In particular, Carr's analysis of nationalism's metamorphosis to its social phase shows that economic competition, border control and conflict are likely to increase in the climate age.

When Carr highlighted the 'curious coincidence' that the publication of the *Wealth of Nations* came in the same year as the invention of the steam engine, which set about to invalidate the premises of Smith's argument (Carr, 1984: 58), he was right in at least two senses. First, in the sense, which Carr pointed, that the steam engine led to the rise of a class of industrial workers who advanced the social phase of nationalism that invalidated the premise of international peace under *laissez faire*. Second, in the sense, which Carr could not have predicted, that the steam engine accelerated anthropogenic climate change, thus invalidating *laissez faire*'s promise of endless growth. As Daniele Conversi

notes, ‘all calculations released by the IPCC take the advent of steam power as the watershed event’ (Conversi, 2021: 142). Since Carr’s writings, the 1940s, energy consumption exceeded that of the Holocene period in its entirety [9700 BC to 1950AD] (Syvitski et al., 2020), with devastating effects for the environment and biodiversity. These effects are compounded by the global relatedness of what scientists refer to as the ‘planetary boundaries’. The boundaries include ‘the climate, stratosphere, ocean systems . . . marine and terrestrial biodiversity, land systems . . . aerosol loading and chemical pollution’ (Rockström et al., 2009: 6). Each boundary has ‘thresholds’, the crossing of which negatively impact other boundaries, thus amplifying the impact and ‘shrinking the safe operating space’ across the globe (Lade et al., 2020: 122). For example, ‘deforestation in the Amazon in a changing climate regime may reduce water resource availability in Asia’ (Rockström et al., 2009: 19).

The shrinking of resources, on one hand, invalidates nationalism’s promise of improvement in standards of living and provision of employment. Contrary to this promise, a 2021 UN report on Africa by the World Meteorological Organisation (2021: 32) notes that ‘climate change will have serious implications on jobs and productivity. In the sub-Saharan region, 55%–62% of the labour force is employed in agriculture, largely rainfed-based. In this region, with a global warming of 3°C, the work capacity in agriculture is projected to be reduced by 30%–50% relative to the 1986–2005 period’. On the other hand, the shrinking of resources increases economic competition between socialised nations. ‘Perpetual expansion’ according to Carr, was ‘the hypothesis on which liberal democracy and laissez faire economics were based’ in the nineteenth century (Carr, 1943: 106). Once the zenith of expansion was reached, peace turned into economic competition (Carr, 1945: 26). Snyder (2015) finds echoes of this dynamic in the climate crisis. If German fascism fed on the fear of resource scarcity that *Lebensraum* came to redress, Snyder argues in *Black Earth*, eco-fascism is the latest manifestation of such future fear, with the rise of the state of exception to secure resources. ‘The Chinese leadership’ for instance, ‘has described Africa as a source of needed resources, including food’ (Snyder, 2015: 331). In Sudan, China ‘leased to the tune of millions of acres, to provide Chinese—not Sudanese—food requirements’ (Levene, 2022: 91). Countries such as Japan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar followed suit, attempting to buy or lease large parts of agrarian land in Africa to meet domestic food requirements (Snyder, 2015: 330).

As the economic pie shrinks and climigration becomes the norm, nationalism, particularly in its social phase theorised by Carr, will increase demand for border control. According to the World Bank, climate migrants will reach 200 million by 2050; to the UNHCR the number can reach 1 billion (Clement et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2022: 10). Can governments overcome the social and psychological exigencies imposed by nationalism and welcome refugees in such numbers? Examples such as the fate of Haitians in the wake of hurricane Dorian that devastated the Bahamas in 2019 offer little reason for optimism. As Mark Levene reports, ‘an unelected but vocal “patriotic” group calling itself Operation Sovereign Bahamas, acted as goad to the Bahamian authorities to clear out Haitian shanty towns . . . and “repatriate” their inhabitants back to Haiti’ (Levene, 2022: 80). Hurricane Dorian, in short, demonstrates that in times of climate crisis nationalism demands barriers. The price for the absence of an alternative outlet to nationalism will be paid for by the billions of poor who will face these barriers.

Finally, resource competition and barriers against climigration are unlikely to persist without also increasing the likelihood of conflict. As resources decrease and climigration increases, the incompatibility between nationalism and peace in the international order will also increase. Carr observed this dynamic in the twentieth century, when he argued that a stagnant economic pie globally turned into economic competition, then border control and finally total war (Karkour, 2021). Indeed, a UN report on Africa (World Meteorological Organisation, 2021: 32), predicts that ‘high water stress is expected to displace up to 700 million people by 2030’ escalating ‘the risk of tensions and intercommunal conflicts’. As nationalism pressures the protection of borders against climigration, powerful states will seek ‘pre-emptive’ measures to keep refugees at bay. Mass climate migration is already cited in a 2008 manifesto by senior NATO strategists as a threat to ‘Western values’ and ‘way of life’ that may require swift action, including the use of force without UN authorisation (Traynor, 2008). Should this scenario unfold and ‘weak states collapse in on themselves’, it is not unlikely that ‘the surviving still unsubmerged ones, more territorially defensive and belligerent than ever, turn—where they have them—to their nuclear arsenals as weapons of last resort’ (Levene, 2022: 93).

The misguided belief in the progressive rationality of the liberal order, as Carr observed over 70 years ago, therefore leaves matters too late to be resolved. Not until total war or extinction become inevitable, does such a belief awaken to the reality of nationalism. Can multilateral institutions, exemplified in the UNFCCC fora, address this problematic relationship between nationalism and peace in the climate age?

Multilateral institutions?

The failure of nation-states to honour their pledges under international law led Carr to conclude that in the social phase of nationalism, ‘modern national governments cannot and will not observe international treaties or rules of international law when these become burdensome or dangerous to the welfare or security of their own nation’ (Carr, 1945: 31). This applies as much to climate treaties as to peace and trade treaties. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol’s differentiation of responsibilities between industrialised and developing nations is often celebrated as ‘an outstanding success of solidarist ambition in international climate politics’ (Falkner, 2019: 272). Governments however remained trapped in the national framework whose logic of competition was defined by nationalism domestically and *laissez faire* internationally. Consequently, neither economic or technological transfer was on the table in Kyoto, nor the principle of differentiation could remain intact as emerging economies, such as China and India, saw their shares of global emissions increase. Differentiation was substituted for ‘national pledges’ in Paris.

All subsequent attempts to incorporate a modicum of justice in climate treaties faced Carr’s challenge: under the pressure to remain competitive, nationalism dictated developmental policies to protect jobs at home. The ‘loss and damage fund’, the highlight of COP27, in 2022 remains in the tens of billions (UNFCCC, 2022a: 8), falling well below the required amount, estimated in a trillion dollars a year by the OECD (OECD, 2018). Meanwhile countries in the Global North fall short in their pledges, the focus remains to be ‘competitive’ in the international market via industrial policies. Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act, which ‘authorised at least \$369 billion in subsidies for clean energy

projects and products' on the condition that companies 'produce in the United States' is a case example of such policy (Wong and Tucker, 2023, para.2). The EU's Net Zero Industry Act, designed to match the US plan with an EU-wide effort to maintain green jobs at home, is another case example (Stolton, 2023). While the Global North seeks to remain competitive, the Global South sees the bill on climate adaptation gradually increase, widening an already staggering gap in climate financing. Reversing much developmental gain, 'the World Bank estimates that climate change will push up to 130 million people into poverty over the next decade' (cited in Sengupta, 2023: 140), the majority of whom in the Global South. 'The pursuit of "free competition"', Carr writes, 'inevitably tends to create those extreme inequalities and forms of exploitation which offend the social conscience and drive the less privileged to measures of self-defence' (Carr, 1945: 46). The key measure of self-defence today, as UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres lately announced, is 'mass exodus on a biblical scale' (Carrington, 2023). Migration on this scale, in a world of shrinking resources, is the ultimate test for peace in the international order. Multilateral institutions that operate within a nationalist framework can neither halt the dynamics that will lead to such migration nor meet this test.

Carr's critique applies to contemporary realists, who embrace nationalism in their solutions to address the climate crisis.

Carr contra contemporary realists

The present interpretation of Carr's argument stands in stark contrast to contemporary realist attempts to address the climate crisis. One example is Symons (2019: 158), who argues that climate negotiations should focus on 'great power interests rather than ideal standards of justice'. The reason, Symons says, is that 'realists anticipate agreements and organisations will fail or fade into irrelevancy if parties insist on a thick interpretation of equity norms'. As such, cooperation should be prioritised over justice,

'Realist ethical reasoning supports 'unjust' distributions of costs and benefits if this injustice significantly enhances the prospects for effective international cooperation . . . cooperation to secure essential global public goods might be considered an independent normative goal' (Symons, 2019: 158–159).

Carr's (1943) work rejects the notion that 'cooperation' in the common interest of (climate) security is an 'independent normative goal'. 'A generation which makes peace and security its aim' without addressing justice claims 'is doomed to frustration'; since only when 'the conditions for an orderly and progressive development of human society' are created, can security 'be added unto them' (p. xxiii). Indeed, climate cooperation requires the pooling of resources from rich countries to poor countries. This is required to address the challenge of development, which is central to mitigation and adaptation in emerging economies. As the IPCC report concludes 'there is a strong link between sustainable development, vulnerability and climate risks. Limited economic, social and institutional resources often result in high vulnerability and low adaptive capacity' (IPCC, 2022: 55). A conclusion that echoes the words of the South African representative in COP27: 'Africa needs to build adaptive capacity, foster resilience and

address loss and damage . . . to achieve this, our continent will need a predictable and appropriate funding stream and technological support' (UNFCCC, 2022b, para.4–5). Sri Lanka's representative agrees,

'The unbridled industrialisation of the developed economy is the root cause of climate change, the consequences of which, we the poor countries are forced to suffer . . . those in the South are facing a double jeopardy - struggling to develop economically while fighting to protect the living standards of our populations' (UNFCCC, 2022b, para.23).

Climate justice is thus intertwined with climate cooperation (Shue, 2014). By undermining the former, nationalism undermines the latter. A 'realist' response to the climate crisis cannot be realistic without accounting for nationalism and its role in undermining climate justice.

A second realist attempt is presented by Stephen Walt. 'Realism' Walt argues, 'suggests that efforts to stop or reverse global warming must rely not on idealistic appeals to our shared humanity but rather on the narrow interests of each nation-state' (Walt, 2021, para.18). For instance, a rich nation would consider addressing the climate crisis to avoid a flood of climate refugees from poorer nations. Furthermore, Walt suggests an emphasis on great powers since 'solving the problem depends more on their actions than on whatever Bolivia or Burundi or Brunei decide to do' (Walt, 2021, para.20). From a Carrian standpoint, Walt is only partially correct. A realist would have no quarrel that individuals in great powers need to realise that addressing climate change is in their vital interests and nor that great powers are crucial to include due to their resources and abilities. Walt, however, advances what Sean Molloy, following Carr, refers to as a 'sterile realism', namely a realism that fails to accept justice claims that are transformative of the status quo (Molloy, 2021: 328). These claims are central to cooperation with the 'less privileged'. The problem of migration is economic, and so is the climate challenge, where poor nations require assistance to develop and address the twin challenge of mitigation and adaptation. Their inclusion in the debate is crucial precisely because of disagreements over such assistance (Hodgson and Politi, 2022). It is unclear how with the persistence of nationalism, great powers can present a realistic plan to address poor nations' economic claims and induce cooperation on climate change (Conversi, 2020). Can proponents of 'green nationalism' present such a realistic plan?

Green nationalism?

Proponents of green nationalism distinguish it from 'resource nationalism' (Conversi, 2020). Resource nationalism is 'a form of nationalist rhetoric that uplifts and sacralises soil-rooted national resources as a common good even though only a tiny minority of the population actually benefits from their extraction and exploitation' (Conversi, 2020: 630). Green nationalism by contrast promotes 'exemplary green nation-states' who pride themselves on their environmentalism (Conversi and Posocco, 2022). The logic behind supporting green nationalism, its proponents argue, is that the alternative, survival cosmopolitanism, is not politically feasible: 'evoking a cosmopolitan utopia doesn't solve divisions based on ethnic and national logics; it doesn't make national

ideology disappear, nor does it increase nation-states' solidarity' (Conversi and Posocco, 2022: 3). Following criticism of the 'stateless nations' of Scotland and Catalonia (Conversi and Friis Hau, 2021), proponents of green nationalism draw on examples such as Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, to illustrate that nationalism can foster environmentalism.

The example of Vaughan in Germany demonstrates that by offering green jobs and turning environmentalism into a matter of 'prestige and pride' (Posocco and Watson, 2022: 1207), green nationalism can provide a substitute for the social and psychological functions of nationalism, without succumbing to the latter's destructive manifestations. The 'stress test' of green nationalism, however, is not pride, but rather, as Levene (2022) argues, remaining a positive force for humanity even as floods of climate refugees mass migrate to relatively wealthy Germany. The evidence, so far, as seen with the rise of the AfD in light of the refugee crisis, renders such optimism questionable. The resort to coal use in Germany, albeit temporarily in light of Russia's cutting off of energy supplies, also shows that, pace Conversi and Posocco (2022), 10), there is a limit to environmental policy and this limit is set by the social question.

Proponents of green nationalism present Brazil's deforestation of Amazonia as an example of 'resource nationalism' (Conversi and Posocco, 2022: 2). The politics of Brazil's deforestation cannot be dissociated from its economics. Brazil's problem with deforestation is not simply a problem of right-wing resource nationalism by a few elites, even as Bolsonaro's government accelerated it. It is a problem of nationalism in its social phase, namely of development and jobs more widely. None illustrates this better than the events under Lula's government. Lula's government in 2010 gave the green-light to build the Belo Monte dam on the Amazon River, on the insistence that it creates jobs, at the expense of 50,000 of indigenous inhabitants. This is, in addition to refusing to enshrine in the national climate law a clause to phase out fossil fuels (Spektor and Fasolin, 2022). Deforestation did not, and could not, stall under Lula's government as long as millions of jobs were (and remain) at stake, from cattle ranchers and miners to commodity exporters.

As a competition over the best 'exemplary ethical community', green nationalism risks becoming a winning contest over the most 'progressive' among rich nations (Conversi and Posocco, 2022: 13), whilst offering no solution to the social question in emerging economies. 'Nationalism' Lorenzo Posocco and Iarfhlaith Watson write, 'is still the engine that runs the state, and the goal [of green nationalism] is still national advantage, profit and progress, although the way to achieve it has changed' (Posocco and Watson, 2022: 1202). Like resource nationalism, green nationalism thus operates within the logic of profit and competition under *laissez faire*, leaving poorer nations at the mercy of continental powers such as the US and EU pursuing industrial policies to protect green jobs at home. In turn, there is little space for emerging economies seeking development, beyond their claims of sovereignty over national resources. Carr's response to liberals is thus relevant to proponents of green nationalism today: 'you cannot be revolutionaries at home and reactionaries abroad; you cannot be socialists at home and supporters of *laissez faire* capitalism abroad' (Carr, 1946: 584). You cannot be supporters of green nationalism at home and *laissez faire* abroad. Sustainable communities, unless global in scale, are unsustainable. A global solution requires a move beyond nationalism.

Beyond nationalism? Redefining humanity's sense of purpose

Carr's work reveals that times of crisis are also times of opportunity for society to re-define its sense of purpose. The emergence of issue-specific climate movements and sector-specific green projects is testimony to the presence of this opportunity today.

Every crisis brings not only a sense of tragedy and urgency, but also an opportunity to think and plan the world anew (Mitchell, 2017; van Munster and Sylvest, 2018: 260). Revolutionary policies become necessary to address the spatio-temporal challenges of the day. Richard Beardsworth argues that such revolutionary policies today require a 'critical concept of the statesperson'. 'Rather than back-tracking, stalling, deferring or scapegoating others' Beardsworth notes, 'this statesperson would embody the multiple responsibilities of the state in a globalised world where duties to one's own people, duties to foreigners, and duties to species life and the planet are assumed as conflicting and/or are aligned as compatible' (Beardsworth, 2017: 103). In short, such leader would 'transform global interest into national interest and national interest into global interest *without* incurring new forms of domination' (Beardsworth, 2017: 115 emphasis in original). The question remains — how would these 'new forms of domination' be eliminated? How would a 'politics of limits and restraints' be enacted in an unequal world (Beardsworth, 2020: 383)? For some, such as Lieven (2020), the self-limitation would stem from a new sense of purpose led by a Green New Deal, akin to the Roosevelt New Deal. Like Roosevelt's New Deal, however, the Green New Deal, or what has become of it under the Biden administration, does not prioritise the individual globally above nationalist goals. National Green Socialism, like National Socialism, is a recipe for securitising foreigners. Issue-specific climate movements and sector-specific green projects today present an alternative, multi-scalar, approach to identity formation.

The notion that identities are relational and multi-scalar (Powel, 2020), is not new to IR. Writing in 1943, Carr argued that intertwined identities and overlapping allegiances may not only coexist but also be instrumentalised for various purposes in a 'healthy social life'. 'All civilised men and women' Carr wrote, 'are members of different groups formed to satisfy different needs, and find no difficulty in reconciling the claims of a church, a sports club, a horticultural society and a trade union' (Carr, 1943: 62). Therefore, 'it can be plausibly argued that healthy social life can exist only where there is some such intertwined network of loyalties and interests, and where no one institution — whether state, church or trade union — makes an all embracing demand on the allegiance of its members in every field of their activities' (Carr, 1943: 62–63). Carr's remarks show that identity is not empirically ordained. An essentialised identity that omits the purposes towards which identities are invoked is not only left with substantive, fixated, categories, but also runs the risk of reducing these categories into abstractions that prioritise some political goals and agencies, while denying others. Identity, according to Carr, is multi-scalar: it reaches multiple scales in society, and a healthy social life exists when no one identity, certainly not national identity, is invoked at the expense of all the rest.

Issue-specific climate movements and sector-specific green projects exemplify this multi-scalar approach to identity formation. Duara mentions the 'anti-dam movement' as 'one of these local-national-global movements' that create 'multiple scales and varieties

of identification with locality, region, nation, nature and planet' and 'bring pressure on the nation-state's restrictive aim of creating the convergence of the state and culture' (Duara, 2021: 619–620). An example of a sector-specific green project is the International Solar Alliance, whose scope and funding of solar projects, such as the SolarX Grand Challenge to 'ease solar deployment in Africa' is transnational – that is, does not discriminate on the basis of nationality (International Solar Alliance, 2022). This is one example of a wider trend of emerging green projects to generate hydroelectricity, manage biodiversity and coastal areas, and eco-tourism, all of which 'can be operated at the regional, national and community level' (Areski, 2022, para.8). These initiatives, which reduce tasks to specific issues and sectors have been praised by commentators for their pragmatism and relative success (Gosh et al., 2022). Will they provide a substitute to the social and psychological functions of nationalism? It is upon this question that not only the fate of nationalism rests, but also the future of peace in the international order.

In *Nationalism and After*, Carr takes a realist stance on functional initiatives (Kostagiannis, 2017: 44). The 'idealistic view of a functional Internationalism would be utopian' Carr writes, 'if it failed to take account from the outset of the unresolved issue of power' (Carr, 1945: 50–51). This is relevant today to climate movements and projects, whose 'autonomous existence' exists alongside the 'awkward fact of nationalism'. 'Within what framework of power' the question should be asked today, 'can a modern international order with its multiplicity of agencies operate?' (Carr, 1945: 51). The framework of power remains national governments. The International Solar Alliance, for example, was co-founded by Narendra Modi's government. Will climate movements and projects replace the social and psychological functions of nationalism and diminish the latter's contradiction with peace within this framework of power? Will they satisfy the individual's drive for power by transcending it beyond nationalism, towards transnational purposes? Will taking part in these movements bring a sense of social solidarity and stabilise individual identity without associating it primarily with the nation?

While historical experience offers little reason for optimism, the emergence of climate movements and projects today is testimony to a significant fact that Carr highlighted during the war: that with each crisis emerges an opportunity for humanity to re-think its sense of purpose. Writing in the 1940s, Carr noted that 'never before has war been so destructive – not merely destructive of material things but of the social and political order under which men lived' (Carr, 1946: 585). But the war did not only bring destruction; it also created a sense of purpose and social programmes of full employment. Similarly, the question today is not whether but when humanity will bring about revolutionary change — to redefine its purpose beyond nationalism and invoke projects that advance multi-scalar identity frameworks. The emergence of climate movements and projects is testimony that the time has come for this change. While their success to provide a social and psychological substitute to nationalism is yet to be seen, their emergence is, of itself, significant: it means that, pace critics (Halliday, 2000; Johnston, 2007; Rich, 2000), humanity today lives in what Carr referred to as 'revolutionary times'. These are times when urgency challenges stability, the future challenges the past, and multi-scalar identity frameworks face an opportune moment to challenge nationalism.

Conclusion

Over a decade ago, Richard Beardsworth wrote that the ‘stark incompatibility between a cosmopolitan and realist perspective is, at least, theoretically misplaced’ (Beardsworth, 2008: 95; see also Craig, 2003). Since then, and in contrast to Mearsheimer’s (2005) static interpretation of Carr, a growing body of scholarship on the realist case for global reform emerged (Craig, 2016; Karkour, 2022b; Scheuerman, 2011). Situated in this literature, this article applied a novel reading of Carr’s analysis of nationalism and global reform to shed light on the climate crisis. In particular, the article argued that the historical context that Carr’s work provides – of the contradictory relationship between nationalism and peace in the international order – extends to, and is exacerbated by, climate change. Nationalism, in its current phase theorised by Carr, intensifies the likelihood of economic competition, border control and conflict in the climate age. Furthermore, it undermines the ability of multilateral institutions and theories that operate within a nationalist framework to address the climate crisis.

Carr’s work however also offers a positive lens through which the climate crisis can be seen as an opportunity for humanity to re-think its sense of purpose beyond nationalism. Times of crisis, such as during the Second World War and the Covid-19 pandemic, offered society an opportunity to redefine its purpose and address pressing issues such as unemployment and homelessness (Macaes, 2020). The emergence of issue-specific climate movements and sector-specific green projects is testimony to the presence of this opportunity in the context of the climate crisis; an opportunity for humanity to develop alternative outlets for the social and psychological functions to nationalism.

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