



A Sociological Reading of the Impact of Nationalist Discourse on Public Policy

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 <https://ror.org/04f81fm77>

Abstract

Nationalist discourse, in modern states, is more than just an ideological orientation; it functions as a powerful social dynamic that directly influences decision-making processes. The construction of national identity, the reinforcement of social belonging, and the mobilization of masses during times of crisis enhance the decisive role of this discourse in shaping public policies. Nationalism, which provides an effective framework in areas such as education, security, migration, economy, language, and cultural policies, can foster social cohesion when implemented in an inclusive manner; however, when constructed in an exclusionary way, it may deepen divisions, polarization, and social tensions. This dual nature becomes particularly evident in the interaction between policymakers and civil society, where nationalist discourse sometimes serves as a unifying reference point and at other times becomes the focal point of ideological conflicts. This study examines the reflections of nationalist discourse on public policies from a sociological perspective, revealing both its unifying and exclusionary dimensions. The research combines the theoretical approaches of Gellner, Anderson, Smith, and Billig with Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Foucault's discourse analysis, focusing on the Turkish context through case studies of education curricula, migration policies, security strategies, and economic nationalism. These analyses demonstrate that nationalist discourse plays a critical role in generating social consent and legitimizing policies. At the same time, however, it carries the risk of restricting pluralism and rendering different identities invisible. Therefore, redefining nationalist discourse in a balanced, inclusive, and egalitarian manner within democratization processes is of critical importance for ensuring social peace and political stability.

Keywords

State, Ideology, Public Policy, Identity, Nationalism

Citation

Ünlü, Samet. “A Sociological Reading of the Impact of Nationalist Discourse on Public Policy”. *Journal of Sociological Context* 6/3 (December 2025), 529-555.

<https://doi.org/10.52108/2757-5942.6.3.7>

Article Information

Date of Submission	15.10.2025
Date of Acceptance	20.11.2025
Date of Publication	15.12.2025
Peer-Review	Double anonymous review - Two External Reviewers
Ethical Statement	It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.
Similarity Check	Done – Turnitin
Conflict of Interest	No conflicts of interest have been declared.
Complaints	dergi@sosyolojikbaglam.org
Use of Artificial Intelligence	No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the preparation of this study. All content of the study was produced by the author(s) in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles.
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