



Resource nationalism

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Abstract

Although ‘resources’ and ‘nationalism’ are core analytical categories in geography, the concept of ‘resource nationalism’ has received little attention in the discipline. We address this lacuna by reviewing relevant literature across the social sciences, and tracing key concepts and scalar frames to advance a critical approach to resource nationalism. In contrast to realist approaches, we understand it as a political discourse mobilized by a wide range of actors. Highlighting its multiple, co-existing, and often contradictory narratives about places, subjects, identities, and materialities, we illustrate the relevance of this critical framework with brief examples from Kazakhstan, Bolivia, and the USA.

Keywords

nationalism, natural resources, political ecology, political geography, resource nationalism, sovereignty, territory

1 Introduction

In his brilliant analysis of the role oil plays in Venezuelan political economy in *The Magical State*, anthropologist Fernando Coronil writes:

As an oil nation, Venezuela was seen as having two bodies, a political body made up of its citizens and a natural body made up of its rich subsoil. By condensing within itself the multiple powers dispersed throughout the nation’s two bodies, the state appeared as a single agent endowed with the magical powers to remake the nation. (Coronil, 1997: 4)

In Venezuela, a petro-state *par excellence*, nation and nature are imbricated so thoroughly as to seem magical: oil is the source of modernity, state legitimacy and unimaginable wealth. Venezuela is not alone. Indeed, in its political economic reliance on resource extraction, its ongoing state project of nation-building, and its mutually constitutive relationship between natural resources and national identity, it shares

key characteristics with many countries, in both the Global South and the Global North. While imbrications of national identity and natural resources vary with political economic, historical and geo-ecological context, nature and natural resources are a common feature in expressions of nationalism.

That nationalism is so frequently expressed through the medium of nature and natural resources raises fundamental questions for geographers. In this paper, we understand resource nationalism as a political discourse, applied to political and economic thinking about how a state and its population should manage and distribute profits derived from natural resources. Beyond these distributional questions, resource nationalism may also be understood in terms of

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collective belonging expressed through the idiom of natural resources. It is, in other words, one means by which the imagined community of the nation is constructed (Anderson, 1991). People with starkly contrasting political agendas may draw on the discourse of resource nationalism, but the final argument is generally the same: that the people of a given country, rather than private corporations or foreign entities, should benefit from the resources of a territorially-defined state. Resource nationalism is thus a geopolitical discourse about sovereignty, the state, and territory, as well as the rights and privileges of citizenship, national identity, and the values a group assigns to resources like oil, gas and minerals.

In this view, resource nationalism does not necessarily equate to a state-centric understanding of resource governance (Bakker and Bridge, 2008). Rather, it accepts an analytical and political distinction between the state and the nation, and acknowledges that resources can be perceived as national irrespective of the specific institutional arrangements through which they are governed (public vs. private, or foreign vs. domestic capital). Further, a discursive and relational approach decenters the state as the locus of resource nationalism, recognizing that various forms of nationalism can arise among non-state and sub-national actors, who can sway national opinion and state policy (Perreault and Green, 2013). Indeed, while resource nationalism often takes the form of ‘hot’ nationalism such as political speeches or the nationalization of resource industries, it just as commonly takes the form of ‘banal’ nationalism expressed through graffiti, murals, statues, or popular mobilizations (Billig, 1995; Jones and Merriam, 2009), or Gramscian ‘common sense’ regarding trade and resource governance (Sutherland, 2012). In this way, resource nationalism takes both political economic and cultural symbolic form, often in ways that are interwoven and mutually reinforcing.

Resource nationalism does not arise everywhere or with respect to every natural resource, however, a fact which presents both challenges and opportunities for geographers. We contend that geographers are especially well positioned to theorize when, where, how, and for whom resource nationalism becomes politically salient. Where it has surfaced, resource nationalism has been used to justify state control of resource extraction, as illustrated recently in places as diverse as Bolivia, Russia, and Qatar. Like nationalism more generally, however, resource nationalism is not limited to elite or state-scale actors. Often supported by globalized advocacy networks, ordinary citizens and activist groups commonly draw on the language of resource nationalism to challenge foreign involvement in their countries’ extractive industries and to contest how benefits and harms are distributed. Recognizing that resource nationalism taps into various normative arguments, in this paper, we are primarily concerned with *how and why* nationalism is so commonly expressed through the idiom of nature and natural resources, as well as the spatial imaginaries and moral geographies that actors draw upon as they engage with distributional questions regarding who should benefit from extractive industries.

Resource nationalism is not restricted to extractive industries, and indeed has been evident with regards to renewable resources as diverse as Spanish water (Swyngedouw, 1999, 2015), Chilean salmon (Bustos, 2010; Gerhart, 2017), Argentine beef (Romero, 2013), and North American and Russian forests (Biermann, 2014, 2016; Davidov, 2015; Kosek, 2004, 2006). Nevertheless, owing to their strategic economic and political importance, it is in relation to hydrocarbons (oil, gas and coal) and mining that resource nationalism takes its fullest expression. Because of this (and for reasons of space limitations), our analysis of resource nationalism is limited to the strategically important resources of hydrocarbons and minerals. We aim to raise several questions regarding how

geographers might think about and analyze the divergent uses and implications of resource nationalism, and to explain why it is politically salient in some places but not in others. We illustrate the utility of a critical approach to resource nationalism through three short case studies (of Kazakhstan, Bolivia, and the USA), but first consider how it has been addressed in the social science literature and what a geographic perspective has to offer for scholars critically assessing resource nationalism.

II Reorienting ‘resource nationalism’ in the social sciences

Despite the rich body of interdisciplinary scholarship on nationalism and, in geography, the strong line of inquiry linking identity politics and resource extraction, there is surprisingly little discussion of this question specifically as it pertains to resource nationalism. Resource management in various forms is universal, but resource *nationalism* is not. A key aim for our analysis, then, is understanding when, where, why, and to what effect ‘resource nationalism’ arises as a force that shapes natural resource politics and policies in a given state. Even in the wider social science literature, answers are hard to find. A loose patchwork of analyses tries to explain the significance of resource nationalism at the global scale, but these are dominated by broad-brush accounts of what it means for foreign policy and business/legal risks for energy firms (Click and Weiner, 2010; Joffé et al., 2009; Herberg, 2011; Vivoda, 2009). Most of this work draws from realist conceptions of political affairs, which typically frame resource nationalism in terms of the ‘threat’ it poses to the flow of strategically important resources to industrialized countries and globalized, multinational corporations. While policy research and more applied economic analyses notably highlight the *plural forms* that resource nationalism may take (see especially Andreasson, 2015; Ganbold and Ali, 2017; Wilson, 2015),

it is typically rooted in a view from the metropole. As such, these analyses predictably focus on the relations between states and firms involved in resource extraction, emphasizing the risks or opportunities that resource nationalism presents for their smooth operation and unimpeded profits.

Realist scholarship stresses the cyclical nature of resource nationalism, which parallels the ‘boom and bust’ nature of resource economies: it is said to be most prevalent during times of high commodity prices, when states have the most to gain (or potentially lose) in the form of resource rents. By contrast, low commodity prices tend to foster an openness to foreign investment in flagging resource sectors. However, we find that much of the focus on boom-bust cycles tends toward economic determinism and proffers a state-centric view that discounts the importance of non-state and sub-national actors in producing forms of nationalism (e.g. Click and Weiner, 2010; Dargin, 2015; Stevens, 2008). Moreover, because applied analyses are designed to provide a sort of practical roadmap for policymakers and financial and risk analysts, they tend to take for granted crucial geographic concepts – such as ‘resources,’ ‘nationalism,’ ‘territory,’ and ‘sovereignty’ – while ignoring the deeply political processes that go into their production. The result is that in such applied analyses, ‘resource nationalism’ is cast as a phenomenon that has an essence, and can be mapped, quantified, and predicted. Realist approaches thus tend to depoliticize the normative aspects of their truth claims. In contrast, the approach we advance in this paper adopts a ‘critical’ epistemological lens, which foregrounds power, both topically and in the conduct of scholarly research (Koch, 2016), and positions geography as a discourse of power/knowledge (Ó Tuathail, 1996).

Until now there have been few systematic efforts to theorize resource nationalism – either in geography or in the social sciences more broadly (but see Childs, 2016). We aim to lay

the groundwork for a critical approach to resource nationalism. Although we recognize that not all geographers adopt a critical stance, we suggest that geography offers many of the theoretical insights and analytical tools needed to advance a critical research agenda about resource nationalism. For instance, political geographers have long been concerned with the concepts of territory, sovereignty and the nation, while political ecologists and resource geographers (among others) have examined environmental and resource politics. In examining these overlapping themes within geography, and in conversation with broader social science research on natural resources, we illustrate how some of the most productive lines of inquiry regarding resource nationalism cut across the core concerns of geography. We aim to provoke conversations within the discipline and advance a more incisive account of the diverse ways in which people think about resources within a defined territory (usually a state) and how profits and harms should be distributed among those claiming a special allegiance or belonging to that territory (usually citizens).

What would a critical approach to resource nationalism look like in practice? As indicated in Table 1, a critical approach to resource nationalism differs markedly from realist approaches. From a geographical perspective, the questions of who, when, where, and to what effect resource nationalism arises, would have to account for the deeply contextual construction and contestation of ‘resources’ and ‘nations.’ It would necessarily entail analyzing multiple, co-existing, and often contradictory narratives, or ‘scripts,’ about places, subjects, identities, and materialities. Approaching resource nationalism as a discourse would thus account for issues like cultural and historical identity narratives, their social and territorial expressions in and beyond the state, the spatial variation of resources in a given country, political traditions surrounding activism and populism, and ties to global networks including

Table 1. Resource/nationalist imaginaries.

	Realist Approach	Critical Approach
Resources	Resources fetishized as discreet, unchanging objects Scarcity and abundance as inherent qualities	Resources viewed dialectically, as produced through social relations Scarcity and abundance as emergent properties, relative to social relations of production and consumption Resources as ideological and material forces
Nations	Transcendental and with unchanging essences Inherently spatial, with unity between state and national territory	Socially produced, multiple and contested Not territorially bound Multi-scalar

multinational corporations, consulting companies and international activist networks. Crucially, recognizing this plurality of actors and affinities does not equate state-level policies with popular sentiments. As Benwell and Dodds (2011: 448) highlight in their study of Argentina, resource nationalism has greater purchase among some citizens than others. For us, then, the interesting questions revolve around how specific groups and individuals claim the *right* to make decisions regarding the proper use of resources within ‘their’ territory.

A wide range of methods, from textual analysis to ethnography, are well suited to accounting for the agency of actors at multiple scales – from ordinary citizens to state-based actors to international activists, entrepreneurs, or policy-

makers – in shaping political discourses and outcomes and to ‘reveal the intimate dimensions of resource politics and to get a better sense of the materialities and “multiple mechanisms of territorialized rule” involved’ (Le Billon, 2013: 295). We begin by highlighting a number of fundamental questions for scholars to examine when unpacking the significance of resource nationalist discourse in any particular setting:

- How are particular resources constituted politically, economically and culturally?
- How is resource nationalism deployed, contested and negotiated by various actors? What sectors of society are engaged in producing discourses of resource nationalism and at what spatial scales?
- Through what discursive forms and political projects is resource nationalism expressed?
- How does resource nationalism articulate with discourses of territorial, racial, gendered, classed or other subjectivities? What sorts of ‘imagined communities’ does it invoke?
- What do expressions of resource nationalism tell us about the relationship between the state and resources?
- What forms does resource nationalism take in different political systems (liberal/illiberal, statist/decentralized, left/right)?

In posing such questions, this discursive approach pushes us to ask how ‘resource nationalism’ may itself serve as an ideological resource that different actors might mobilize for contrasting agendas. And given the wide range of actors and scales that are relevant to thinking about how states and people benefit from or are harmed by resource extraction, a critical approach to resource nationalism necessitates a decidedly multi-scalar and multi-dimensional perspective, which we explore in the following section along two conceptual

axes: (1) *natural resources* and (2) *nationalism, sovereignty and territory*.

III Key concepts in resource nationalism

I *Natural resources*

In an early and influential critique of neo-Malthusian environmentalism, Harvey (1974: 265) argued for a relational view of the world, in which

‘resources’ can only be defined in relationship to the mode of production which seeks to make use of them and which simultaneously ‘produces’ them through both the physical and mental activity of the users. According to this view, then, there is no such thing as a resource in the abstract or a resource which exists as a ‘thing in itself.’

In contrast to an Aristotelian view of resources as discrete things to be discovered ‘in nature,’ Harvey’s dialectical perspective views resources in broader context, and asserts that resources *qua* resources have meaning only in relation to specific social, economic and political configurations. In this sense, natural resources may be understood as historically specific and socially contingent ‘cultural appraisals’ of nature, a conceptual category through which we organize society and our relations with the non-human world (Bridge, 2009). Understood dialectically and as socially produced, natural resources are both outcome and driver of socio-environmental ordering. Of vital importance, then, is the reciprocal relationship between resources and the state, and the manifold ways this relationship is expressed. As Bridge (2014: 119) notes:

The interesting questions for critical geography . . . have not been about what resources and states are (in a realist sense) but about how they come to be – i.e. the formative processes through which resources and states are generated as ‘effects’, and the consequences of these effects for the organization of socionatural relations.

State-making and resource-making are, in short, mutually constitutive as both process and project.

This perspective has inspired a resurgence in resource geography, positioned largely at the intersection of political ecology and political economy (Bakker and Bridge, 2006, 2008; Bridge, 2010, 2014; Le Billon, 2013). Work in this field is explicitly critical of the reductionism and resource fetishism of the realist perspectives found in many international relations and political science approaches to environmental politics (e.g. Kaplan, 2001, 2013; Klare, 2002, 2004; Homer-Dixon, 1999). Resource geographers working in this vein also seek to examine the processes by which resources and states are territorialized and co-produced, materially and ideologically (Bridge, 2014; Le Billon, 2013; Robbins, 2008; Whitehead, 2008). As Le Billon (2013) notes, given the historical role of primary commodities markets in driving both windfall profits and economic dysfunction, the term 'resource' itself conveys a sense of optimism and opportunity, even as it also connotes dependence and foreboding. Both connotations – opportunity/optimism and dependence/foreboding – are geographically expressed. To the extent that resources are literally embedded in national territory, '[r]esource-making activities are fundamentally matters of territorialization – the expression of social power in geographical form' (Bridge, 2010: 825). Far from being merely incidental features of national identity, resources are fundamentally constitutive of the material and ideological nature of nations and states: the material basis for state power (Coronil, 1997; Emel et al., 2011; Williams and Smith, 1983).

From the political economy of natural resources, it is only a small step to cultural politics and the geographical imaginaries with which natural resources and extractive industries become infused. The particular expressions these imaginaries take have much to do with a state's position along a commodity chain

(Bridge and Le Billon, 2013). For instance, given the globalized nature of commodities markets, the concerns of resource *exporting* states (e.g. Russia, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria) are fundamentally associated with the protection of resource supplies and the control of rents derived from resource extraction within their national territories. In these states, tropes of control over resources and resource rents, and the threat of foreign, neo-colonial domination of resource reserves predominate. By contrast, the concerns of resource *importing* states (e.g. the US, Japan and most of Western Europe) are largely focused on securing resource access and flow from beyond state boundaries. Resource nationalism in these states is characterized by tropes of resource scarcity and the threat of resource cutoffs by foreign entities (from resource exporting states or stateless armed actors). Both resource exporting and resource importing states experience tensions between the internal demands of the population (over resource control, commodity prices, quality of life, etc.), and the vagaries of external forces (of commodities markets or resource suppliers) (Himley, 2013, 2014; Kaup, 2013).

Particularly for resource exporting states, the political economic importance of extractive industries, and of oil development in particular, is reflected in the fact that most of the world's largest petroleum companies (as measured in oil reserves) are state-owned firms. ExxonMobil – the world's largest privately-controlled oil company – does not even rank in the top 10 (rather, it ranks 14th, just ahead of Russia's Lukoil) (Bridge and Le Billon, 2013: 40). Oil and other natural resources are viewed as engines of economic growth in countries as disparate as Norway, Canada, South Africa, Bolivia, Chile, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Mongolia, a resource-centric view of economic development that spans otherwise yawning political divides. This is evidenced by the fact that Augusto Pinochet and Hugo Chávez both emphasized natural resources (copper and oil,

respectively) as a primary source of economic development and state power (Bebbington, 2009).

Notwithstanding the prevalence of state-owned firms in the global petroleum industry, however, the relationship between resource extraction and economic development is far from straightforward. Indeed, many resource dependent states are marked by economic and political dysfunction (Norway is a notable exception while Nigeria is a prime example). Recognition of this tendency raises questions regarding the so-called 'resource curse' (Ross, 1999, 2001, 2012, 2015; Sachs and Warner, 2001), a concept that has been roundly criticized within geography (e.g. Peluso and Watts, 2001). Nevertheless, the various pathologies associated with resource abundance have provided much grist for the political ecology mill, from Watts' (2004) investigation of the Nigerian 'oil complex' to Bebbington and Humphreys Bebbington's (2010) 'Andean Avatar' (see also Bridge and Le Billon, 2013; Le Billon, 2013). Rejecting the deterministic tendencies inherent in the resource curse concept, these geographers highlight instead the social and political complexity of resource conflicts, as well as the dialectical nature of natural resources themselves, as socially produced and socially enacted (Bakker, 2002, 2004; Bridge, 2010; Le Billon, 2004, 2007; Peluso and Watts, 2001; Watts, 2004). As Bakker and Bridge (2008) point out, far from being externally imposed 'natural' conditions, resource scarcity and abundance are historically and spatially contingent circumstances that emerge at the intersections of political economy and geology (see also Huber, 2013). This literature presents a view of natural resources as inherently political and as both a material and an ideological force, in which resource struggles are never only (or even primarily) about resources themselves, but instead encompass an array of social and political concerns including political economy, citizenship, the nation, development, rights and collective identities

(Childs, 2016; Emel et al., 2011; Perreault, 2006, 2013; Perreault and Valdivia, 2010; Valdivia, 2008).

2 Nationalism, sovereignty, and territory

Identity narratives can take many forms, but nationalism holds a special place for geographers because of its unique connection to space and place, as both 'a specific type of human territoriality and a territorial form of ideology' (Kolossoff and O'Loughlin, 1998: 262). In treating nationalism as a political and normative discourse about a particular community, imagined to have both social and spatial roots, geographers share in the broader consensus among social scientists that nations are *constructed*. From this perspective, nationalism is analyzed as a set of situated practices, constituted in and through unstable power relations, from the overtly politicized to the mundane (Agnew, 2013; Antonsich, 2015). Geographers similarly approach the 'state' as a social construction without a discernible essence, but as the *effect* of a wide range of practices and material relations. As with the case of 'natural resources,' the constructivist or relational tack positions the state as a historically- and geographically-contextual discourse, with multiple and constantly shifting expressions over space and time (Kuus and Agnew, 2008; Moisisio, 2013; Jeffrey, 2015; Koch, 2015b).

These insights are crucial to understanding resource nationalism because, as a discourse, it is rooted in the question of *who* gets to legitimately speak in the name of the state or the nation, where, and at what scale sovereignty or autonomy is claimed. 'Sovereignty' is conventionally defined as a state's absolute authority over a defined territory, as recognized by other states (Weber, 1995: 1). While it is typically used to denote a political expression of power or authority, the discretely-bounded Westphalian state is not the only spatial expression of sovereignty. Territorial sovereignty may

in fact be claimed by either nationally-defined communities or others with various social and spatial extents (Herb and Kaplan, 1999; Paasi, 1996; Raffestin, 2012; Sack, 1986; Sassen, 2013; Whitehead et al., 2006). Indigenous groups, for example, often have special claims to both sovereignty *and* territories within states (which is often complicated by the fact that most states retain rights over sub-surface resource whereas indigenous territories typically include only surface resources). In Bolivia, for instance, indigenous identities figure centrally in regional constructions of nationalism, among both indigenous and non-indigenous populations and in all cases are tethered to the geographies of resource extraction (Perreault and Green, 2013; Postero, 2017; Zimmerer, 2015). In Nigeria, where oil development has provided the context for armed independence struggles among ethnic minorities, constructions of territorial and sub-state nationalisms frequently hinge on interpellations of the 'indigenous' (Watts, 2004), a pattern similarly common among indigenous groups in Russia's Far North (Graybill, 2013a, 2013b; Laruelle, 2014; Stammler and Ivanova, 2016; Yakovleva, 2011). While sovereignty may have multiple spatial expressions, geographers readily acknowledge that the territorial state is foremost among these – whether claimed or contested.

The related concept of a territorially- or state-defined 'nation' is also globally hegemonic, but rife with contradictions:

On the one hand, the doctrines of popular sovereignty conceive 'the people' as a territorial community, defined by the state. On the other hand, these doctrines also evoke an image of the people as a pre-political community that establishes state institutions and has the final say on their legitimacy. (Kuus and Agnew, 2008: 99)

These contradictions are the motivating fiction of the statist ideal that arose out of 19th-century nationalist ideology, which sought to spatially

fix a 'nation.' As a jointly social and spatial identity narrative, nationalism serves to naturalize the link between people and a place. As a social grouping, any nation is comprised of members who cannot be forever tied to one piece of land. Yet nationalist imaginaries routinely reject this reality by rooting communities to a 'primordial' homeland (Kaiser, 2002). Expressed through various (and often competing) visions of how a state and nation *should* relate to one another, nationalism is thus a normative discourse. This is precisely why critical political geographers reject the use of the term 'nation-state': it problematically posits that nations *belong* within certain state-defined territories, while concealing the deeply political nature of claims about congruence between an imagined national community and a particular territory (Connor, 1978).

The place-based claims of nationalist homeland narratives are significant because they typically frame the past and present around a spatially-exclusive vision of ownership: members of the nation are taught that a particular territory is 'theirs' and theirs alone. Often this works by sacralizing the image of the homeland through references to its natural environment: 'Its mountains are sacred, its rivers are full of memories, its lakes recall distant oaths and battles, all of which have been commemorated in national epics and ballads, and attracted countless legends' (Williams and Smith, 1983: 509). Geographers have accordingly examined how nationalist claims to, and constructions of, political space shape this sense of 'naturalness' through diverse cultural interpretations of natural landscapes – specifically asking how they may be colonized, utilized, and transformed by any number of actors (e.g. Herb and Kaplan, 1999; Kaiser, 2002; Nash, 1993; Nogué and Vicente, 2004; Sörlin, 1999; Zimmer, 2001). Similarly, nationalism frequently imbues discourse surrounding state-led environmental interventions, such as mega-engineering dam projects (Forest and Forest, 2012; Josephson,

1995, 2002; Menga, 2015; Murton et al., 2016; Sneddon, 2015; Wooden et al., 2016) and stated afforestation and desert greening schemes (Brain, 2011; Koch, 2015c; Ouis, 2002; Scott, 1998). In these diverse cases, natural resources and landscapes are routinely harnessed by elites and state planners to promote the image of a nation that is ‘modern’ – however that ambiguous concept is locally defined.

Resource nationalism is part of this broader family of tropes and imaginaries, as the nationalist coding of the physical environment can be readily applied to natural resources – imagined as a free-floating or abstract commodity separate from the earth, but with a clear origin in the nation’s domain or iconic landscapes. Coronil’s (1997) representation of Venezuela as composed of two bodies, one political and the other ‘natural,’ is instructive here. Natural resources in this sense serve to bind citizens and the nations and root them both in a shared territory (Perreault, 2013; Valdivia, 2008). Localized claims about who should benefit from resources and extractive industries, and how, can derive their shape, structure, and substance from any number of identity narratives, but nationalist ideals often provide the easiest and most widely-comprehensible tropes and imaginaries for various actors to employ (Benwell and Dodds, 2011; Bouzarovski and Bassin, 2011; Eldarov et al., 2015; Jackson, 2015a, 2015b; Jackson and Dear, 2016; Lafitte, 2013; Tynkkynen, 2007). The central question of who has the *right* to determine how and where benefits and harms of resource extraction are felt can be both a legal issue (as expressed through juridical categories like citizenship), and an ideological issue (as expressed through the affective ties of nationalism). However these rights are negotiated by a given community, they ultimately connect to broader theoretical questions about sovereignty and territory.

The discourse of sovereignty can also draw upon both legal and ideological concepts. When particular actors or groups claim the right to

‘property’ or to act ‘independently,’ they do so with reference to some spatial unit that is imagined to accord them such a right: in ‘our’ land or jurisdiction, we can do as we wish because no one else has a higher authority. This is what Williams and Smith (1983: 509) refer to as ‘the ideal of the good life as consisting of communal freedom from external constraint, and in the capacity for the community to direct its resource distribution as it thinks fit.’ They underscore the close connection between nationalist narratives and resources, not just as a simple economic asset, but as a guarantor of autarchy, ‘fused with the ideal of economic sufficiency and hence self-sustaining growth’ (Williams and Smith, 1983: 509). When used by communities claiming a territorial expression other than the state, sovereignty conceptually bleeds into ideas about ‘autonomy’ or ‘autarchy.’ Actors operating at and constructing different scales of political action thus depend on a range of identity narratives, and their associated sets of ‘rights,’ in contests over natural resource use. Critical approaches to nationalism, sovereignty, and territory call these contests into sharp focus. In what follows, we illustrate these processes with reference to three brief case examples: Kazakhstan, Bolivia and the USA.

IV Case examples

I Kazakhstan

In post-communist Eurasia, the sudden transformation of political economic systems in the late 1980s and early 1990s sheds light on the dynamic nature of resource nationalist discourses. Many countries in the region were quick to privatize extractive industries and the state bodies responsible for selling off rights to previously unexploited resource deposits, forests, and hydropower. Privatization has been patchy and many post-communist countries have resource governance regimes that combine public and private control. Others have gone back and forth between opening up and closing

down corporate involvement in resource sectors. Resource nationalism looms large in post-communist transition, as it is implicated in many micro- and macro-political questions about how government leaders, economic elites, and ordinary citizens have reacted to new ways of imagining the 'rightful' access, use, and distribution of resource wealth. This is readily apparent in Kazakhstan, a Soviet successor state with significant deposits of uranium, precious metals and, near the Caspian Sea, oil and gas.

As early as the mid-1980s, during a time of extreme economic hardship in the USSR, Soviet authorities were actively negotiating with Chevron for a contract at Tengiz, a field along the Kazakh SSR's shore of the Caspian (see LeVine, 2007: 95–142). The protracted negotiations were unfolding as the Soviet Union itself was in the process of collapse. When the state was officially dissolved in December 1991, control of hydrocarbon deposits in the Caspian basin, once a domestic policy issue, suddenly became a matter of foreign policy for the newly independent littoral states (Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Russia). This meant that Kazakhstan's new president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was the one to sign the final Tengiz drilling agreement with Chevron in 1993 (Yessenova, 2015). It was a proud moment for Nazarbayev, who described the oil and gas sector as 'the vital basis of the country' (Nazarbayev, 1997). Kazakhstan's reserves were not just understood to be the country's fount of prosperity, but also a major source of nationalist anxiety in the 1990s, when Russian leaders gestured toward claiming parts of Kazakhstani territory. Though this never materialized, Russia inherited the Soviet pipeline infrastructure, through which all Caspian oil and gas was exported. At various junctures, Russian leaders successfully used this as a political tool to bring Kazakhstani officials in line with their political and economic agenda in the 1990s (Ericson, 2009; LeVine, 2007). President Nazarbayev thus came to see Russian involvement in the

hydrocarbon industry and supply networks as a threat to national sovereignty. His early strategy for getting around Russian regional dominance was to involve Western oil companies and other international partners in exploiting the region's hydrocarbons and introducing new pipeline routes, elaborated in the 'national security' section of his government's Kazakhstan-2030 development plan.

In the country's transition to independence in the 1990s, a number of key assumptions about natural resources shaped how they were to be governed and understood in this new political reality. First, it was assumed that they were a *national* resource, which could be used to stave off existential threats to the new nationalistically-defined country of Kazakhstan – eliding deep ethnic and regional divides within the country (Laruelle, 2016; Schatz, 2004). Though the government has continued some of the Soviet ideals of pan-ethnic unity, Kazakhs now held a special place in the new country – and the wealth under its soil was imagined to belong to them as a people. Second, in promoting a central role for corporations in the country's newly-configured extractive industries, President Nazarbayev's policies assumed a fundamentally different vision from Soviet times. In contrast to state-controlled monopolies being the only legitimate actors in natural resource exploitation in the USSR, the post-Soviet era was to be marked by more international and market capitalist involvement.

In the early years of Kazakhstan's independence, resource nationalism was expressed through deepening ties with international oil companies, since elites understood this to be the only way around Russian domination. Yet as new pipelines were developed and oil and gas fields started to produce, Kazakhstan's leaders began to renegotiate contracts to oust foreign firms and reassert control of various oil and gas projects by state-owned extraction enterprises by the late 2000s (Domjan and Stone, 2010; Koch, 2013a; Partlett, 2010; Sarsenbayev,

2011). Thus, resource nationalism shifted back toward a more familiar Soviet vision of statist control of extractive industries. As oil and other global commodity prices hit dramatic new lows from around 2014 on, Kazakhstan's government faced major budget shortfalls and, in Fall 2016, President Nazarbayev announced plans to sell off the largest of the state-owned monopolies, including the oil and gas firm, KazMunai-Gaz, and the uranium producer, Kazatomprom (Gizitdinov, 2016). It is not clear how this privatization campaign will be received by private investors, but the push to privatize once more suggests that there is no clear stasis and that the pendulum may continue to swing between these competing understandings of which extraction model will best serve the 'national' interest.

Whether articulated through a market-based or state-centric approach to extractivism, resource nationalism in Kazakhstan has always assumed that the 'state' (i.e. those acting in the name of the state) should decide how to exploit the country's natural resources. Newly-independent Kazakhstan would become (and remain) an authoritarian state, led by a relatively small circle of elites surrounding President Nazarbayev. These government elites have been able to position themselves as the legitimate agents of the state, thereby justifying their arbitration the country's natural resource wealth – and in so doing, achieve extraordinary wealth through various extra-legal economic patronage practices (Junisbai, 2010; Kalyuzhnova et al., 2009; Koch, 2015a, 2018; Sakal, 2015). While ordinary people are well-aware of these elite machinations, they largely internalize the resource nationalist narrative that state-controlled companies should be the leaders in Kazakhstan's extractive industries. This is seen not only through the widespread popular resistance to Chinese involvement in the oil and gas sector beyond pipeline construction (Koch, 2013a), but also in urban Kazakhstanis' contempt for striking oil workers in 2010–11, who were largely seen as unjustly trying to extort the

state for higher wages when they were thought to be well paid (Koch, 2013b). The internalization of this state-promoted discourse should come as no surprise for scholars of authoritarian states. But the case of Kazakhstan highlights how centralized governments can dominate the discursive playing field to advance a form of resource nationalism that may not be 'bottom-up' in the sense that it has diffuse social origins, but is nonetheless has wide popular purchase.

2 Bolivia

Unsurprisingly, given their shared history of colonial and neo-colonial resource exploitation, resource nationalism in Andean countries is most commonly expressed as resentment toward powerful foreigners intent on appropriating national wealth. Indeed, the dependency theories that emerged from South America in the 1960s and '70s continue to inform and animate the everyday rhetoric of politicians – even those as politically disparate as neoliberal Alán García of Peru (2007) and socialist Álvaro García Linera of Bolivia (2012; cf. Galeano, 1973). Moreover, condemnation of transnational mining and hydrocarbons firms (particularly those from the US) is as common in everyday speech, graffiti and street murals as it is in political discourse. In Bolivia, as in other Andean countries, natural resource endowments are commonly referred to as *patrimonio nacional* – national patrimony. Tellingly, *patrimonio* shares its etymological origins with the words *patria* (fatherland) and *patriótica* (patriotic), both derived from the Latin *pater* (father). As Sawyer (2002) notes in the case of Ecuador, *patria*, more than *nación* ('nation'), is the term most commonly used to express allegiance to the Republic. This discourse was similarly adopted in protests against neoliberal policies in Bolivia, where social movement activists contesting foreign control over natural gas reserves accused politicians overseeing these processes of being

'vendepatrias' – sellers of the fatherland. Such language explicitly links natural resources (*patrimonio nacional*) with the nation (*patria*), and identifies as traitorous those who would permit foreign entities to control and profit from them (Valdivia, 2008; see also Perreault, 2006; Sawyer, 2004). Thus, understandings of resources and the nation are firmly rooted in the same conceptual soil, a relationship that is expressed linguistically, ideologically and territorially.

Of central importance for Bolivian resource nationalism are the environmental imaginaries and contested forms of governance that resource extraction engenders. For instance, Perreault and Valdivia (2010) examine the conjoining of petro-capitalism, nationalist ideologies, popular movements and the politics of place in the context of resource governance in Bolivia and Ecuador (see also Carrión, 2015; Davidov, 2015; Perreault, 2013; Rosales, 2017). Given its structural dependence on resource extraction (and thus its subordinate position in the global capitalist order), Bolivia has little room for economic or political maneuver, and is subject to pressures from transnational firms and financial institutions as well as from social movements that may reject efforts to export resources they consider to be national patrimony (Kohl and Farthing, 2012; Hindery, 2013). A striking example of this was evident in the so-called 'gas war' of 2003 and its aftermath. A plan by neoliberal president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada to export natural gas via Chile (where it was to be liquefied) to the United States (where it would be re-gasified for sale in California) sparked widespread protests which led to the ouster of Sánchez de Lozada (who fled to the United States), and eventually to the election of current president Evo Morales in December 2005. In one of his first acts as president, Morales nationalized the country's natural gas industry. The presidential decree declaring the nationalization was called 'Heroes of the Chaco' (*Héroes del Chaco*), a name that recalls Bolivia's disastrous

war against Paraguay in the 1930s, fought in the region where most of the country's oil and natural gas reserves are located. In the war, Bolivia suffered as many as 65,000 dead (some 2 per cent of its population at the time) and lost most of its Chaco territory, but managed to protect the oil fields from Paraguayan incursions. Thus, in recalling this history, Morales' 'Heroes of the Chaco' decree discursively binds Bolivia's natural resources to a national imaginary embodied in the heroic defense of sovereign territory (Perreault, 2006).

Although natural gas is now Bolivia's main export product and the most important source of income for the national treasury, the country continues to be popularly known as a *país minero* – 'mining country' – for the historical importance of its mining industry (Bebbington, 2012, 2015; Bebbington and Bury, 2013; Díaz-Cuellar, 2017). While Bolivia, like most Latin American countries, has experienced dramatic swings in recent decades between political right and left, the governments' reliance on extractive industries for both economic development and political legitimacy has remained constant (Andreucci, 2017; Schilling-Vacaflor, 2017). As was the case with his neoliberal predecessor, socialist President Evo Morales has promoted the mining industry as crucial to national development, sovereignty and identity, while attacking indigenous and environmentalist opponents of mining with similar vitriol (Marston, 2017). Reverence for the mining industry is widespread and popularly expressed. Cities and towns throughout the country's principal mining region are decorated with monuments and murals depicting mining's central role in the national story (Perreault, 2017). It should be noted that, in the cases of mining and hydrocarbons, local opposition to extractive activities on the part of indigenous and *campesino* (smallholder farmer) populations is driven not only by concerns over national patrimony, but also – and in some cases especially – by concern over the impacts on environments, livelihoods

and territories (Anthias, 2018; Andreucci and Radhuber, 2017).

Thus, resource nationalism in Bolivia is expressed through a variety of policy measures, political discourses, visual representations and populist movements. These expressions of resource nationalism articulate with anti-colonial sentiments in opposing domination by powerful outsiders, thus positing a clear distinction between those Bolivians with rightful claims on natural resources and national territory, and foreigners who lack such rightful claims (as well as undeserving Bolivians, in the case of some forms of sub-state nationalism; see Perreault and Green, 2013). In these representations, the state is posited as the administrator of national resources and is charged with the just distribution of the benefits they produce (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2017).

3 USA

In the USA, where imaginaries of the ‘American way of life’ and the ‘American dream’ hinge on the mass consumption of inexpensive and widely available fossil fuels, resource nationalism is often expressed through the idiom of energy security and vulnerability. Although the United States is now the world’s largest oil producer (having surpassing Saudi Arabia during the recent boom of hydraulic fracturing or ‘fracking’), such discourses posit that the country is vulnerable to the malicious designs of distant suppliers and the vagaries of geopolitical conditions beyond its control. The experience of the 1970s OPEC oil embargo, with its soaring gasoline prices and general economic malaise, has shaped US energy policy ever since (Huber, 2013). Concerns over access to foreign (mostly Middle Eastern) oil are often coupled with the politically evocative drive toward ‘energy independence,’ evident in the discourses and practices of both the political left and right (Bridge, 2015). For the political left, the trope of energy independence most often

takes the form of calls for greater state investment in renewables such as solar and wind energy, greater fuel efficiency and the adoption of hybrid or electric cars. It is on the political right, however, that calls for energy independence are most often infused with nationalist fervor. Here, energy anxiety is expressed as calls for increased production of domestic energy sources, either through technological innovation (e.g. fracking in many US states) or through the spatial expansion of oil and gas production into new and in many cases protected environments (e.g. the recent fulfillment of the oil industry’s and the Republican Party’s long-held goal of drilling in Alaska’s Arctic Wildlife Refuge).

Discourses of expanded extraction contain within them an element of machismo that mirrors US imperial adventurism: energy companies (especially the oil ‘majors’ such as ExxonMobil, Chevron and ConocoPhillips; but also transnational mining corporations such as Freeport-McMoRan) portray themselves as bravely venturing to the far reaches of the earth in order to retrieve the natural resources US consumers demand (and that the ‘American way of life’ requires) (Bridge and Wood, 2010; Huber, 2009). In turn, these forms of resource nationalism are often connected to popular imaginaries of US imperialism and its political and moral limitations (Sica and Huber, 2017). These sentiments are on full display in the blog, ‘Natural Gas Now,’ an outlet for activists in favor of developing natural gas reserves in New York state by means of hydraulic fracturing. A blog post titled ‘Drill a natural gas well, bring a soldier home’ opens with the statement, ‘Failure to develop our natural gas and other energy sources at home means putting our sons and daughters in harm’s way. It’s time to drill gas wells upstate and bring home our soldiers’ (<http://naturalgasnow.org>, 26 September 2013). Leaving aside the fact that developing domestic natural gas reserves, whether through fracking or conventional techniques, will by

itself do little to reduce US military entanglements in the Middle East and elsewhere, this assertion and others like it (e.g. the political slogans, ‘drill baby drill,’ ‘drill here, drill now,’ and ‘no blood for oil’), bind together the concepts of energy security (framed as securing access to abundant fossil fuels) and national vulnerability (as a result of imperial overreach). In this way resource nationalism provides an ideological frame, which naturalizes US energy consumption patterns and casts US lifestyles as vulnerable to the violence and unpredictability of global energy markets (Huber, 2009, 2013; see also Bridge, 2014; Emel et al., 2011; Le Billon, 2013).

Whereas US energy consumption patterns mean that petroleum and natural gas will surely retain their economic and strategic importance for decades to come, the future of coal is far less certain. Plentiful, inexpensive natural gas, combined with environmental concerns have made coal uneconomical and less desirable. Nevertheless, coal remains a fixture in the national imaginary, never more so than during the 2016 presidential campaign and its aftermath, when Donald Trump made reviving the coal industry a keystone of his promise to ‘make America great again.’ Trump deployed the patriotic symbolism of coal to great effect, and the major coal producing states of Wyoming, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and West Virginia strongly supported him at the polls. It bears noting that the coal industry lags behind car washes, theme parks, used car dealerships, travel agencies, radio stations and even Arby’s restaurants in terms of total employment in the US (Ingraham, 2017). Nevertheless, coal carries symbolic weight as representing US energy independence, and more than oil or natural gas, it has been historically tied to forms of US patriotism. Don Blankenship, the former Chairman and CEO of Massey Energy Company (one of the largest coal producers in the US), was known to address crowds in star-spangled red, white and blue garb, using an enormous American flag as a

backdrop. Such imagery also has an undeniably gendered dimension, with the (inevitably male) coal miner held up as the quintessential American working man. During the 2016 presidential election campaign, Mr. Trump disparaged rival Hillary Clinton’s calls for increased wind energy, insinuating not only that renewable energy is uneconomical, but also that it is effeminate and emasculating. In this view, it is most assuredly not US lifestyles or resource consumption patterns that are called into question, but rather the ways such patterns are to be sustained in the most patriotic and manly way possible (Huber, 2009, 2013; Sica and Huber, 2017). Given the hegemony of neoliberalism within the USA, distributional concerns are less apparent in these representations than are the perceived rights to individual liberty, automobility and material consumption, and the patriotic imperative to make productive use of the country’s vast store of resources to further these ends. In this context, the state’s primary role is as steward, assuring the wise use of resources and facilitating their availability for the national economy.

V Conclusion: Approaching resource nationalism critically

To date, writing on resource nationalism in the social sciences has been dominated by broad-brush and deterministic realist accounts originating in international relations and applied economic analyses. Placing emphasis on relations between states and capitalistically-defined business ‘risks,’ these studies ignore many of the political and geographical questions about who is impacted by resource nationalism and how the harms and benefits of resource extraction are to be configured. Though some preliminary efforts have been made in recent years, a critical approach is sorely needed if we are to understand when, where, how, for whom and to what effect resource nationalism becomes salient. In this

paper, we have sketched the outlines of a conceptual framework for analyzing resource nationalism by joining the theoretical insights of various strands of geographical thought, drawing in particular from political geography, resource geography and political ecology. These insights, together with geographers' longstanding interest in political economy, position the discipline to push debates beyond essentialist market- and state-based analyses of resource nationalism and to provide a far more nuanced approach to its various manifestations.

Nationalism remains one of the most important identity narratives around the world (Murphy, 2013) and for this reason, *resource nationalism* deserves extra scrutiny from geographers. It has long been a topic of concern beyond academia, circulating widely in policy and business circles as well as international bodies interested in the connections between the environment, resource extraction and security in developing states. In studying resource nationalism not just through the lens of market forces, but also with an eye to state-based identity politics, a critical approach to resource nationalism demands that we ask how *actors at all scales* shape political outcomes. Simple as this argument may appear, it is an essential lesson that geographers are well positioned to advance among non-academics who are making important decisions about international investments, foreign policy, and environmental activism. As the global markets for energy and other natural resource commodities continue to undergo rapid changes, resource nationalism will remain a relevant point of analysis for scholars and policymakers alike. With the current wave of populist nationalism across the globe, this is perhaps truer now than ever.

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