



Post-Nationalism: Postage Stamps as Carriers of National Imaginaries

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Abstract

Despite their immense potential as information sources, postage stamps have been virtually ignored in academic research. Therefore, in this thesis I study how official national imaginaries have been promoted through iconographic and written messages in postage stamps; how such messages are linked to the ideology, interests and goals of political elites; and how competing elites and groups with relative power within the state try to influence such official ideas about the nation.

The thesis is divided in three sections. The first presents a theoretical framework for the study of national imaginaries. It also presents the properties of stamps that made them ideal 'carriers' of ideological propaganda. The second section analyses a random sample of 1,000 stamps by means of a typology of ideological messages. It was found that the vast majority of stamps are carrying messages related to the features, composition, and historical development of the nation that issued the stamp. Then, these 'nationalist' stamps were further studied by means of a second typology, in order to differentiate the particular aspects of the nation that were promoted in each stamp.

The third section analyses the political goals and processes behind nationalist messages in stamps. For that, both the United Kingdom during 1950-1970 and post-revolutionary Mexico were studied using process-tracing methodology. It was found that, while the most important actors are still the ruling elites, other actors such as competing elites, local authorities, pressure groups or social organizations will also try to influence the messages about the nation in stamps. A relevant finding is that intermediate structures, such as middle-range public officers in postal institutions, can have a key role not only in the promotion, but also in the shaping of official national imaginaries.



Jury: Rainer Bauböck (EUI) (Supervisor), Stephan Leibfried (University of Bremen), Pavel Kolář (EUI), Mauricio Tenorio (University of Chicago) (via videolink)

Bio

Henio Hoyo studied the B.A. in International Affairs at El Colegio de México (ColMex) in Mexico City, and then the M.A. in Nationalism Studies at the Central European University (CEU) of Budapest, Hungary. His main research areas are nationalism and identity politics; minority and indigenous rights, and comparative politics (Europe / Latin America). Further academic interests include political extremism and terrorism, nationalist and ideological propaganda, and political realism.