

NATIONALISM AND AFTER



E.H. CARR

With a new Introduction from
MICHAEL COX



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Praise for new edition of *Nationalism and After*

“Nationalism supercharges the competitive, conflictual, and mistrustful dimensions of international relations. The idea of ‘the nation’ as the highest locus of loyalty and political legitimacy has for centuries constrained cooperation in the human interest. Resisting its divisive power is one of the challenges of our global times. The author of this book, E.H. Carr, was one of the most important thinkers about nations and nationalism in the early decades of the academic study of international relations; and by reissuing this book, Michael Cox and Palgrave have done the discipline a great service. In his substantial introduction Professor Cox begins by situating Carr’s thinking in the context of the doctrine of ‘self-determination’ after 1918, particularly in the complex politics of Central and Eastern Europe. He concludes by asking us to think carefully about what we might learn from Carr’s concerns about nationalism in the context of today’s global challenges. ‘A great deal’ is the clear answer.”

—Ken Booth FBA, *Distinguished Research Professor, Aberystwyth University, UK*

“In this timely reissue of Carr’s classic work on nationalism, Michael Cox brilliantly unravels Carr’s complex views on one of the most contentious issues of the last two centuries. Demonstrating striking command of both primary and secondary materials, Cox demonstrates how a figure so critical of liberal projects for cosmopolitan governance could support an international order that superseded both nationalism and the nation-state. It is a fascinating story, and Cox tells it with great dexterity and élan. As the world’s borders harden once again, this book makes for essential reading.”

—Professor George Lawson, *Australian National University, Australia*. Author of *Anatomies of Revolution*

“Like all his fellow realists, E.H. Carr paid much attention to nationalism and its primary manifestation: the nation-state. Grasping the relevance of *Nationalism and After* (1945), which lays out Carr’s bold views on that powerful phenomenon, is greatly enhanced by Michael Cox’s superb introductory essay.”

—John J. Mearsheimer, *R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago, USA*. Author of *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*

“In his brilliantly written essay, Professor Cox does a masterful job of taking you from Carr’s experiences as a Foreign Office official dealing directly with the challenges of nationalism in post-World War I Europe, all the way up through the interwar crisis, the war years and on to the Cold War, interweaving Carr’s study of nationalism with his other abiding interests in IR and the USSR … hugely informative and illuminating.”

—Professor William Wohlforth, *Dartmouth College, USA*. Author of *America Abroad: The United States’ Global Role in the 21st Century*.

“The welcome re-issue of Carr’s penetrating study of nationalism is enhanced by Professor Cox’s superb introduction, which is at once informative, insightful and fair—both to Carr and his critics.”

—Philip Cunliffe, *University of Kent, UK*. Author of *The New Twenty Year’s Crisis: A Critique of International Relations, 1999–2019*

“Probably best known today for his brief book *What is History?* E.H. Carr had an extraordinary career as a diplomat, academic, and semi-professional journalist, writing leaders for *The Times*. Though almost reclusive by nature, Carr was what the French call an ‘homme des affaires’. He continues in death, to bitterly polarise opinion, mainly because of his views of the Soviet Union, rather than as one of the fathers of a realist approach to foreign policy. In his important introduction to a long-neglected volume, Professor Cox avoids these polemics, instead using cool and careful analysis of Carr’s writings and the details of his service at the Foreign Office, to present a much more nuanced view of Carr, who truly deserves the epithet—rare in Britain—of public intellectual. Cox’s introduction is a delight to read, in contrast to the leaden prose of Carr’s massive history of the early Soviet Union, and he does much to shed light on what Carr had to say about nationalism and nation states in the international system.”

—Professor Michael Burleigh, *Engelsberg Chair, London School of Economics, UK*. Author of *Small Wars: Far Away Places*

“Nationalism has returned as a critical factor in world politics. This timely re-issue of one of E.H. Carr’s most provocative texts is a reminder of how his work speaks directly to us today. Professor Michael Cox’s new introduction not only superbly captures the multi-faceted way in which Carr saw nationalism at work in the modern world, but it adds significantly to our knowledge of Carr’s life and work. I strongly recommend this impressive piece of scholarship.”

—Professor Randall Germain, *Carleton University, Canada*. Author of *E.H. Carr and IPE: An Essay in Retrieval*

“Professor Cox’s superb introduction to E.H. Carr’s under-discussed classic *Nationalism and After* is a classic in its own right which not only tells us much about Carr’s wider contribution to thought, but is also an incisive and illuminating guide to Carr’s ongoing engagement with the vicissitudes of nationalism and of the possible pathways to a world beyond it. In a time of resurgent nationalism in world politics, the reissue of Carr’s slim but powerful volume published in 1945 is both timely and relevant.”

—Aaron McNeill, *London School of Economics, UK*. Author, *Conceptualizing World Society*

“Written as the Second World War was ending, *Nationalism and After* is clear, pithy and pointed. Carr’s analysis has worn surprisingly well and even his prognostications for the future bear a second look. In his introduction, Cox does an admirable job of setting the intellectual scene of the book, weaving together earlier and later work to give the reader a sense of the overall course of Carr’s understanding of nationalism.”

—Professor David Long, *The Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Canada*. Author of *Towards a New Liberal Internationalism: The International Theory of J.A. Hobson*

“Professor Cox’s very well written introduction perfectly places *Nationalism and After* in its correct and immediate context and within Carr’s wider work and career as a whole ... excellent.”

—Sean Molloy, *University of Kent, UK*. Author of *The Hidden History of Realism: A Genealogy of Power Politics*.

“Michael Cox has done it again, with an in-depth reading of E.H. Carr that places the man and his work in historical context whilst bringing his insights right up to the present-day. Just as his introduction to *The Twenty Years Crisis* brought Carr’s writings to a whole new generation of thinkers, this reissue of *Nationalism and After* will resonate with those attempting to understand the causes and consequences of the retreat to national borders and protectionism taking place across the globe. This is essential reading for a troubled world.”

—Nicholas J Kitchen, *University of Surrey, UK*. Author of *Understanding American Power: Conceptual Clarity, Strategic Priorities and the Decline Debate*

“The introduction has all the hallmarks of Cox at his best, lots of vivacity, shrewd, knowledgeable, sympathetic but with a fair and discerning eye ... and a good read.”

—Emeritus Professor Alan Sharp, *University of Ulster, UK*. Author of *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking After the First World War 1919–1923*

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

E.H. Carr joined the Foreign Office in 1916 and resigned 20 years later to become the fourth Woodrow Wilson Professor in the Department of International Politics at the University College of Wales Aberystwyth. There he wrote seven books including *The Twenty Years' Crisis* in 1939. The following year he joined the Ministry of Information before moving on to become the Assistant Editor of *The Times*. In 1945 he began work on his massive *History of Soviet Russia*. He was elected a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1995. He is the author of the bestselling *What Is History?* (1961).

Michael Cox is Emeritus Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics, and founding director of LSE IDEAS. He is the author, editor and co-editor of over 20 books including works on the USSR, the end of the Cold War and of US role in the world system. His most recent books include a new edition of EH Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (2016); a third edition (with Doug Stokes) of his best-selling volume *US Foreign Policy* (2018); and a collection of his essays, *The Post-Cold War World* (2019). He has also recently brought out a new centennial edition of John Maynard Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (2019). He is now working on a new history of the LSE, entitled *The "School": LSE and the Shaping of the Modern World*.

INTRODUCTION

It is not too early to attempt an analysis of our contemporary revolution: It is a revolution against three predominant ideas of the nineteenth century: liberal democracy, national self-determination and laissez-faire economics. (E.H. Carr (1942), quoted in *Conditions of Peace*, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1942, p. 10)

E.H. Carr made his reputation as policy-maker, writer on international affairs and historian in an era that announced itself with a devastating conflict, continued with a revolution in Russia, went on to witness the near collapse of the western economic system in the 1930s, and concluded with yet two more wars—one decidedly hot and the other (at times) cold—which between them reshaped the world in ways that would have been thought inconceivable when Carr was born into the British Empire in the late nineteenth century.¹ To those who never experienced what Carr experienced, or who grew to intellectual maturity in more settled times, his answers to the questions posed by his age might now seem dated, problematic even. However, they did not seem entirely odd or idiosyncratic then. A classical Lloyd George liberal during and just after the First World War, an economic ‘planner’ by the late 1930s, a firm supporter of the alliance with the USSR during the war, and one of the more influential

¹ For an earlier overview see my ‘Will the real E.H. Carr please stand up?’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 3, July 1999, pp. 643–653. See also Michael Cox, *E.H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, Houndsills, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2000, and Michael Cox, ‘Introduction’, E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Houndsills, Palgrave, 2001, pp. ix–lviii (reissued with a new Preface in 2016).

anti-Cold War historians in the West thereafter, Carr lived through an epoch of revolutionary transformation which he reflected upon, wrote about, and sought in his own fashion to understand and shape.²

But if Carr lived through what were, by any measure, revolutionary times, he could hardly be described as a revolutionary himself. Indeed, his views on revolutions always remained decidedly ambiguous. Revolutions may have been critical transformative events.³ However, they never changed society as much as revolutionaries hoped they would.⁴ A classless society he once remarked was neither possible nor desirable;⁵ and no society he believed could function without a ruling class.⁶ As his closest friend, the Marxist Isaac Deutscher later observed, Carr may have admired revolutionaries from afar, but he did not really understand what motivated them.⁷ A brilliant policy adviser when in the Foreign Office, later an influential member of Chatham House, a lead writer for *The Times* during the Second World War, and finally a Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge from the 1950s onwards, Carr may have come to be regarded as a dangerous heretic by some. Nevertheless, he always seemed to keep at

² See Edward Hallett Carr, *The New Society*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1951. In the US edition published at the height of the Cold War in 1957, the American publishers, no doubt in an effort to get Americans to read what was a left-wing book, described the short volume as a ‘scholarly study’ which described ‘how western culture is proceeding in the direction of the robot civilization of Orwell’s 1984’!

³ See his *Studies in Revolution*, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1950.

⁴ Carr paraphrasing de Tocqueville with approval wrote in 1956 that ‘revolutions are less revolutionary than they appear at first blush, and interrupt the continuity of the nation’s history less sharply and less radically than their sponsors like to pretend’ This telling comment is taken from his chapter ‘Russia and Europe as a Theme of Russian History’ in Ricard Pares and A.J.P Taylor eds., *Essays presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, London, Macmillan, & Co Ltd, New York, St Martin’s Press, 1956, p. 357.

⁵ In 1933 Carr wrote that ‘classless society’ was the ‘Achilles’ heel of Marxism, and would, if ever achieved ‘be as dull as the heaven of the orthodox Victorian’. See his ‘Karl Marx, Fifty Years After’ written under the pseudonym John Hallett, *The Fortnightly Review*, March 1933, p. 321.

⁶ ‘Carr wrote in August 1944 that ‘No community can do without its “ruling class” or “leaders”’ He went on to say that the ‘public schools’ in Britain had ‘on the whole been particularly successful ... in training such a class’; and rather than being abolished should be ‘extended’ by widening the ‘the basis of recruitment’ . See ‘Memorandum From Mr. Carr to Mr. Barrington – Ward’. Carr Papers, University of Birmingham, p. 5.

⁷ Isaac Deutscher, ‘Mr E.H. Carr As Historian of Soviet Russia’, *Soviet Studies*, April Vol. VI, No. 4, 1955, esp. p. 344.

least one foot inside the establishment without, it appears, ever becoming fully integrated into it.⁸

There was also something distinctly English about Carr. As he himself later confessed, he had a ‘hidden preference for the English idiom’ and a ‘marked preference for the empirical over the theoretical’.⁹ He did of course admire Marx and was much influenced by his view of history. Yet he never accepted some of Marx’s key ideas.¹⁰ Dissident he may well have been, but orthodox Marxist with a faith in the working class he most certainly was not. As Rosenberg has pointed, Carr always tended to look at the world from a state’s eye point of view.¹¹ Even his leaving government in 1936 to take up the Woodrow Wilson Chair in International Politics in the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth was not to allow him space to agitate against capitalism, but rather to talk more openly about the conduct of British foreign policy. Needing more time to reflect on the world in a job which placed very few demands on his time, the decision to take up the post was however a decidedly odd one. Carr after all was no liberal, even though the Chair was funded by a distinguished Welsh family with impeccable Liberal credentials; and to add insult to injury, he was no great admirer of Woodrow Wilson either. Little wonder that the man who had played a central role in establishing the Chair in the first place—the formidable David Davies of Llandinam—was incensed and thereafter continued a low level campaign against the appointment!¹²

Davies however was not the only person of note whom Carr managed to alienate over a long and argumentative career. In fact, he seemed to have what can only be described as a rare capacity for upsetting all manner of people including Winston Churchill when he was still Prime Minister

⁸ Isaac Deutscher, *ibid.*, p. 342.

⁹ Quoted in Tamara Deutscher, ‘E.H. Carr: A Personal Memoir’, *New Left Review*, January–February 1983, no. 137, p. 84. Tamar Deutscher went on to characterize Carr, the great scourge of twentieth-century liberalism, as being in essence ‘a nineteenth century liberal who had become exceedingly impatient with the anarchy of capitalism’! (p. 84).

¹⁰ Shortly before his death Carr claimed that he had always been more interested in Marxism as a ‘method’ rather than the ‘Marxist analysis of the decline of capitalism’. See his ‘An Autobiography’ (1980) in Michael Cox ed., E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2001, p. xviii.

¹¹ See Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations*, London, Verso, 1994, esp. pp. 10–15.

¹² On this particular episode see Brian Porter, ‘E.H. Carr: The Aberystwyth Years, 1936–1947’ in Michael Cox ed., *E.H. Carr: A Critical Reappraisal*, op. cit. pp. 36–67.