

Political Studies Book Note Form

Thank you for agreeing to review:

David Brown (2000) *Contemporary Nationalism: civic, ethnocultural and multicultural politics*. London: Routledge, 198, £16.99, ISBN 0 415 17139 3

Please type your review in the box below and return by e-mail to politicalstudies@lse.ac.uk. If you do not have access to email, then send to **Book Notes – *Political Studies*, Department of Government, LSE, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE**. We ask that all book note reviews are limited to a maximum of 250 words.

David Brown (2000) *Contemporary Nationalism: civic, ethnocultural and multicultural politics*. London: Routledge, 198pp., £16.99, ISBN 0 415 17139 3

This book succeeds against the odds. The field of nationalism and ethnic conflict studies has been marked in recent years by an overproduction of ostensibly 'new' categories of analysis which obfuscate more than they illuminate. David Brown's work breaks with this trend. His work is not revolutionary, but is well-written and sophisticated, making a contribution to the nationalism literature.

Brown's aims are represented by the book's four major sections: 1) a synthesis of the existing nationalism literature, sealed by a reconstituted 'constructivist' argument; 2) a critique of the commonplace 'ethnic=bad', 'civic=good' nationalism dichotomy; 3) an empirical illustration of these arguments through the prism of the Basque, Singaporean and Ghanaian cases; and 4) a powerful critique, both normative and empirical, of corporatist multiculturalism, particularly as practiced in the Australian context.

The most original, and interesting, thread running through the book is Brown's interpretation of ethnic nationalism as both more open, and more benign, than is commonly allowed. Brown views ethno-nationalism as present in most successful nation-states, which tend to fuse ethnic and civic visions, placating minorities with promises of economic development and wealth redistribution. The failure to deliver on the latter promise has led to a 'disentwining' of ethnic and civic nationalism, resulting in a post-1960s rise in inter-ethnic conflict. Multiculturalism, particularly as practiced in the West (the Australian case is used), is viewed by Brown as a counterproductive method of conflict management which exacerbates communal tensions.

The book could have been more focused, addressing fewer theoretical debates; it could also have provided better empirical evidence for its constructivist premises. However, overall, the book is worth the purchase price, and will prove useful to scholar and lecturer alike.

Readership: Undergraduates Advanced Undergraduates Postgraduates
Academic/Research Professional
Rating: ***** Excellent **** Very Good *** Good ** Some Good Points * Poor

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Institution (Underline)

We look forward to receiving your review before 20th March 2001 – many thanks once again.