
Citizenship, Territoriality and Post-Soviet Nationhood: The Politics of Birthright Citizenship in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova

By Maxim Tabachnik

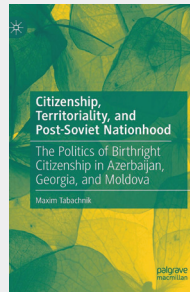
Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 304 pages, \$59.99, ISBN: 9783030128821

Reviewed by Azra Erdem Adak, Marmara University

Citizenship, Territoriality and Post-Soviet Nationhood: The Politics of Birthright Citizenship in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova, written by Maxim Tabachnik and published in 2019, makes a valuable contribution to the literature on nationalism and citizenship. Drawing upon the profound findings of his Ph.D.

research, Tabachnik analyzes the citizenship policies of three post-Soviet states with frozen conflicts: Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Moldova (Transnistria), and Georgia (Abkhazia/South Ossetia). Tabachnik refers to those states as a buffer zone between Russia and the West. The main argument of the book is two-fold: first, the author criticizes the classic dichotomy of nationalism as civic/ethnic; instead, he proposes a new dichotomy of nationalism with a specific focus on territorial instead of civic nationalism. Second, he argues that “citizenship policies of territorial nationalism in the three countries with frozen conflicts have been conditioned not by liberal-democratic development associated with civic nationalism but three factors: territorial integrity concerns, historical collective identity, and geopolitics of dual citizenship” (p. 3).

The book consists of three main parts. The first introduces Tabachnik’s way of understanding the concept of nationalism as territorial and ethnic in line with the pre-modernist school. He argues that in the post-Soviet space (PSS), Azerbaijan and Moldova adopt a territorial



definition of the nation, instead of the ethnic one adopted by most of the states, such as Georgia. Based upon this distinction, Tabachnik focuses on two birthright citizenship policies: unconditional/conditional *jus soli* (citizenship by birth) and *jus sanguinis* (citizenship by blood). The author’s main aim is

to figure out why states implement different kinds of citizenship policies.

Before going into in-depth analysis, Tabachnik provides a well-structured critical approach toward the existing academic literature on nationalism and citizenship policies with a specific focus on modern and pre-modern schools of thought. He proposes a reinvention of the traditional dichotomy of ethnic/territorial since it does not suit the realm of the post-Soviet region. Tabachnik also explains the relationship between nationalism and citizenship policies: “similar to nationalism, the foundation for citizenship has also vacillated between ethnicity and territory throughout history” (p. 37). He gives examples of territorial and ethnic citizenship policies from Ancient Greek and Roman times through the Soviet Union and today’s Russia and provides a broad understanding of the evolution of the concept. As a result of citizenship policies in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), national identity became a contested concept between ethnicity and territory. In the end, this tension led to the dissolution of

the USSR. After gaining their independence, Azerbaijan and Moldova adopted territorial citizenship policies, also known as *jus soli*, in contrast to other PSS states. Tabachnik points out that “they may serve as best practice for others in order to eliminate discrimination on the ethnic origin” (p. 60).

The second part of the book analyzes citizenship policies in the post-Soviet states with frozen conflicts. Tabachnik presents a legislative timeline of the evolution of unconditional citizenship (*jus soli*) in Azerbaijan, Moldova, and Georgia, and provides evidence from several interviews conducted with local authorities. Whereas Azerbaijan and Moldova have implemented *jus soli* at different levels throughout time, Georgia practices *jus sanguinis*. In order to explain this divergence, Tabachnik analyzes the causal mechanism between the “absence or presence of unconditional *jus soli* and frozen conflicts, historical-constructed concepts of national identity and geopolitics of dual citizenship in those states” (p. 70). In the case of Moldova and Azerbaijan, frozen conflicts contributed to territorial national identity because the authorities desired to reconnect to the residents through citizenship and prevent further separatism. However, in the case of Georgia, the frozen conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia increased ethnic nationalism. In addition to this, its historical collective belonging inherited from ancient times developed a strong ethnic consciousness that led to strict citizenship policies. On the other hand, in Moldova and Azerbaijan, national identity was historically formed in a territorial way. In terms of geopolitics as the last factor, the author constructs a relationship between dual citizenship and unconditional *jus soli*. States, such as Moldova, that allow dual citizenship are more inclined toward unconditional *jus soli*, whereas restrictions on dual citizenship due to the fear of foreign in-

terference restrain *jus soli* provisions, as in the case of Azerbaijan.

The third and final part of the book applies these empirical findings to the existing debates on nationalism (p. 260). Tabachnik argues that historical factors are important elements in the formation of national identity and today’s citizenship policies in the post-Soviet states. In doing so, he criticizes not only the modernist paradigm but also its critics. He suggests that neither modernist nor pre-modern explanations are enough on their own to fully understand national identity politics. From this point of view, Tabachnik highlights the importance of modifying the civic/ethnic dichotomy, replacing ‘civic’ with ‘territorial’ nationalism, in order to provide a better perspective. Going beyond that, his findings prove that there is not always a positive relation between liberal-democratic development and territorial national identity and vice versa, as demonstrated in the cases of Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Citizenship, Territoriality, and Post-Soviet Nationhood contribute much to the debate on nationalism and citizenship policies with its well-structured empirical and in-depth analysis. It offers significant explanations about why post-Soviet states internalize more or less inclusive citizenship policies over a broad historical background. In terms of its theoretical framework, the book proposes a new way of understanding the concept of nationalism in the PSS. This is an important attempt to direct the debate into a lesser-known area. Based upon his findings, Tabachnik presents territorial nationalism as an important factor in “making policies that seek inter-ethnic peace, territorial integrity and ensuring respect for individual and human rights” (p. 274). Agreeing with his argument in general, it is not clear whether states adopt territorial na-

tionalism in order to serve that purpose or to avoid Russia's influence in the region. Moreover, unconditional *jus soli* as an element of territorial nationalism may create grievances in the public. In this sense, the author seems to attribute too much importance to territorial nationalism as a solution to ethnic tensions in the region.

Overall, the book provides comprehensive information on the formation of citizenship policies in three post-Soviet states and makes important theoretical contributions through its own interpretation of the history of nationalism. It is an important resource for scholars interested in nationalism, citizenship studies, and the post-Soviet region.

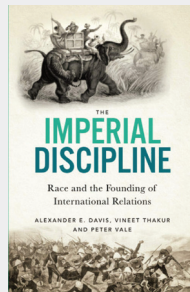
The Imperial Discipline: Race and the Founding of International Relations

By Alexander E. Davis, Vineet Thakur, and Peter Vale
London: Pluto Press, 2020, 197 pages, \$19.99 [paperback], ISBN: 9780745340623

Reviewed by Abhishek Choudhary, University of Delhi

The Imperial Discipline challenges the accepted origin of the discipline of International Relations (IR). Authors Davis, Thakur, and Vale focus on 'Round Table' society, i.e., the network formed by the British imperial societies of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and India, in tracing the actual origin of the discipline. In doing so, they uncover unexplored archives to assert that race played a major role in the founding of the discipline. Tracing the journey of the Round Table across continents, *The Imperial Discipline* moves beyond the unquestioned Eurocentric origin of the discipline. The authors argue that it was the efforts of the Round Table network that in fact led to the establishment of the discipline of International Relations (IR) as we know it.

While the Round Table aimed at achieving a more efficient imperial governance and sought to place the empire in a position of controlling world affairs, it eventually led to placing the Global South in an important po-



sition in the founding of IR. It was in this period that IR scholarship became intertwined with imperial racial thought. The first chapter details the role of Lionel Curtis in propagating the 'scientific method of the Round Table' (p. 20). The launch of the eponymous journal, *The Round Table*, initially sought to further imperial ambitions but eventually began to focus more on international issues during the inter-war period. The chapter locates the ways in which knowledge was produced and the manner in which the key players around the Round Table disseminated the imagination of 'the international' intertwined with the notion of the Commonwealth. The second chapter engages with the proliferation of the Round Table network into Canada. Curtis' role remained central in that the Canadian Institute of International Affairs could be viewed as the beginning of IR in Canada. Despite the shortcomings of imperial IR due to the diversity of views among the major institutional actors, the Canadian internation-