CFP Patriotism, Protest Politics and Political Violence, *5-6 May 2022, Queen’s University Belfast*

**Prof. Jaime Lluch,** University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

[jaime.lluch@upr.edu](mailto:jaime.lluch@upr.edu) or [jaime.lluch@gmail.com](mailto:jaime.lluch@gmail.com)

<https://www.mwpweb.eu/JaimeLluch/>

**Varieties of State Nationalism in the USA: Trumpist Ethnonationalism, “Liberal Patriotism,” and the Case of Puerto Rico**

Michael Billig famously observed that leaders of powerful established states such as France, the United States, and the United Kingdom seldom recognize themselves as “nationalists.” To the contrary, they call themselves “patriots” because for them “patriotism” is virtuous. Anyone who knows the USA well will observe that at all levels of USA society liberals, academics, professors of Political Science, will approvingly christen themselves as “patriots,” while there is now a new Trumpist ethnonationalism promoting a new self-understanding as “nationalists.” This paper will explain this long-standing divide in USA society, between those on the liberal side who deny being nationalists and prefer the label “patriotism” and those on the right who are now proudly opting for a new white nationalism.

I will argue that both are forms of nationalism, one being a form of hard-right white nationalism and the other being a disguised form of banal nationalism. I will show this empirically by referring to the case of Puerto Rico,[[1]](#footnote-1) and how it is seen, accommodated, and treated by the U.S. federal government and by USA elites. I will show that both varieties of USA state nationalism, the liberal and the hard-right one, have ignored, silenced, and marginalized Puerto Rico´s democratically-expressed preference for a non-colonial status precisely because for both varieties of USA nationalism Puerto Rico does not fit within the USA nation. On the other hand, with respect to administrative issues such as how the federal government has treated Puerto Rico during recent natural disasters, there we observe a more generous attitude by the liberal form of nationalism, whereas the hard-right nationalism has discriminated against the island.

1. As the CFP states, these cases should be of special interest for this workshop because until 6 years ago the USA was deemed politically stable, and Puerto Rico cannot be classified as ethnically divided. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)