



GLOBAL COMMONS

THE RISE OF A NEW NATIONALISM

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& GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS



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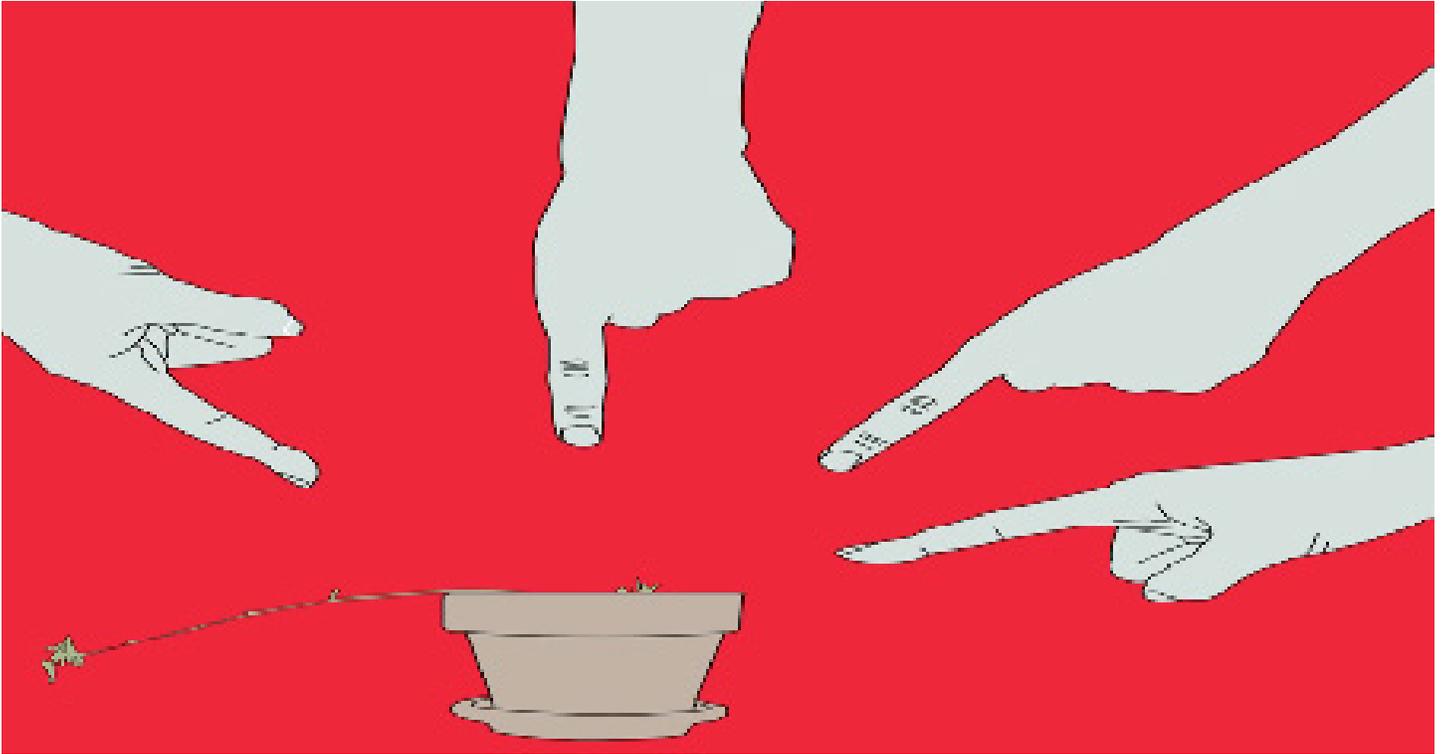
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THE BLAME GAME: 21ST CENTURY NATIONALISM IN HUNGARY

BY: CREED ATKINSON



Source: Creative Commons, Ian

You are sitting with your family and friends watching your country compete for the Olympic gold medal. The game is nerve-racking, with everyone on the edge of their seats. You would do whatever it takes for your country to win. As this final round progresses, you realize that you do not know much about the sport, nor have you ever had much interest in it. You convince yourself that you are still worthy enough to watch this game because your country is playing. Of course, you are not a bad person for supporting your country. Your pride is patriotic, you are proudly participating in nationalism. What is wrong with that?

We have been reading about the rise of nationalism and populism for the past couple years, but most of us cannot discern the difference between the two “isms”. Benjamin De Cleen and Antonis Galanopoulos wrote an article illustrating the differences between them. Populism can be described as a political logic that “revolves around the powerless-powerful dimension, a vertical dimension - the down versus the

up - where the populists claim to represent ‘the people’ against the current elite that does not represent them.” Nationalism however, “is not built around this vertical dimension, but instead around a horizontal dimension; nationalist politics construct and claim to represent the nation, which is discursively constructed by distinguishing between those who are ‘in’ and those who are ‘out’ of the nation.” This short article will focus on the recent rise of ethnic nationalism in Hungary, and how those who are “out,” are being blamed for internal issues within and leveraged as legitimizing tools for Hungary’s nationalist parties.

Nationalism has many shapes. Cheering on your nation during the Olympics is a form of civic nationalism, while cheering on your nation to form ethnic or racial solidarity against minorities is ethnic nationalism. Hungary for example, has built a fence along the Serbian border to block the outsiders, refugees, from entering their nation. This is a result of rising ethnic nationalism within. Research suggests that

“differences in state wealth and migration rates are the best predictors of barrier construction.” Hungary has experienced a significant rise in the number of refugees seeking asylum in the past five years and many of them are coming through Serbia. Serbia’s GDP per capita is nearly half of Hungary’s GDP per capita. A fence on the border was nearly inevitable.

Hungary’s autocratic, and perhaps even kleptocratic, Prime Minister Viktor Orban of the Fidesz Party is a large proponent of the ethnic nationalism movement that is snowballing in Europe and other parts of the globe. In October 2016, Viktor Orban submitted to Parliament a Bill for constitutional amendment in a move to ban refugees. He has vowed to block an EU program which was designed to redistribute refugees from Greece and Italy to nations such as Hungary. With nearly 85% of Hungarians perceiving themselves as ethnically “Hungarian,” and a per capita income only two-thirds the EU-28 average, Viktor Orban has leveraged the rise in anti-refugee sentiment within his nation to legitimize his nationalist platform.

The Fidesz Party and its coalition the Christian Democratic People’s Party (KDNP) have 131 of the 199 seats in the National Assembly. The Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) Party controls 24 seats in the National Assembly. The Fidesz-KDNP and Jobbik are theoretically in opposition, but issues on migration are the exception. Both nationalist political groups have not held back in expressing their anti-refugee sentiment, and their current and expected political power is most concerning.

Jason Pack, a researcher at Cambridge University, sums up the situation in Hungary quite well, “Despite the ease of movement afforded by their EU passports, fewer Hungarian young people study abroad than five years ago; fewer are trilingual than a generation ago; the country’s economy and political system are gradually reverting back to Soviet-style cronyism, after a brief flirtation with liberal democracy; free flows of investment capitalism have halted; and – most worryingly-- Hungarian ethnic nationalism deploys increasingly irredentist themes.” This is a major concern because Hungarians aged 15-44 constitute approximately one-third of the population. Rising ethnic nationalism driven by older demographics is concerning, but when this phenomenon is being driven by young people, it becomes devastating. The young are blaming refugees

for their hardships.

A similar narrative took shape during the 2016 U.S. election. The great and prosperous boom after World War II was followed by a significant increase in supply of jobs, which not only fostered happier citizens because their net worth was increasing, but also helped crystalize civic nationalism. Since there were so many jobs, immigrants and refugees coming into the country were not of grave concern, and were often welcomed. Now that the music has stopped, frustration and anger have been building up, and the blame game naturally follows.

Three combined ingredients - increased supply of refugees, increased demand for anti-refugee policy, and a relatively weak economy – are the recipe for leveraging ethnic nationalism to blame refugees for Hungary’s economic hardship.

On an absolute and relative per capita basis, Hungary is receiving many asylum applications. However, Hungary rejects most of these applicants, and has the lowest acceptance rate in the EU. Refugees are being blamed for Hungary’s weak economy, although Hungary has accepted few refugees. So what can be done?

While the EU is becoming increasingly frustrated with Hungary’s approach to the refugee crisis, it is important to realize that EU pressure is only adding fuel to the nationalist fire in Hungary. Hungary has a relatively weak GDP per capita and their economy is not likely to improve anytime soon. Instead of the EU trying to enforce minimum asylum acceptance thresholds, it would be more beneficial for all European nations to instead let Hungary independently decide how many refugees it wants to receive. Although this at first sounds counterintuitive, EU pressure is inadvertently increasing the legitimacy of Hungary’s ethnic nationalism. Hungary’s nationalist coalition in power along with Jobbik have made it clear they will block the EU’s refugee program. The more the EU pressures Hungary into accepting refugees, the more Hungary’s nationalist parties can blame refugees for everything going wrong to legitimize these party’s platforms.

Hungary is blaming refugees for their internal issues, despite very few refugees being granted asylum. The EU’s increased pressure on Hungary is legitimizing ethnic nationalism within, making it increasingly

harder for those on the outside to have a chance of ever being accepted on the inside. 



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MARINE LE PEN'S NATIONALIST RISE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF MADAME PRESIDENT

BY: SIOBHAN BRADLEY

One chant overpowered all else at Marine Le Pen's presidential campaign launch in February, "On est chez nous!" - This is our country!

As leader of France's National Front (FN) party, Le Pen has steadily ascended in polls and popularity by exacerbating fears of immigrant infiltration and a crippling globalized economy. She has warned against globalization and Islamism, "two totalitarianisms" that aim to "subjugate France."

At its core, Le Pen's campaign embodies the clash of globalization and nationalism as she strives to collapse the current political order and capitalize on French voters' hopes and frustrations.

The National Front is closer than ever to gaining power after over 40 years of existence. As the world reverberates from widespread electoral upheavals, including Brexit and the election of Trump, France will hold its first round of national voting on April 23rd. The two candidates with the most votes will proceed to a second runoff on May 7th. The result will be a testament to the momentum of nationalism and populism, grown rapidly and alarmingly from global recessions, immigration concerns, and a distrust of institutions.

The FN's disreputable origins were established by Marine's father, Jean Le Pen, and supported by a coalition of former Nazi collaborators and veterans of the Algerian war. Marine took over as leader in 2011 and subsequently began transforming the FN into a more palatable platform to voters, working to cleanse the party of its xenophobic and anti-Semitic image and rebranding its far-right values. Although Marine expelled her father from the party, her populist tirade retains many of the former leader's virulent sentiments. She has clung to the party's most radical ideas, including the notion of "France for the French," while portraying Islam as the largest threat to the country.

Le Pen's 144 presidential commitments would have major implications in France, and would ripple throughout Europe and the rest of the world. As a self-proclaimed "patriot" who rallies against migration, the European Union (EU), open borders, Le Pen ultimately puts France first. She threatened to hold a referendum within six months regarding European Union membership, abandon the euro, raise protectionist tariffs, and remove France from international bodies like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Catering to feelings of insecurity, Le Pen also asserted populist promises that include increased pensions for the elderly, lowering gas and electricity prices, and maintaining the 35 hour labor week, all while pledging to lower income taxes. Le Pen also seeks to reinstate welfare privileges, saying immigrants were taking France's social benefits and offering little in return. According to Le Pen, such inward thinking would not be unique to France. Alluding to Brexit and Trump's election, she claimed, "other people have shown the way."

With France and Germany now at the nucleus of the EU, France's departure could signal its downfall, and reverting to the franc could cause massive currency fluctuations. Some economists argue a "Frexit" would provoke a financial and economic crisis, because asset owners would sell assets before the currency switch, out of fear of the franc dropping in value.

Le Pen's commitments pose serious implementation challenges. Her plan requires a sharp increase in spending, without a paralleled increase in revenues.



Source: Creative Commons, Blandine Le Cain

Perhaps the most serious obstacle of all is the two seats the FN currently holds in the National Assembly. Unless there is a strong showing of support, Le Pen, if elected, might face a prime minister from a different party. According to economist Holger Schmieding from Berenberg Bank, this would likely result in “a protracted political stalemate and a serious dent to growth and heightened uncertainty.”

Like Trump, Le Pen scores higher among voters with lower levels of education, but FN voters can no longer be confined to an old stereotype. Her reach has expanded in communities previously marginalized by the FN, in areas of inequality and with traditional left wing voters weary of traditional parties. According to University of Reading professor Daphne Halikiopoulou, “It’s got more to do with perceptions than even any actual numbers. If you look at Marine Le Pen with the terrorist attacks in France, it has been such a good rhetorical tool.”

The FN has coupled its hardline stance on security, national identity, and targeting of Islam with more progressive causes such as promoting women’s rights, gay rights, and defending the Jewish community from anti-Semitism, “often by presenting Muslim immigration as a threat to all three.” For instance, she claims that the very existence of Islam endangers women’s

rights and restricts women’s freedoms.

Le Pen is leading in the polls, with up to 27 per cent support of the French population. Her opponents include conservative Francois Fillon and Emmanuel Macron, the centrist independent and former economy minister. Macron, the antithesis of the FN, is a fervent advocate of the EU and favours open borders, global trade, and technical innovation. Maintaining a lead in polls and at the ballot box will be a challenge for Le Pen, especially under the pressure of recent allegations that she misused 300 000 euros of EU funds to pay her parliamentary assistants.

Notwithstanding the corruption scandal, the likelihood of Le Pen winning in the second round is low according to most projections. Yet, analysts remain cautious given the unpredictability of recent elections, while EU leaders are apprehensively monitoring the popularity of Le Pen and other nationalist leaders. Le Pen says she feels “comforted” by Trump’s success, which she views along with Brexit as the dawn of a new world order.

The rise of nationalist sentiment in France and around the world reveals the depth of the far right, and for many, validates Le Pen’s efforts. Though the future of France in Le Pen’s hands is unpredictable, the un-

precedented and undeniable support of the FN and far right political parties creates the perfect storm for destabilization in Europe. 



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CANADIAN NATIONALISM: NOT AS FAR OFF AS YOU MAY THINK

BY: KYLE JACQUES

Canadians often think that they are immune from the nationalist fervour that is sweeping other Western countries. As the world watches Donald Trump instate a Muslim immigration ban in the United States, Canadians take solace in their progressive, feminist Prime Minister, who takes to Twitter to say that “Canadians will welcome... those fleeing persecution, terror and war.” The experience of Donald Trump in the United States, however, should illustrate the potential risk of dismissing political movements that may at first seem only marginal. Consequently, Canadians would do well to remain vigilant against creeping nationalist rhetoric, no matter how disguised it may seem at first.

A “UNIFIED CANADIAN IDENTITY?”

“Canadians, by and large [are] philosophically predisposed to an openness that others find bewildering, even reckless,” writes Charles Foran of the Guardian, This openness, some argue, comes from the ill-defined notion of what exactly a Canadian “identity” looks like. As far back as 1963, thinkers like Marshall McLuhan have argued that “Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity.” In Justin Trudeau’s view, it is this lack of a “core iden-

tity” that makes Canada the first truly “post-national” state.

Evidently this view is not shared by all Canadians. Kellie Leitch, a current contender for leader of the Conservative Party, has allegedly heard from many Canadians who do “believe in a unified Canadian identity.” Consequently, in her platform, she advocates a process that would screen incoming immigrants for “anti-Canadian” values. Many have drawn comparisons between Leitch’s rhetoric and Trump’s, and portrayed her as an opportunist capitalizing on the US President’s success.

However, this notion of “anti-Canadian” values has much deeper roots that predate the Trump phenomenon. In 2015 Chris Alexander, then-Immigration Minister for the Harper Conservatives, promised to establish an RCMP hotline for reports of “barbaric cultural practices” that were held to be contrary to “Canadian values.” This proposal came during an election campaign in which the Conservative Party suggested banning the Niqab from Canadian citizenship ceremonies. According to a Conservative fundraising email during the election, such attire was simply “not the way we do things here.”

“WELL INFORMED CRITICISM”

This perceived opposition between “Canadian” and “non-Canadian” values has been given renewed attention by motion M-103 from Liberal MP Iqra Khalid to study “systemic racism and religious discrimination” in Canada. Opponents of the motion argue that, by specifically singling out “Islamophobia,” it inaccurately represents all criticism of Islam as an “irrational fear,” and precludes “well-informed criticism” about the potentially real clash between Islamic values and Canadian ones.

The debate over the appropriateness of the term “Islamophobia” in the motion has already taken up considerable space in Canadian media coverage as of late, and this article will not rehash it here. It is, however, worth stressing that once one legitimizes the discursive arena that pits “Canadian” values against “non-Canadian” or “barbaric” ones, the tipping point between “well-informed criticism” and nationalist, even hateful, rhetoric, can be a precarious one.

Consider the following quotes:

We need to “fight to protect our Canadian laws and values,” to counter “barbarianism,” and to redress “poor management by governments” of the refugee issue.

“It’s not a question of racism,” but rather, “a question of common sense.”

These are the types of words one may now reasonably expect to hear from several of the current Canadian Conservative candidates. However, they were actually spoken by members of the Soldiers of Odin, an anti-immigrant, anti-refugee group with alleged ties to neo-Nazism, in a recent documentary by VICE. While the above quotes may seem relatively tame, the documentary follows the group to an “anti-radical-Islam” protest, where a young boy insists that all Islamists be thrown “in the river.” Later, the documentary shows the group coordinating with Atelante, a more militant group that, among other things, advocates a white-supremacist “renaissance of the neo-French in Quebec.”

ARE WE AT RISK?

Once again, many will argue that these examples represent nothing more than the hateful views of a fringe minority, misunderstanding what constitutes “well-informed criticism.” However, this “us” and “them” rhetoric can be coupled with other populist tactics that do have wider appeal. It is worth remembering that Trump was not brought to power by hateful, nationalist rhetoric alone. Indeed, many argue that this nationalist message largely rode the coattails of Trump’s broader appeal to a disenfranchised middle class who no longer had faith in American political institutions.

Once again, Canada may not be as insulated from these forces as we think. The recently released “Trust Barometer” from Canadian communications firm Edelman shows that 80 per cent of Canadians think the Canadian elite are “out of touch” with ordinary people. 60 per cent of Canadians believe mainstream politicians won’t solve our problems, and almost a third say they would support a politician who manipulates the truth.

What’s worse, these forces have already seen Canada flirt with Trump-type populism. Toronto, which BBC

News alleges is the “most diverse city in the World,” elected Mayor Rob Ford, a man who appealed to the exact same sort of distrust of career politicians.

If one listens only to Justin Trudeau’s “post-national” musings and welcoming tweets, Canada indeed seems far removed from the rising global wave of nationalism. However, if a space for the idea that there are fundamentally anti-Canadian values is allowed, and is conspicuously tied to some loosely defined vision of “Islam,” then the forces that are subsequently unleashed, even if unintentionally, may be hard to control. More importantly, if Canadians find themselves with a politician who can tie this slippery nationalist language to an increasingly popular distrust of Canadian political institutions, then the possibility may not be as far away as we think. 



Kyle Jacques graduated from McGill University in 2014 with an Honours Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science. While at McGill he worked as a research assistant on a book about the history of socialist political thought. After graduating, he worked as a freelance writer for a current affairs journal based out of Montréal, writing on various issues surrounding international human rights. He is in his first year of the MGA program.

NATIONALISM IN JAPAN: A PERMANENT THREAT OR A TEMPORARY RETURN?

BY: RINCHEN-DOLMA KARMA

Since the 20th century, the relationship between China and Japan has been strained by a constant tension from territorial and political disputes. This has been further challenged in recent weeks by a controversial move from the Tokyo-based hotel chain APA.

THE CONTROVERSY

At the center of controversy is Toshio Motoya, the president and chief executive of Japan’s largest hospi-



Source: Creative Commons, Bin

tality chain APA, who disputes Chinese accusations that the Japanese imperial army killed 300,000 people in Nanjing between December 1937 and January 1938. He instead claims that the incident “was fabricated by the Chinese side and did not actually happen.” These revisionist views are expressed in Mr. Motoya’s book *The Real History of Japan: Theoretical Modern History II*, which is said to be available in every room of the chain’s approximately 400 hotels and their gift shops.

The issue has generated much controversy in China. A spokesman for the China National Tourism Administration described the actions of the hotel as an “open provocation to Chinese tourists,” and subsequently ordered all operations within international tours and online platforms to completely halt all cooperation with the APA hotels. The matter also instigated heated debates on Chinese social media, with many netizens asking for a formal apology from the chain and calling

for a boycott. Moreover, on February 5, 2017, some 200 Chinese citizens living in Japan took to the street in downtown Tokyo to protest the hotel chain.

This highly negative reception has generated mixed results in Japan. On the one hand, APA Hotel in Sapporo, the host of the 2017 Sapporo Asian Winter Games that took place from February 19 to 26, agreed to remove the contentious material from its rooms. However, APA defended its position on the grounds of freedom of expression. In a formal statement, the chain claimed that notwithstanding any variations in historic interpretation in different nations, the book does not aim to “criticize any specific state or nation, but [to let] readers learn the fact-based true interpretation of modern history.” The author of the book Mr. Motoya further added that Chinese people made up only 5 per cent of the guests in his hotels and that he was not worried about the impact of any potential

boycott.

SERIOUS RISE OF NATIONALISM OR A REACTION TO THE “CHINA THREAT?”

The Nanjing Massacre is one of the most sensitive subjects between Asia’s two largest economies, and indeed one of the largest reasons why Beijing continues to accuse Tokyo of failing to properly apologise for its wartime past. The issue has become a symbol of Chinese nationalism and in 2014, the state introduced December 13 as the national day for the Nanjing Massacre and has since commemorated it annually.

Amidst these disagreements, it should be noted that the Nanjing Massacre is not an isolated example of tension between China and Japan. Among others, frequent visits by Japanese leaders to the Yasukuni Shrine – where 14 leaders convicted as war criminals are honoured with the war dead – is another example that has repeatedly angered Japan’s neighbours, mainly China and South Korea. Both nations suffered greatly under imperial Japan’s brutal rule before its defeat in 1945. These moves have often been interpreted as an expression of conservative ideologies that never fully left Japan’s national fabric. As a result, it is no surprise that China’s state media Xinhua described the APA scandal as “only the iceberg of Japan’s ultra-right wing efforts to revise the nation’s war history” and their desperation to “erase the historical crime.”

Although Mr. Motoya has not explicitly made ideological statements, his views could arguably reflect the position of many right-leaning Japanese nationalists who are deeply concerned with the contemporary rise of a more aggressive China. For instance, in response to China’s territorial claim over the Senkaku Islands (Diaoyudao in Chinese), the right-wing former governor of Tokyo Shintaro Ishihara attempted to purchase the Islands – a controversial move that has sparked several anti-Japanese riots across China. He defended his intentions as he wished for the downfall of Beijing, because he “hated it.”

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Whether it’s a revival of an imperial historical legacy, or simply a response to China’s rise, nationalism has remained present in Japanese politics. However,

it might be reassuring to consider that despite the controversies sparked by Japan’s right-wing forces, a big part of the country’s general public ignores, or at least pays very little attention to, the strength and prevalence of nationalism – a phenomenon that is said to be rooted in the “de-politicization of Japanese civil society since the 1970s.”

To be sure, there has been an increase in nationalistic fervour in the last two decades, which has largely been attributed to Japan’s steady economic decline. However, the movement is largely driven by the establishment and the elite – rather than at the grassroots level – and the nature of Japan’s political realities makes it difficult for these elites to push forth their nationalist agenda with ease. More specifically, since its foundation in 1955, except for a short period from 1993-1994 and again in 2009-2012, the Liberal Democratic Party has almost continuously been in power. The Party has always had its share of classical nationalists, but it is also a conglomeration of other competing – yet not necessarily right-wing – factors that do not always support the expansion of nationalist policies.

Lastly, in Europe and the United States, immigration has arguably played a key role in nurturing the rise of nationalism and populism. Contrastingly, Tokyo is well-known for its restrictive immigration laws and reluctance to welcome refugees; the country accepted only 28 refugees in 2016. This reality has greatly limited the number of targets that right-wing politicians could utilize to cultivate nationalistic forces in Japan. For all these reasons, Japanese nationalism seems unlikely to become unhinged, or generate any fundamental right-leaning policy seen elsewhere in the foreseeable future. Despite this, it will arguably continue to occupy a small, but permanent space in Japan’s national fabric, and will most likely continue to shape Japan’s foreign policy agenda in the Asia-Pacific realm. 



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