

Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism. Edited by Liliya Berezhnaya and Heidi Hein-Kircher. New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2019. 416 pp.

At the height of the European refugee crisis in 2015, Jarosław Kaczyński, head of the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party in Poland, explained his strong anti-immigrant position by claiming that the Polish nation had a historic mission to defend Christian Europe from enemies who wanted to destroy it. He has also used this argument to justify homophobia and attacks on women's rights. Similar claims resound across Eastern Europe. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has made similar claims about Hungary, as has Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša for Slovenia. Pro-Western Ukrainians intent on joining the European Union also see their country as a bulwark protecting Europe, albeit against a different enemy: Russian imperialism. In each case, nationalist leaders look back in time and translate histories of wars fought against Bolsheviks, Ottoman armies, and Tatar invaders into myths of heroic martyrdom in order to cast themselves at the center of present-day struggles to define where Europe is and what it should mean to those who live there. Eastern Europe today abounds with visions of nations vying with one another to be the rampart of Europe, a bastion protecting a continent surrounded by enemies. Why are these myths so ubiquitous? And what gives them such power?

The urgency of these questions today makes *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism*, edited by Liliya Berezhnaya and Heidi Hein-Kircher, especially welcome. The fourteen essays in the volume analyze examples of rampart or bulwark nation myths in a variety of contexts, ranging across the region from Russia and Ukraine to Hungary and Romania and in time from the late fifteenth century to the present-day. A helpful introductory essay by the editors frames the entire volume, highlighting the power of these myths to create meaning through the cultural imagination of space. Bulwark discourses abound, they write, “where it is necessary to strengthen identity and culture, to define a society in demarcating it from Others and to imagine a territory” (p.11). They suggest that competition in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to define imperial spaces as national space made Eastern Europe especially fertile ground for this kind of myth-making, imparting fantasies of national sacrifice and civilizational defense with a cultural power still felt across the region today.

Many of the essays in this volume illuminate the ways in which visions (and narratives) of borderlands and border security are so often shaped by beliefs in a civilizing mission. In her own contribution, Heidi Hein-Kircher shows how the city of L'viv (Polish: Lwów) was imagined in late nineteenth-century travel guides as an outpost of Polish civilization surrounded by barbarism. Echoes of this theme can be found in other essays, for instance Paul Srodecki's comparison of anti-Bolshevik ideology in interwar Poland and Hungary, Philipp Hofeneder's account of Polish and Ukrainian history textbooks in Habsburg Galicia, and Steven Seegel's fascinating analysis of maps and the politics of mapmaking in East Central Europe. Volodymyr Kravchenko explains that bulwark myths were largely absent from Ukrainian national discourse until the late nineteenth century, when historian Mykhailo Hrushevskyi made this trope a staple element in the national historical imagination. By contrast, several essays—Stephen Norris's on the complex afterlives of artist Viktor Vasnetsov's famous painting *Warriors* and Kerstin Jobst's on the cultural construction of an Orthodox Crimea—reveal how Russian imperial ideology legitimized itself through historical myths about the origins and early history of Slavic Orthodoxy. These studies show that the bulwark myths so central to the cultural geography of Eastern Europe were not always imagined in opposition to enemies from the East. Sometimes the threat came from the West.

Other contributors highlight the sacral power that modern nationalist bulwark myths drew from older languages of religious threat. Kerstin Weiand locates some of the earliest instances of a pan-European bulwark discourse in late fifteenth-century speeches made to the Imperial Diet by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, councilor to Emperor Frederick III and later Pope Pius II. In them, he called on Christian Europeans to unite against an implacably savage Ottoman Muslim enemy. His warnings, which circulated in print form throughout Europe, found especially receptive audiences in Poland and Hungary. Centuries later, nationalists in both countries would refashion this history into dramatic myths of resistance and martyrdom on the eastern marches of European civilization. But this ideological transformation was not peculiar to Catholic societies. According to Liliya Berezhnaya, the Russian Orthodox monks of the Pochaiv Lavra monastery remade their collective memories of conflict with an expanding Ottoman Empire into a vision, updated for the nineteenth century, of Orthodoxy under attack from Jews, Polish Catholics, and a host of cultural ills coming to Russia from the West. Zaur Gasimov proposes that the religious origins of modern bulwark myths were even more malleable, showing in his

essay how émigré Turkic intellectuals from the Soviet Union imagined Atatürk's Turkey as a (non-Christian) bulwark defending Turkish and Turkic culture from Communism.

This collection reflects the diversity of bulwark myths in Eastern Europe. It has less to say about causes: why do bulwark myths spring to life at some times and lie dormant at others? The volume also leaves readers to draw their own connections between bulwark discourses in Eastern Europe and myths of civilizational defense at work in other places. Today, no less than in Piccolomini's age, calls to defend the bastions of Christian civilization resound throughout Europe and across the Atlantic. As this volume shows so well, bulwark myths persist in many places. *Rampart Nations* is an excellent guide to a problem that shows no signs of going away.

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