

The Hauntings of Empire: Imperial Nationalism and International Relations

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Abstract : A growing body of scholarship is dedicated to the concept of imperial nationalism, denoting a nostalgia for empire amongst former imperial powers and a yearning to recapture the grandeur of the imperial 'golden age.' Much research within this field has focused on Brexit, arguing that Britain's imperialist identity has spawned Euroscepticism. However, the interaction between imperial nationalism and foreign policy remains underdeveloped and thus far has failed to consider cases outside of the UK. Using maximum variation sampling across post-2000 Britain, Spain and the Netherlands, this comparative analysis aims to explore the discursive invocation of empire in foreign policy framing, under which circumstances and in what ways imperial nationalism emerges. Preliminary findings demonstrate that empire is most often cited when there is a perceived threat to the sovereignty of the nation and that all cases frame foreign policy options according to their acute concerns with regaining the prestige associated with empire. This is present to a lesser extent in Spain, whose earlier period of decolonisation affected the extent to which imperialism has permeated their national psyche. This, therefore, provides an alternative lens through which we can view both Euroscepticism and international relations, conditioned by an imperial legacy.

Keywords : empire, nationalism, foreign policy, IR

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