

The State of the Nation

Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism

Nationalism is one of the major social and political sources of modern times, and a subject of intense intellectual debate. The most important and influential theory of nationalism is that of Ernest Gellner (1925–1995). This volume assesses every aspect of that theory, bringing together an exceptional set of scholars to explain, criticise and move beyond Gellner's work. In doing so the book establishes the state-of-play within the theory of nationalism, and complements Gellner's account by bringing political variables into consideration. The book is unique in offering sustained attention to a single powerful theory, and will be of wide interest to students and scholars of political and social theory, history, sociology and anthropology.

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Edited by

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Introduction

John A. Hall

The most striking way in which Ernest Gellner stood apart from the rest of his generation of postwar social scientists was in his concentration on nationalism. The neglect of nationalism within the academy after 1945 is easily explained: as is often the case, geopolitical events set the intellectual agenda. Nationalism was blamed for the onset of war in 1939; as statesmen paid no attention to national self-determination when dividing Germany and Korea, so scholars in their turn ignored nationalism. If there was some interest, not least in the case of Gellner himself, in decolonisation and in nation-building in the new states that resulted, it remains the case that generalised intellectual attention turned to nationalism only in the 1980s – interestingly and puzzlingly slightly *before* the break-up of the last Eurasian empire made nationalism a central topic of public concern. In these circumstances, Gellner's theory of nationalism, first adumbrated two decades earlier, suddenly received enormous attention, with *Nations and Nationalism* becoming an influential, much translated bestseller.

The circumstances of Gellner's life which made it utterly impossible for him ever to have neglected nationalism are well worth bearing in mind as background to the studies assembled in here. Both his parents were lower middle class Bohemians of Jewish background who changed their allegiance, from the German to the Czech community, to accommodate themselves to the way in which sheer demographic weight created a new form of society in Prague at the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Gellner himself grew up in a bilingual household within a genuinely multinational city. He was necessarily aware not just of Zionism, Marxism and nationalism but also of different communities, often in violent conflict with each other. After his class had sung together in his Czech primary school, for example, he volunteered to sing the same song with different words – German words, to the shocked silence of his classmates. This was the sort of event that let would-be insiders know that they would never really be accepted, especially if they came from a Jewish background. Loyalty to Masaryk's republic kept the

family in Prague very late, so that Gellner witnessed the start of the German occupation which was to lead to the death of some of his relations. But the escape of his immediate family allowed attendance at St Albans County School for Boys and a year at Balliol College before active service at the end of the war as a member of the Czech Brigade. Gellner marched in the victory parade in Prague in 1945, but was unable to re-settle in the city he so loved. For one thing, he was appalled at the manner of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans at this time, even though he found it entirely comprehensible. For another, he could see – or so he claimed in later years – that Czechoslovakia was in for a very bad time: there was limited active opposition to communism because the Czechs had no doubt that Germany would revive and no trust that the West would protect them should that revival react to the political and ethnic cleansing in which they were then engaged.

Thinking through these experiences necessitated theorising nationalism. Most obviously, the marvellous extended parable of 'Megalo-mania' and 'Ruritania' that stands at the heart of *Nations and Nationalism* demonstrates identities to be constructed and chosen, thereby making his central claim that it is nationalism that explains the nation – and not, as is so often believed, the nation which accounts for nationalism.² But it is a less obvious element of Gellner's background that makes his theory permanently thought-provoking. Gellner's thought contained powerful tensions. The firm stress on the need for protection given by the political roof of nationalism goes hand-in-hand with a no-holds-barred defence of universal rationality against every form of relativism; equally, the insistence that national homogeneity enables political and economic development did not rule out deep loathing for nationalist politics and ideology.

These tensions came out especially clearly after he returned to Prague in 1991 to open a Centre for the Study of Nationalism for the newly founded Central European University. At a local level, Gellner disliked the claustrophilia of Václav Klaus's Czech Republic despite the fact that it was producing, as his theory had predicted, something of an economic miracle. More generally, he was deeply worried by the speed and totality of the Soviet collapse, fearing that ethnic cleansings might lead to dreadful political instability throughout the region.³ This was something of a change of heart: he had returned from initial close contacts with Soviet ethnographers delighted that his concern with ethnic stratification seemed to cast so much light on problems sure to plague the Soviet Union. With characteristically witty self-deprecation, he made the best and most cutting joke against himself – that he had become a Russian imperialist.⁴ He became equally enthusiastic about the virtues of

Austro-Hungary, not least when assessing the contribution of Malinowski – and particularly so when setting him against the narrow communalism he found in Wittgenstein.⁵ At the end of his life there was accordingly considerable tension between the formal descriptive theory of *Nations and Nationalism* which predicts the demise of entities such as Austro-Hungary and the Soviet Union and his prescriptive hopes for some way in which cultural pluralism could be achieved within a larger political unit.

The purpose of this volume is to analyse Gellner's theory of nationalism as a whole. In order to do this properly, the book is structured around four key themes. It is vital, to begin with, to fully comprehend the making of the theory, not least since emphases within it – for example, the late emergence of a prescriptive tone – changed over the three decades over which it was articulated. Secondly, considerable attention is given to the classical criticisms brought against the theory. At a substantive level, Gellner's theory was accused of being too modernist and too optimistic; at a more formal philosophical level, it was attacked again and again for having too instrumental a view of human motivation and for relying excessively on functionalist argumentation. These charges are discussed at length here, giving one justification for the title – that is, providing the most up to date state-of-play of discussions of Gellner's theory of nationalism. But the title is designed to suggest a second meaning. Gellner's theory explains nationalism by means of socio-economic categories. The principal positive claim of the third section of this volume is that nationalism cannot be understood without systematically bringing politics back in; differently put, this section is representative of modern studies of nationalism in seeking to challenge Gellner's account by stressing the impact of the actions of states. The fourth thematic section considers some implications of Gellner's theory: if two essays – one on civil society, the other on Islam – follow Gellner's own agenda, the final essay by Rogers Brubaker presents nothing less than an overview of the future of nationalist studies in general.

These themes can best be brought out by devoting the rest of this introduction to discussion of the individual chapters – albeit this process necessarily cannot take the place of the rich detail in which the reader will soon be immersed. But before turning to this task, two general points deserve emphasis. First, it is curiously rare in social science to subject any theory to sustained analysis, let alone to definitive refutation. Intellectual interest seems driven by fashion, with one view being replaced by another because it lends excitement rather than truth. This is dreadful, not least since it means that untested theories come back

again and again. The studies assembled here aim at better cognitive practice, not least since Gellner's theory needs attention on the grounds of complexity as well as merit. Secondly, it should be emphasised that all Gellner's work to do with nationalism, listed in the bibliography at the end of this volume, is considered here. This means that attention is given to his initial statement in the mid-1960s and to the complete account of *Nations and Nationalism*, to later historically-sensitive amendments and to the prescriptive writings already mentioned, to his important 1996 'Reply to Critics' and to *Nationalism*, his last book on the subject published posthumously in 1997. One benefit of considering the full panoply of Gellner's work on nationalism is that it is possible to draw attention to replies that Gellner developed to standard criticisms of his position.

The charm of Roman Szporluk's account of the way in which *Thought and Change* suggested an intellectual agenda should not distract from the novelty of its analytical contribution. Szporluk shares with Gellner an East Central European background, and this makes him especially sensitive to the way in which Gellner's assessment of nationalism was merely a part of a larger attempt to take stock of the ideological options provided by the modern world, and in particular of Marxism and liberalism. The most important claim of Szporluk's own important *Communism and Nationalism* – that is, its interpretation of Marxism as a nationalist strategy of late development – is clearly inspired by Gellner's view of Marxism as a protestant ethic of the twentieth century.⁶ Still, there remains a difference between the two accounts. Gellner's review essay of Szporluk's book took issue with the praise given to List's view that nations are eternal: this ontology was rejected on the grounds that nations are *created*, with nationalism itself being seen as the result of ethnic conflict – for all that the 'nation', once formed, then often eagerly embraces developmentalist strategies.⁷ This is not a matter on which Gellner changed his mind, noting in a very late statement (in a passage quoted at length below) that 'nationalism is not to be explained by the use it has in legitimising modernisation – a view with which I am quite mistakenly credited . . .'.⁸ Despite the power of Gellner's reply, Szporluk is surely right to insist that Gellner showed too little interest in 'old-state' nationalism. This is an extremely important point. Gellner *defined* nationalism in terms of the 'awakened' seeking their own state. But large and established states, not least Revolutionary France and Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany, can and have embraced nationalism in ways that have vitally affected the historical record. Szporluk further notes, perhaps as the result of a background whose contours are powerfully evoked by Chris Hann in his contribution to this volume, that peoples

are fought for by different states. This leads him to hint at another definitional point of which we will hear more: states are not always quite so unitary and homogeneous as Gellner imagined. Szporluk certainly makes much of this point in his most recent work on the Ukraine, and this in turn derives in part from stressing the way in which differential outcomes may come about as the result of nationalist ideas – which Gellner famously scorned.⁹

Gellner responded generously and warmly to an earlier version of Brendan O'Leary's essay, not surprisingly since it was then the most complete critical account of his work on nationalism. This version of O'Leary's essay is very much expanded, and takes into account all of Gellner's late writings on nationalism; O'Leary now goes beyond his discussion of *Thought and Change* and *Nations and Nationalism* to critical assessment of the historical stages of nationalism proposed as well as to analysis of Gellner's late prescriptive argument. The essay now stands as the most accurate analytic reconstruction of Gellner's theory. O'Leary adds to this a defence of many of the theory's key points, most notably its modernist emphasis and its claim that nationalism would lose its virulence once the transition to modernity had been achieved. He is particularly interesting on the typology of nationalism, noting both that it is not as inclusive as Gellner had imagined and that it does not structure his later historically sensitive amendments. O'Leary is of course not without critical points of his own to make. Those concerning the philosophy of social science and politics concern us below, for they are at the heart of later essays; but one point should be mentioned here. O'Leary insists that nationalism has a perfectly coherent ideology, based on the principle of self-determination, and that it is inherently modern and progressive – a view that means a great deal to O'Leary, one suspects, given that his works suggest adherence to a particular and highly liberal version of Irish nationalism. Gellner's response at this point was blunt: 'We should not make nationalists a present of their ontology. It is not universally applicable, and to accept a principle which implies the contrary, means that we start from false premises.'¹⁰ One should not miss O'Leary's footnotes for his reply to Gellner at this point. And his essay anyway deserves the closest reading: it is packed with innovative views, not least in its appreciation of the role of geopolitical conjunctures in the history of nationalism.

The second section of the book turns to detailed consideration of the classical accusations levelled at Gellner's theory. The first substantive issue to be considered is the charge that nations are far older than Gellner's modernist account allowed. A thesis of primordialism was suggested by John Armstrong in his *Nations before Nationalism*, but

Gellner gave sustained attention to two different authors, Anthony Smith and Miroslav Hroch, who offered more subtle accounts seeking some mix of modernism and primordialism. He did so, it should be noted, because he was genuinely troubled by the issue, noting uneasily that Shakespeare's plays are full of nationalist rhetoric. Still, he sought to maintain his modernist view, albeit he took care to open the matter to empirical debate. Thus *Nationalism* doubts Anthony Smith's view that successful nation-states must have an ethnic core at their heart, but suggests empirical research to establish how many states have historic 'navels' and how many invent them – as well as to consider those which seem to manage without them altogether.¹¹ He gave still more attention to the work of Miroslav Hroch, often joking that the publication of his *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe* made it difficult for him to open his mouth for fear of making some mistake. He most certainly took very seriously Hroch's insistence that Balkan nationalism did not fit his scheme since it had nothing to do with industrialism: he varied his reply to this point, becoming most consistent, in the eyes of both O'Leary and Mouzelis, when arguing that industrialism cast a long shadow to which peripheral elites reacted. Still, he eventually devoted a critical essay of great power to Hroch's work, accusing him of reifying both class and nation.¹² It is to that essay that Hroch replies here.

Hroch carefully and interestingly describes the process of his intellectual formation so as to evade certain of Gellner's objections. He insists that his use of the nationalist term 'revival' did not entail acceptance of any ontological view of the permanence of nations. Equally, he explains that the class terms in which his argument had been expressed did not indicate allegiance to the materialist conception of history: if pure economic classes mattered on occasion, so too did all sorts of social groups whose existence is best understood in Weberian terms. It is good to have these matters cleared up, and there is justice in Hroch's claim that this increases the conceptual overlap between their two accounts – both of which, after all, draw on socio-economic rather than political categories for the explanations they offer. Still, two sets of differences remain. First, there is disagreement as to the material on which nationalist processes work. Hroch stands closer to Anthony Smith in insisting that nationalism would be ineffective were its appeal not directed at a pre-existent community; this contrasts with Gellner's more constructivist position. Secondly, Hroch's celebrated phase model makes an important distinction between national identity and nationalism, and he insists that some movements sought to affirm their identity without seeking their own state. This again puts Gellner's definition of nationalism under scrutiny.

A second substantive charge often made is that Gellner was too optimistic in imagining that nationalism would lose its bite once modernisation had been completed. This claim is of course extremely important to his general position, for it allows him to restore a measure of universalism by arguing that the excesses of nationalism will be temporary. One occasion on which he devoted his full attention to the impact of nationalism within the industrial era was when reviewing Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain*.¹³ He did not find himself especially troubled by the arguments of that book, not surprisingly given that it made extensive use of his own categories. Nor did he find movements of rich regions seeking some autonomy from the fiscal extractions of central states – for that is how he and Nairn then saw the matter – especially troubling for his general position.¹⁴ But Nairn here makes a rather different case – one moreover which does go absolutely to the heart of Gellner's thought. When Gellner sought to explain the viciousness to which nationalism can be prone, he tended to make much of John Plamenatz's contention that nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe was bound to be nasty, given the absence of a high culture and the presence of complex ethnic intermingling – a corollary of Gellner's view here being that the undoubted horror associated with German nationalism was seen as essentially contingent.¹⁵ Nairn's interpretation is very different. Modernisation is brutal, as Gellner knew, but it need not be passive: rather, traumatic experiences which take away the promise of affluence lead those placed in pain to codify anti-modern memories. According to this view of interrupted modernisation, ethnic nationalism is the result of a peasantry managing to write its way into history. If this has happened in Central and Eastern Europe, most notably in contemporary Serbia, Nairn insists that it can happen anywhere: he has in mind here not just the Khmer Rouge with whom he begins but quite as much the cases of France and Germany – which is, of course, to agree with Szporluk that the form of nationalism within 'core' countries matters a very great deal. In making this argument, Nairn interestingly distinguishes between chauvinism and nationalism. The words themselves do not matter, but the reality does. For all that nationalism can be reactionary and vicious, it can equally be progressive; this was the case with Gellner's Czechs seeking to escape the constraints of Vienna and the Baltic peoples seeking to leave a moribund Soviet Union – and, Nairn insists, of the Scots wanting autonomy from an overcentralised and decrepit imperial state.¹⁶

These two substantive criticisms effectively concern the beginning and end points of the record of nationalism with which Gellner was concerned. But most attention by his critics has always been given to the

area in between, namely to the putative link between industrialism and nationalism. It should be said immediately that rather different issues are here deeply, even licentiously entangled. An immediate problem is that of functionalist logic, that is, of whether the needs of industrial society cause nationalism. Should the answer to that question prove to be negative, the claim that national homogeneity enables, that is, is functional for, economic (and political) development may still convince – which is to stress that multinational arrangements are rare and difficult. But a further distinction needs to be drawn here, between societies that have built their nations before industrialisation and those that face modernisation after nation-building has begun. It may be the case that the advantages given by the relative social homogeneity of the former should *not* convert to policy prescriptions for the latter designed to extirpate all pluralism. Asymmetry in development – ethnic and linguistic homogeneity achieved over time in the one case, nation-building through a recognition of cultural diversity in the latter – may have much to recommend it.

The chapters by Laitin and Mouzelis form something of a pair, arriving at similar conclusions even though one is a negative and the other a positive critique. David Laitin is one of the most distinguished practitioners of rational choice theory, an approach he clearly finds attractive on account of its rigour. This makes Laitin's charge against Gellner – that he attempts to be *too* rigorous – all the more striking. In fact two elements are involved here. First, Laitin accuses him – as have many others, notably Charles Taylor and Brendan O'Leary in this volume, as well as Michael Mann and Perry Anderson on previous occasions¹⁷ – of adopting a functionalist logic of explanation. It is not at all hard to see what is meant here. Gellner constantly marshalled the categories of his general philosophy of history when discussing nationalism, and it very often seemed as if he did mean to say that industrial society's need for social and linguistic homogeneity was the cause of nationalism. But Laitin moves beyond this to say that Gellner relies heavily on the most instrumental view of human motivation imaginable.¹⁸ Laitin believes that one can do much better by drawing in other variables, in this case adding to material self-interest the extent to which one's own group forces nationalist activity upon one through varied social pressures and the extent to which the larger society might be prepared to welcome moves to accommodation. The second part of his chapter makes marvellous use of these variables, themselves identified through the construction of ingenious measures, to identify patterns of behaviour in Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine which would not be revealed by Gellner's approach.¹⁹ In all this, it should be firmly

noted, Laitin clearly envisages a range of relations wider than Gellner's stark choice between nationalist secession or assimilation – a viewpoint for which he argued extensively in an earlier pathbreaking book on language repertoires and state construction.²⁰

Nicos Mouzelis has become particularly well known in recent years for a series of books dealing with the logic of social theory, and he here applies his skills to a defence of Gellner's position against the first of Laitin's charges.²¹ There is indeed no doubt that it makes no sense to take consequences as causes – that is, in this case, to take the need of a social formation as the cause of its very creation. One way out of this dilemma is suggested by O'Leary. He notes that some nationalist leaders in effect agree with Gellner's view of the needs of a new form of society, and therefore actively try to create it. If this brings agency back into the historical record, equally important is the fact that the seeming necessity of the equation between social homogeneity and the modern world is subtly undermined. Differently put, that equation is an ideology, and an ideology which may not be completely true: for all that modern social organisation may be easier given social similarity, policies to engineer social homogenisation forcibly may, as noted, have grave disadvantages. That is the point at the heart of Laitin's interest in the extent to which a larger society will welcome those who seek to enter its bounds, the particular point being that Estonians can create loyalty and diminish dissent if they welcome Russians who learn Estonian. Alfred Stepan also reflects on this case, underscoring the potential in the situation by saying that the Russian population can be politically integrated rather easily even though it will retain a measure of cultural distinctiveness.

Mouzelis accepts O'Leary's criticism, but then uses these words of Gellner to mount a defence of a particular type of functionalism:

Functionalism is a term people sometimes apply to their own position and it is not clear why it should be a badge of shame. What I think the critics mean is that [my] theory is *teleological*, that it explains a phenomenon in terms of the needs it satisfied, and this is not acceptable in good social science: a need may be demonstrated but it does not bring forth its own satisfaction . . .

I accept entirely this repudiation of teleological explanation: I have many needs which, whatever their urgency or intensity, nature has not deemed fit to satisfy. Bitter experience, quite apart from the canons of scientific propriety, has taught me this unpalatable truth. Needs engender no realities. But my theory does not sin against this. It is straightforwardly causal. Political and economic forces, the aspirations of governments for greater power and of individuals for greater wealth, have in certain circumstances produced a world in which the division of labour is very advanced, the occupational structure highly unstable, and most work is semantic and communicative rather than physical. This situation in turn leads to the adoption of a standard and codified, literacy-linked

(‘High’) idiom, requires business of all kinds to be conducted in its terms, and reduces persons who are not masters of that idiom (or not acceptable to its practitioners) to the status of humiliated second-class members, a condition from which one plausible and much-frequented escape route led through nationalist politics.²²

This is an important passage, making it crystal clear that Gellner’s principal thesis is that nationalism results from the actions of a social group placed at a disadvantage by newly unified cultural space – the causal origins of which lie with varied and unspecified ‘political and economic forces’. Mouzelis follows Michael Mann in arguing that the new social context was initially as much the result of military as of economic factors.²³ Gellner came to accept this, admitting that a ‘state committed by its very manner of operation to cultural *Gleichschaltung* is not merely an effect of a new socio-economic system, but also an important independent cause’.²⁴ Mouzelis then defends functionalism shorn of teleology as a useful general orienting approach to social life. But it is noticeable that this attempt to save Gellner in fact ends up largely agreeing with Gellner’s critics. Both Laitin and Mouzelis insist that Gellner’s very abstract general model needs to be filled up with historical detail. Mouzelis seems to think that in general we are bound to have abstract theories which can then suggest detailed historical accounts, with Gellner certainly believing this to be true for nationalism. In contrast, Laitin is in the company of a group of contemporary scholars who feel that historical details are not just one damn thing after another: as we shall see, this school rather seeks to theorise politics as a comprehensible middle ground standing between abstract generality and random particularity.

The possibility of political explanation is also raised by Laitin’s second charge, namely that Gellner’s theory suffers from an excessively instrumental view of human nature. Gellner firmly rejected this charge:

I *am* deeply sensitive to the spell of nationalism. I can play about thirty Bohemian folk songs (or songs presented as such in my youth) on my mouth organ. My oldest friend, whom I have known since the age of three or four and who is Czech and a patriot, cannot bear to hear me play them because he says I do it in such a schmaltzy way, ‘crying into the mouth organ’. I do not think I could have written the book on nationalism which I did write, were I not capable of crying, with the help of a little alcohol, over folksongs, which happen to be my favourite form of music. I attend folklore performances from choice, but go to Covent Garden or the Narodni Divadlo from social obligation or snobbery.²⁵

More than the merely personal is involved here. Gellner emphasised – in a passage replying to Perry Anderson, who had made Laitin’s point with

great force²⁶ – that humiliation rather than material self-interest provides the heart of his theory:

Modern life *is* contact with bureaucrats: shop assistants, railway clerks, etc., etc.

It is this which pushes people into nationalism, into the need for the congruence between their own 'culture' (the idiom in which they can express themselves and understand others) and that of the extensive and interconnected bureaucracies which constitute their social environment. Non-congruence is not merely an inconvenience or a disadvantage: it means perpetual humiliation. Only if such a congruence does obtain, can one feel 'at ease in one's skin'. Only then is one's personal style of being accepted and endorsed by the environment, only then is one allowed to 'be oneself', without impediment. Nationalism is not explained by the use it has in legitimising modernisation – a view with which I am quite mistakenly credited – but by the fact that individuals find themselves in very stressful situations, unless the nationalist requirement of congruence between a man's culture and that of his environment is satisfied. *Hence* that deep passion which, according to Perry Anderson, is absent both from my theory and my bosom. As it happens, it is very much present in both of them. The passion is not a means to some end, it is a reaction to an intolerable situation, to a constant jarring in the activity which is by far the most important thing in life – contact and communication with fellow human beings.²⁷

This shows again that the core of his theory lies in a group seeking the security of its own political roof. O'Leary accepts this formulation as an improvement on Gellner's earlier statements. Though this may be so, it is still noticeable that humiliation is seen socio-economically, that is, as the result of ethnic and/or linguistic difference. But nationalism can arise without linguistic or ethnic difference, whilst relative peace can sometimes be observed where cultural and linguistic diversity is allowed within a single state. This brings us to the third part of the book.

One of Gellner's most brilliant points was that nationalism was at once inevitable *and* relatively weak, that is, that only a very few calls by nationalists for their own states have been successful.²⁸ This is akin to the point made against – but not by – Durkheim, namely that not all divorced Protestant males who are unemployed commit suicide.²⁹ If one set of factors does not explain all variance, it may make sense to bring in further variables. O'Leary suggests in this spirit that the size of a 'nation' might help us predict the chances for success of a nationalist claim. He also argues that political oppression might go a long way to explaining the incidence of nationalism – that is, differently put, that a sense of humiliation might result from acts of political arbitrariness. Gellner would have none of this:

Oppression is not some kind of independent and additional factor: cultural differentiation, inoffensive under the old intimate social order, is automatically

experienced as oppression in the age of anonymity, mobility, and pervasive bureaucratisation with a standardised idiom.³⁰

There is some truth here, just as there is to an alternative defence he sometimes offered – namely, that authoritarianism is almost a constant, and so no explanation of nationalism. But oppression can not be dismissed so easily. For one thing, there is a marked difference between old regimes which do not much interfere with their societies, and modern ones which do so with real bite.³¹ For another thing, his insistence that ‘repression itself is a corollary of a nationalism-engendering situation’ does not carry conviction: a whole host of ideological and institutional factors stand behind the actions of the modern state.³²

The three chapters that follow offer a state-centric challenge to Gellner’s theory of nationalism. Mark Beissinger begins his chapter with an analysis of the remarkable way in which Gellner’s theory stresses both necessity and contingency, and thereafter seeks middle ground through theorising politics. Beissinger notes that nationalists are very much more concerned with state power than economic opportunity, and he in effect suggests that we take them at their word. He argues that completely repressive states can bring nationalist agitation to a halt, whilst liberal regimes stressing compromise and accommodation may create a soft nationalism concerned to have national identity within established borders. But his central point is reminiscent of Tocqueville: nationalism is likely to be strongest when political openness is followed by a sudden re-imposition of arbitrary rule. Support for independence in Georgia blossomed literally over night after the Soviet attempt at repression – with this, together with a similar intervention in the Baltics, having powerful demonstration effects elsewhere. The analytic point is best expressed in terms of the categories made famous by Hirschman: exit is attractive when voice is denied, with some measure of loyalty being possible as the result of political inclusion.³³ Differently put, nationalism is a dialectical affair, with movements amongst Ruritanians very often resulting from the actions of those in the Megalomanian metropolis. One prime example of the independence of oppression as an explanatory factor can be found in Scotland: nearly two decades of rule by a party not supported locally, and one determined to destroy local government, stand behind the current resurgence of Scottish nationalism. A second example may well yet be provided by Belarus: nationalism is there becoming political and liberal, the opponent of Stalinist legacies – with the language itself something that nationalist leaders will force themselves to learn later, should their struggle prove to be successful.³⁴ All this is reminiscent of Austro-Hungary: the Dual Monarchy might have survived if a more liberal option had been taken by the

regime, with the failure to do so leading political sub-units to *become* homogeneous linguistic and 'ethnic' blocs.

Charles Taylor is one of a very small handful of modern thinkers possessed of something like Gellner's extraordinary intellectual range. Both shared a background in Oxford philosophy, and both consider the relations of epistemology to politics. It is perhaps this that leads to a certain similarity of argumentative style. Taylor broadly accepts Gellner's functionalist argument about industrialisation, seeking to complement it with an appreciation of the functional requirements of democracy. Further, Taylor accepts that nationalism is pre-eminently modern. Although he has interesting points to make about the very varied nature of mass support for nationalism, the core of his case then privileges the reactive responses on the part of peripheral elites. It is at this point that Taylor subtly parts company with Gellner: nationalism is occasioned by discrimination on the part of the powerful. One example of this is the Québécois nationalism with which he has always lived, seen here as the result of the relative intransigence of 'the rest of Canada'. But this is part of a much more general demand for dignity, one manifestation of which is that of Islamic fundamentalism. This very different philosophy of history leads to Taylor's now famous call for a 'politics of recognition', the purpose of which is to soften various ethnic and cultural demands by means of political inclusion.³⁵

Alfred Stepan begins his discussion of multinational arrangements by placing Gellner within the history of liberalism more generally. A fundamental drift within liberalism asserts that it is necessary to solve the national question before liberal rule can be possible. Stepan is far too good an historical sociologist to disagree with this, as the recent book he has co-authored with Juan Linz makes exceedingly clear.³⁶ All the same, he wishes to consider the alternative possibility – that liberal arrangements may sufficiently soften demands for cultural diversity that they do not lead to full-scale secession. Such arrangements are especially vital, in his view, because most secessions create new problems of minorities – not least because the late twentieth century lends minorities staying power, as the result of diasporas sending money home and of external interest fanned by the international media. There is absolutely no doubt in Stepan's mind that human beings are capable of holding multiple identities, and that doing so encourages rather than undermines the consolidation of democracies. In this matter, he draws on striking evidence from Spain and the Baltics. But his tone is still cautious. A very great deal will depend upon the details of design.³⁷ If federalism leads to regional overrepresentation, it can lead to stalemate and blackmail. And if institutions matter, so too does our political

theory. Stepan here follows Taylor and Kymlicka in arguing that greater attention be given by liberalism to communal rather than individual rights – an area in which there is sure to be intense debate in coming years. Behind these pleas, it is easy to see the nature of Stepan's fundamental hope. He certainly favours a measure of homogeneity, for he is well aware that loyalty is necessary for democracy: but that sharing can be at, so to speak, a high level, thereby allowing for greater cultural diversity within it. The civic nationalism of France and the United States had the capacity to be highly exacting, being as wedded to the nation-state as a moral project as has been ethnic nationalism.³⁸ Stepan is best seen as arguing for more civil arrangements, for a less romanticised, more domesticated view of the state as a home for nations.

It may be useful to assess this state-centred position so as then to compare it with Gellner's general viewpoint. Nobody doubts that uniformity makes the operation of a modern industrial and democratic society much easier. It is a fact, albeit a sad one, that the developmental tasks of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland are much eased thanks to the ethnic cleansings of Hitler and Stalin. None the less, the incidence of nationalism – the move from national identity to demands for secession, or, in a different formulation, the ability of some national markers to eventually create states – is definitely influenced by state activity. A corollary of this descriptive point is prescriptive practice, namely, a politics of recognising difference. We have some reason to believe that such politics can work. Had postcommunist Ukraine forcibly sought to build a unitary and homogenised nation-state it would surely have faced debilitating secessionist challenge: its more civil route makes it possible for us to at least hope that it will continue to survive. Equally, multilingual India seems to work, probably thanks to a three plus or minus one language regime – that is, one needs Hindi and English and a provincial language, with the minus applying to Hindi provinces and the plus to minorities within provinces. More generally, it should firmly be noted that the attempt to build unitary, homogenised nation-states in Africa has been a disaster – less a help to economic development than the principal ideological element explaining a period of catastrophe.³⁹

Gellner's own late prescriptive arguments are rather different. His hope that different cultures could be allowed to flourish did not diminish his insistence that power remain politically centralised. As the provision of opera houses rather than the acceptance of political autonomy, of folk-dancing rather than of democracy, failed in both Austro-Hungary and the Soviet Union it is worth speculating as to why Gellner would not go any further. Gellner was a remorseless critic of the replacement of analysis by hope, and there remains enough to be said for his

pessimism to make the state-centred view a challenge rather than a complete alternative. His general view that nationalism may lose its bite after the transition to modernity after all gains support from the discovery that accommodation by means of federal and consociational deals depends upon certain background conditions, lending it better chances in Holland than in South Africa.⁴⁰ Linguistic difference does raise difficulty: Quebec may yet secede from a relatively liberal regime, whilst the continued unity of India is not guaranteed. His refusal to endorse any view that placed too much hope on the best being realised can be seen in those final words of *Nationalism* on the principle of self-determination:

Various procedures involved in applying [the idea of self-determination] cut across each other: is it demography, history, or geography which is to prevail? The application of the demographic principle (let the majority of the population be heard and be decisive) depends on how the electoral units are drawn, and this demarcation can easily be manipulated to render diverse answers. There is the not insignificant consideration of safety and security: our nation has been attacked before and probably will be attacked again, so can we tolerate a boundary which enables the enemy to cut the country in half with ease, or to shell the capital with small guns? There is the piquant principle invoked in Kosovo – can a nation be expected to separate itself from a piece of land which witnessed its greatest national disaster, even if that land is now largely inhabited by aliens? . . . There is also the principle that even a cultural/national group which is not a majority *anywhere*, may nevertheless, or all the more, require to have a safe haven, shelter, base, somewhere . . . In brief, the various criteria are almost always in conflict.⁴¹

This stands as a prescient warning to philosophers now – of course, quite properly – seeking to establish principles of legitimacy for secession.⁴² Bluntly, power and principle do not always coincide, and a large part of the task of social science needs to be limited to that of explaining the very difficult matter of how the world actually works.

Gellner's mind seemed to be furnished with a set of cards, surprising use of which could be made when addressing particular issues. The last section of this book begins with two chapters addressing occasions when the playing of these cards was linked to his interpretation of nationalism. Gellner's 1995 *Conditions of Liberty* is the text principally involved in both cases.

Gellner argued that the collapse of socialism involved the loss of a moral universe, and his analyses of postcommunist politics were thereafter concerned with what would come to fill the vacuum. He viewed this general situation with a great deal of apprehension, noting that civil society forces were slow to organise – in contrast to ethnic nationalist sentiment which seemed to him all-too-readily mobilisable. With the

benefit of even a few years of hindsight, and in particular of a series of elections lost by nationalist demagogues, we can see that Gellner may have been wrong at this point. Nationalism has not swept over most of the former socialist bloc, perhaps in part because the absence of civil society made it rather *hard* to organise nationalist protest efficiently.⁴³ Part of the explanations for this statement has already been given, particularly by Mark Beissinger: nationalist protest derived far less from cultural bases than from political units with which a central state interacted.

Chris Hann disputed Gellner's view of the nature of civil society on a previous occasion.⁴⁴ A background to his argument on this occasion is a precise anthropological account of the fate of east Galicia, and in particular of Premysl. Hann notes the contrast already drawn, between the descriptive theory of *Nations and Nationalism* and the late admiration for Austro-Hungary, and insists that the former makes most sense of this area before 1918 given that state policies were neither passive nor liberal.⁴⁵ A still more fundamental contrast with Gellner's general world view concerns the socialist period. Hann insists that a good deal of progressive social change took place in this period, moving society from rural hierarchy towards something like equality and inclusion. This stands behind his scepticism as to the benefits of the introduction of civil society: in so far as this means the arrival of capitalist market relations, Hann insists that it has merely diminished life chances and recreated hierarchies. What is especially noticeable for Hann is that western monies to support civil society groupings have been used to underwrite Polish right-wing nationalist groups opposed to the rights of Ukrainians. In a sense, Gellner knew all about this: a merit of his discussion of civil society is that it explicitly points out that mere societal self-organisation is no guarantee of civility. But it certainly was Gellner's hope that the strengthening of society in eastern Europe would prevent the sudden emergence of the politics of rage.

Conditions of Liberty necessitates consideration of Islam since it argues forcefully that this religion may take the place of nationalism in large parts of the modern world. Gellner's thesis at this point was straightforward. Islam has within it a high tradition, stressing literacy and puritanism, that can be and is used by those wishing to modernise their societies. This means that Islamic societies can evade, as Taylor also notes, the awful choice between populism and westernisation: remaining true to their better selves allows them to enter the modern world. It is this that lends Islam, in Gellner's view, its secularisation-resistant quality, making it a major force to be reckoned with in the modern world.

This very striking view is open to the very basic rejoinder that Islamic

societies in fact have a poor record of economic, social and political modernisation. But what matters here are the two rather different considerations raised by Brendan O'Leary. First, it may well not be the case that Islamic societies are resistant to pressures that derive from nationalism. O'Leary notes that Pakistan and Afghanistan remain subject to ethnic conflicts, and suggests that Islam may be tied with nationalism in South Asia rather than serving as an alternative to it. One might add to his analysis at this point a further objection: attempts to develop identities larger than the national – whether pan-Arab, Muslim or Shi'ite – have uniformly failed. Secondly, O'Leary wonders whether Islam is as secularisation resistant as Gellner imagined. Were it to be so, there would be a remarkable and uncomfortable contrast with the way in which Gellner hopes that achieved modernity will diminish the fervour of nationalism.

Dale Eickelman's account of Muslim politics takes direct issue with Gellner at this point. Gellner's view of Islamic civilisation was formed in the mid-1960s, Eickelman correctly notes, and so is slightly insensitive to key changes that have taken place since then. Mass higher education has led to a plethora of societal organisations, many of which wish to reimagine Islam in very different forms. Eickelman insists that Islam is no longer unitary, going so far as to say that its varied characters result in largest part from the national contexts within which it interacts. By and large, Eickelman presents an optimistic view, noting that many Islamic movements favour democracy, for all that some wish to undermine it. History has not yet sat in judgement on this matter, and Gellner's pessimism may yet come to haunt us.

Nothing could be more Gellnerian in spirit, Rogers Brubaker correctly notes, than removal of intellectual detritus. His essay decisively refutes, through factual consideration and analytical clarification, six misconceptions about nationalism, so as to offer a comprehensive account of where nationalist studies are now going. Analysis of the first pair of misconceptions – that careful architecture can solve nationalism as against the view that it is endemic and dangerous – takes Brubaker close to Gellner's viewpoint. The second pair of misconceptions – the idea that nationalism is a 'return of the repressed' as against the view that it results from elite manipulation – is the result of debates in the most recent literature. None the less, Brubaker should be seen as arguing against Gellner's position. Broadly speaking, Brubaker belongs to the state-centred school of thought identified above – his particular contribution being to stress that nationalism in the former Soviet Union crystallised around the administrative units of that modern regime. But it is the fifth myth, that of groupism, that leads Brubaker to his largest

and most original disagreement with Gellner. Brubaker believes that the high point of homogeneity for the nation-state may now be over: the end of conscription warfare and transnational migration may lead to multi-cultural societies that allow cultural difference within liberal limits. This leads to the final myth, much spread in fact by his own earlier work, according to which a useful binary contrast should be drawn between civic as against ethnic nationalism.⁴⁶ Brubaker seeks to replace this with the highly suggestive notions of state-framed and counter-state nationalisms.

NOTES

- 1 G. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival*, Princeton, 1981.
- 2 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 58–62.
- 3 E. Gellner, 'The Rest of History', *Prospect*, May 1996, pp. 34–8.
- 4 E. Gellner, 'Nationalism in Eastern Europe', *New Left Review*, no. 189, 1991.
- 5 His growing interest in Malinowski can be seen easily by looking through the bibliography at the end of this volume. His most important arguments are contained in *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Hapsburg Dilemma*, Cambridge, 1998; but attention should also be given to 'Two Escapes from History, or the Hapsburg Impact on British Thought', in A. Bohnen and A. Musgrave, eds., *Wege der Vernunft, Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstag von Hans Albert*, Tübingen, 1991.
- 6 R. Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1988. Gellner's Weberian view of Marxism is in *Thought and Change*, London, 1965, pp. 136–9.
- 7 E. Gellner, 'The Dramatis Personae of History', *East European Politics and Society*, vol. 4, 1990, reprinted as 'Nationalism and Marxism', in *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994.
- 8 E. Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 626.
- 9 A foretaste of Szporluk's forthcoming magnum opus on Ukrainian history is 'After Empire: What?', *Daedalus*, vol. 123, 1994.
- 10 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', p. 638.
- 11 Smith's claims were made in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986. A direct debate between Smith and Gellner on this point can now be found in *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, 1996. But see too, *Nationalism*, London, 1997, pp. 90–101.
- 12 E. Gellner, 'An Alternative Vision', in *Encounters with Nationalism*. The reader should note that this essay is taken from a larger piece, published later as 'The Coming of Nationalism and its Interpretation: The Myth of Nation and Class', in G. Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, London, 1996.
- 13 T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, London, 1977.
- 14 E. Gellner, 'Nationalism, or the New Confessions of a Justified Edinburgh Sinner', *Political Quarterly*, vol. 49, 1978.

- 15 J. Plamenatz, 'Two Types of Nationalism', in E. Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London, 1973, discussed in E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 99–100. See Gellner's *Nationalism*, pp. 59–62 for some further, slightly *ad hoc* comments about nationalist violence.
- 16 A brilliant account and comparison of the reactionary and progressive nationalisms of the Basques and the Catalans is now available in J. D. Medrano, *Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia*, Ithaca, 1995.
- 17 P. Anderson, 'Science, Politics, Enchantment' and M. Mann, 'The Emergence of Modern European Nationalism', first published in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *Transition to Modernity*, Cambridge, 1992, and reprinted in Hall and Jarvie, *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*.
- 18 A part of Gellner's rejection of this claim is noted below, but see too 'Reply to Critics', pp. 623–39.
- 19 D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca, 1998.
- 20 D. Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa*, Cambridge, 1992.
- 21 The books in question are *Post-Marxist Alternatives* (London, 1990), *Back to Sociological Theory* (London, 1990), and *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong?* (London, 1995).
- 22 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', pp. 629–30.
- 23 Mann, 'The Emergence of Modern European Nationalism'.
- 24 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', p. 636.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 626–7.
- 26 Anderson, 'Science, Politics, Enchantment'.
- 27 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', pp. 627–8.
- 28 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 43–50.
- 29 R. Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, London, 1961, p. 202.
- 30 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', p. 637.
- 31 M. Mann, *Sources of Social Power. Volume Two: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760–1914*, Cambridge, 1993.
- 32 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', p. 637.
- 33 A. O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, Cambridge, MA, 1978.
- 34 R. Szporluk, 'Nationalism after Communism: Reflections on Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. IV, 1998.
- 35 C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in A. Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism*, Princeton, 1994.
- 36 J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Baltimore, 1996, especially ch. 2.
- 37 This is a fertile area for research and theory, not least on the vexed question as to whether the provision of local institutions contains or serves as a launching pad for nationalism. A great deal seems to depend upon political style – that is, whether local institutions are the result of pressure rather than of generosity on the part of an intelligent state.
- 38 For an analysis of the state as a moral project, see the excellent discussion in V. Perez-Diaz, *The Return of Civil Society*, Cambridge, MA, 1990.

- 39 I draw on Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa* for these points about India and Africa.
- 40 J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, 'Introduction: The Macro-political Regulation of Ethnic Conflict', in J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London, 1993, pp. 36–7.
- 41 Gellner, *Nationalism*, pp. 104–6.
- 42 For examples, see A. Buchanan, *Secession*, Boulder, 1992 and M. Moore, ed., *Self-Determination and Secession*, Oxford, 1997.
- 43 See Jack Snyder's forthcoming monograph on nationalism and democracy for a fully developed working out of this argument.
- 44 C. Hann, 'Gellner on Malinowski: Words and Things in Central Europe', in Hall and Jarvie, *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, pp. 45–64. For Gellner's response see 'Reply to Critics', pp. 675–8.
- 45 It may be worth noting in passing that one of Gellner's favourite novels, Joseph Roth's superb *The Radetzky March*, is partly set in East Galicia. The novel by and large takes the same view as *Nations and Nationalism* – that the break-up of the empire was inevitable.
- 46 R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, MA, 1992.

Part I

The making of the theory

1 Thoughts about change: Ernest Gellner and the history of nationalism

Roman Szporluk

... two of the great myths of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, namely Marxism and nationalism.¹

Today, a third of a century since its publication in 1964, *Thought and Change* can be seen as Ernest Gellner's *magnum opus*, a work that contained the nucleus of not only *Nations and Nationalism* but also of an even later *Plough, Sword and Book*.² Its initial reception, however, appears to have been lukewarm: Brendan O'Leary says that Gellner's theory of nationalism presented there 'went largely unnoticed' among political scientists, philosophers and sociologists.³ Something similar probably may be said also about its reception among historians. This chapter, however, is not even a beginning of an investigation of that question. Instead, this is a personal account, written twenty-eight years after the story began, of how one historian's encounter with *Thought and Change*, first read by him in 1968,⁴ had put him on a 'train of thought' in the course of which he formed, for himself, a view of the history of nationalism and Marxism, which he then presented in his teaching and writing.

It is common for one book to become the stimulus for another writer to write another book in roughly the same area and on the same (or a related) topic. But in this case something different happened. Here a philosophical and sociological argument by a theorist inspired a historian to design a concrete historical investigation that was not even aimed at 'testing' the theorist's thesis, let alone at formulating another general proposition. Instead, Gellner's understanding of what nationalism is in general, led a historian to look at historical evidence in a way that enabled him (or so he thought), in accordance with criteria implicit in Gellner's argument, to identify a certain individual as a significant *nationalist thinker*. That 'discovery' in turn inspired a new reading of the life and ideas of *another* figure, representing another *Weltanschauung*, whose standing as a major thinker, unlike that of the former, had never been in question.

Paradoxically, this occurred under the inspiration of a scholar who insisted that nationalist thinkers 'did not really make much difference':

If one of them had fallen, others would have stepped into his place . . . No one was indispensable. The quality of nationalist thought would hardly have been affected much by such substitutions. Their precise doctrines are hardly worth analyzing.⁵

The story does not end here, however. For that very scholar then wrote an essay in which he examined, seriously and sympathetically, the said nationalist thinker's ideas.⁶ But let us begin at the beginning.

Reading Gellner

For me, *Thought and Change* was not an easy 'read' and I absorbed, and reacted to, some parts of it more actively than others. But as I worked my way through his argument, I realised that Gellner treated nationalism in a way I had not seen anywhere else – and that he was most strikingly original in establishing 'genetic' (not his adjective) connections between nationalism and Marxism that had remained hidden or obscure to other writers.

Philosophy

Gellner's aphoristic style – sentences that effortlessly turned themselves into memorable 'quotations' – helped an outsider to come to grips with the philosopher's fundamental thesis. 'Philosophy', Gellner said, 'is about industrialisation'. He then clarified his meaning in a footnote: 'Or, if you like: philosophy is about the failure of 1789.' To help those distressed or confused by the seeming paradox, Gellner was willing to reformulate his thought: he described philosophy as 'an attempt to understand the nature, emergence, alternatives and implications of the kind of knowledge on which our society is based, and of that society itself'.⁷ Elsewhere, he described philosophy as 'general thought about man, society, and their place in the world, and thought of the kind which takes least for granted'.⁸

Gellner said that philosophy is about change, and the essence of change is industrialisation – the transition from agrarian to industrial world. According to him, that change was transforming the nature of the relationship between man and the surrounding world:

the features which differentiate the world of pre-industrial men from those of developed countries are far deeper than mere wealth alone, or the presence of steel mills, electricity, and so forth. What is at issue is something far bigger: a wholly new balance between being and knowing.⁹

Even while elsewhere in the book he said that 'philosophy is about industrialisation', Gellner made it clear that in his view it is not industry but science that defines the new age. Moreover, science is not a new religion replacing the old: 'it was a mistake of the Enlightenment, and its nineteenth-century revolutionary successors, to suppose that science was rather like a religious synthesis – only truer and free of invocation of the extra-mundane.'¹⁰

There was a fundamental difference between the philosophy of the modern age and the religion of the old:

In fact, science is radically and qualitatively different. Its manifest and regrettable characteristics . . . include not only the now well-advertised essential incompleteness . . . but also a kind of amorality, one might even say a moral dullness. It does not reveal a nature that rewards virtue and punishes vice, and in whose terms virtue and vice can be defined (in brief, a kind of decapitated version of the old Deity). There is no such lady. It reveals a world that supplies no morals, which at best indicates possibilities and excludes some others. No closed, meaningful, reliable cosmos emerges.¹¹

Thus, if 'science' did not offer any guidance as to how the individual or a group should behave, and thus was not assuming the role of religion in old society, what authority did modern men and women have to rely on once they had lost religion as their guide? Was 'philosophy' a substitute, as a 'practical' or 'applied' science? Nor was it clear whether Gellner allowed that there might exist more than one kind of 'philosophy' whose business was 'industrialisation'. He called liberalism and socialism the 'two great currents of social thought brought into being by the earlier stages of the great transition'¹² but was 'social thought' as understood in this case another name for philosophy?

Questions of this kind did not bother me at the time when I was working my way through *Thought and Change*. I was not interested in the relationship between philosophy and science as he defined them and I paid little attention to his critique of liberalism, to which he gave considerable attention in his book. What mattered was his treatment of Marxism.¹³

Marxism

As was to be expected, Gellner acknowledged that Marxism was concerned with those matters which he assigned to the domain of philosophy. It was understandable, therefore, that he turned to Marxism after an explication of his own position.

He recognised that Marxism was concerned with change, and was thus on the right track in identifying what was important, indeed

crucial, about the modern period. 'Marxism is still probably the best starting point for the understanding of the modern world. Not because its doctrines are true . . . but because, on the whole, the questions it poses are the correct ones.' He spoke with respect about Marx's sociology – but he separated it from his 'preposterous eschatology'.¹⁴

Gellner also acknowledged the special political status of Marxism as the legitimating ideology of a number of states: the 'one official belief . . . that comes some way towards incorporating *the* transition into the official Founding and Justifying Myth of these societies'.¹⁵

But being official did not make Marxism right. I was especially struck by Gellner's remark on what he called the 'two famous mistakes of Marxism' and what, he said, they *really* were about:

two famous mistakes of Marxism – the expectation of continuing or even increasing misery of the proletariat, and the underestimation of nationalism – are really *one* mistake: *if* the proletariat in regions where the big wave has already passed remained near the starvation line . . . then indeed it might feel solidarity with the new recruits to industrial misery.¹⁶

To appreciate the explosive content of this message, one needs to place it next to what Gellner had to say about *nationalism* and industrialisation or 'change': 'Essentially, nationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion'.¹⁷

Let us follow Gellner's thought – philosophy is about industrialisation, nationalism is about its uneven diffusion – to where it leads. A moment's reflection makes one realise that since no other kind of diffusion is possible – diffusion must take place *in time* – Gellner is really saying: 'Nationalism is about industrialisation.' (I am sure it did not occur to me then to ask whether this meant that 'philosophy *equals* nationalism'.)

It would be interesting to see if post-publication reviews and other critical commentaries on *Thought and Change* noted the anti-Marxist thrust of that work. For me, because of my prior exposure to Marxism–Leninism, that was one of its most impressive elements. Gellner was challenging Marxism on its territory: the idea of uneven development had been a fixture in the repertory of Marxism–Leninism; every student of communism knew that Trotsky had argued, by invoking uneven development, for the *communist* revolution in what came to be called Third World countries. As late as the 1930s, Trotsky famously insisted that workers in Calcutta had much more in common with those of Manchester, and vice versa, than either did with their respective nation's 'bourgeoisie'. And here Professor Gellner came along to stand the famous Trotsky argument on its head! The solidarity of workers of

advanced and underdeveloped countries was a myth, he said, and he implied further that for developing lands nationalism was the answer. It was good for them to be independent: 'if a politically united world were passing through the second, global, phase of industrialisation, this united world might well come to resemble the present condition of South Africa'.¹⁸

Modern industry was a child of science, Gellner was saying, but nationalism, not Marxism, was better suited to deal with the social and political aspects and consequences of industrialisation.

Nationalism

It was obvious from the preceding that change and nationalism went hand-in-hand. Nationalism was a subversive, revolutionary force:

as the wave of industrialisation and modernisation moves outward, it disrupts the previous political units. These are generally either small and intimate (village, tribe, feudal unit), or large but loose and ill-centralised (traditional empires, which of course contain the small intimate groupings as parts).¹⁹

In a footnote (some of his most revealing points were in the footnotes) Gellner introduced the concept of *modernisation* and explained how industrialisation was related to it:

The two are to be distinguished only as the narrower and wider aspects of the same phenomenon. Industrialisation proper may be preceded – in certain odd cases followed – by the trappings, terminology, expectations, slogans of industrial society. A complex of such anticipatory borrowings may have almost as much impact on a society as the thing itself.²⁰

Later, the idea of 'anticipatory borrowings' would reappear when he recognised that some nations were 'engendered by recent industrialism', while others were engendered by '*the shadow* cast by its coming'.²¹ Modernisation was obviously a broader concept than industrialisation.

It was in the realm of culture, including education, that 'anticipatory borrowings' took place and where industrialism's coming cast its 'shadow'. However, for Gellner culture is the foundation of industrial society, not only something very important in an industrialising one. Modernity calls for an educated person, education is attained in school, schools use different languages:

The importance of the 'national' differentiation, of what are in effect cultural definitions of group membership, hinges on the fact that development requires, above all, education, that it is in effect education which confers real citizenship, and that education must be in some medium, some culture, some 'language'.²²

In school one learned to work and one also learned to be a citizen: the modern phenomenon – citizenship through education, group *differentiae* in

terms of the language of instruction, and unmediated membership of mass co-cultural societies . . .²³

Thus, to Gellner, the language was more than a medium in which scientific-industrial knowledge was communicated. The medium was the message: 'Language is, as Vico saw, more than a tool of culture, it is culture.'²⁴

Nationalism recognised the crucial importance of education in the making of the modern person – i.e. an individual skilled to function in industrial society. While in agrarian society one learned the necessary skills while working in agriculture, in industrial society one learned not by working in a factory but by studying in school before going to work. And school, said Gellner, had to be national.

Gellner's approach helped one to see why education was the central battleground in nationality struggles in countries like the Habsburg monarchy. The struggle for language of instruction in school was not a diversion from the real issues such as suffrage or wages or land reform (which was what democrats, liberals and socialists were saying) but a fundamental struggle about the kind of persons that were being made – and thus about the limits of political units.

What Gellner had to say about 'anticipatory borrowings' and nations engendered by the 'shadow' of industry amounted to recognising that even while 'philosophy', that is, sociology and economics, was more important than history, something was still left for the historian to do. 'Anticipatory borrowings' meant ideas. A study of those ideas had a future, after all . . .

Studying history

There were personal or autobiographical circumstances which led me to find Gellner's position on nationalism so persuasive and so appealing. I had studied the intellectual evolution of Tomáš G. Masaryk (1850–1937) and Gellner suddenly illuminated for me the larger stage on which my subject's life had taken its course.

At first, Masaryk proclaimed the necessity of a 'New Christianity'. (He read Saint-Simon and Comte during his youth, in the late 1860s. One of his teachers in Brno was a follower of Saint-Simon.) Then he gave up that new universal religion and proposed that science should become a new, needless to say, universal, religion. Finally, by the 1890s, without giving up his fundamental religious and philosophical ideas, Masaryk decided to present them in a package he called the *Czech national philosophy*. Only with that last move, only by going national, did Masaryk acquire a potential constituency and at least a prospect of

political influence. He could preach his vision of what it meant to be human only by telling *certain* people that he was teaching *them* what it meant to be Czech.²⁵

If Masaryk had provided me with what was one case of an originally religious figure's seemingly inevitable march to nationalism, Russia/USSR supplied the story of a Marxist historian, M. N. Pokrovsky (1868–1932), who attempted 'rescuing history from the nation',²⁶ and from 1917 until his death enjoyed the status, with Lenin's approval, of the leader of new Soviet historical science. But then, in 1934, he was condemned by the new Stalinist orthodoxy that put Marxism–Leninism in the service of new Russian-cum-Soviet imperial patriotism.²⁷

Gellner seemed to be telling me that there was some regularity (*Gesetzmässigkeit* or *zakonomernost*) in what happened in the cases I studied: the futility, or so it looked, of two very different attempts to ignore or to overcome nationalism, the impossibility of transcending the nation in modern thought and politics.

Teaching

It was obvious I had to share my discovery of Gellner with my students. Back in school, at the University of Michigan, I organised an undergraduate colloquium, under the title 'Theories of Nationalism', in which *Thought and Change* was the principal text; and in conjunction with its themes other readings were selected. (Topics of several of the weekly sessions were presented via quotations from the book. Thus, one week's theme was 'Philosophy is about industrialisation.' The next was: 'Or, if you like: philosophy is about the failure of 1789.')

That colloquium underwent revisions over several years and then was succeeded by 'Socialism and Nationalism', a lecture course with, I thought, a broader appeal. The main idea, however, remained the same. Students were told that socialism and nationalism operated in a world being transformed by industry, and both were equally 'responses' to it and attempts to explain the failure of '1789'; these two world-views differed, however, in that one spoke for *the underdog* and the other for *the outsider*. (I would hasten to add that later in the term we would deal with situations in which outsiders and underdogs were, or thought themselves to be, *the same*.)

This was a course in which nationalism and Marxism were given equal standing. Nationalism or the national question was not treated as a *problem* (that is, a distraction from serious matters) for the Marxists to 'solve' – which was how college courses on Marxism dealt with nationalism.²⁸ Here, nationalism was recognised as a view and a movement

which had in common with Marxism a concern with the modern world: industrialisation/modernisation and its consequences. Nationalism was another – alternative – interpretation of the world and a rival programme for its transformation.

Learning

It was one thing to make assumptions and issue declarations, and another to furnish individuals and ideas capable of doing for nationalism what Marx, Engels and their followers (whose names my students had at least heard) did for socialism. Preparation for it took some time and effort.

When I walked into the forest of nationalism I did so with at least some idea on how to recognise those trees that I needed to find. From Gellner I had received a standard for comparing and ‘grading’ nationalist thinkers of the nineteenth century. Which ones had understood – or, anticipated? – what Gellner was teaching us now? Which one/s knew what nationalism was all about, without having read Gellner?

If nationalism was what Gellner said it was – and the relevant citations above had made me a convert to his interpretation – I reasoned that there *should* have been at least *some* nationalists who had at least intuitively been on the right track before Gellner. There must have been some, that is, who had grasped the connection between the condition of their nation, the nationalist’s proper main concern, on the one hand, and the uneven diffusion of industrialisation, a universal process, on the other. In short: my task was to find a Gellner before Gellner.

Just as before Marx and scientific socialism there had been various ‘Utopian’ currents, in my study (and then presentation) of nationalism I found ‘Utopian’ nationalist thinkers and currents. Just as Utopian socialists idealised the past social order and the village commune where it still survived, so, I argued, did Utopian nationalists do the same about the distant national past and the village culture of their time, and they rejected industrialisation and change. ‘Scientific nationalism’, by contrast, built its programme on the acceptance of the inevitability and desirability of industrialisation. While it was evident that in actual historical cases the distinction between the two kinds of nationalism was not always sharp, for some ‘Utopians’ had intuitively arrived at important and correct insights (Herder was an obvious example), I needed someone who clearly understood that ‘philosophy is about industrialisation’. After reading in secondary literature and after going to original writings of major figures themselves, I decided I could close my search. It was Friedrich List.²⁹

More than any nationalist thinker I had encountered, I concluded, List deserved the rank of leading theorist, perhaps founder, of 'scientific nationalism'. At times I called his system *generic nationalism* for it could be adopted by any nation facing an industrialising world. This generic nationalism, or the 'algebra of nationalism', which List invented, could be learned and applied by any nationalist currents and movements for they in relation to it represented just so many different 'arithmetics'.³⁰ I suspect this mathematical analogy made little if any sense, but it helped me to clarify my argument about an underlying commonality in all 'scientific' nationalisms. For the same purpose, I drew on List's own life and career as an illustration of universal applicability of his system: List had begun (and ended) his public life as a German nationalist but also found time to be a theorist and practitioner of American nationalism as well, and even managed to offer to the French some free advice on how they could make *France* stronger. To make the symmetry between the two *Weltanschauungen* perfect, I needed a nationalist figure to 'compare and contrast' with Marx. If List had not existed it would have been necessary to invent him. 'The Marx of nationalism', I could tell my students, 'was Friedrich List'.

The 'discovery' of List called for a fresh look at, perhaps a re-examination of, Marx's biography. If List was what he appeared to have been, one reasoned, Marx *ought* to have known, and have said something about, him. It was reasonable to suspect that the young Marx should have not only had some opinions on German nationalism of his time but he should have been especially interested in List because of List's view of industrialisation in the setting of a world market. But, as I was soon to learn, standard works on Marx were not interested in the question of young Marx and German nationalism, and had nothing or almost nothing to say about Marx's knowledge of or opinions on Friedrich List (only Harold Laski seemed to have noticed a polemic with List in *The Communist Manifesto*).³¹ Undeterred, and seeing myself similar to the astronomer who senses that there must be an unaccounted-for celestial body somewhere in the space because the movements of known planets cannot be explained otherwise, I felt an important piece – German nationalism before 1848, and specifically Marx's relation to List – was missing in the accounts of Marx and Marxism. I went to work and found that Marx *had* known List – and, much better than I had imagined; Marx had even read List's critique of Adam Smith before reading Adam Smith himself. (Even their careers intersected at one point: Marx took a job that List had been offered first, but declined.) I had a subtitle for my book: *Karl Marx versus Friedrich List*.

History of nationalism . . . and Marxism?

In an essay titled 'An Alternative Vision', first published in 1992, Gellner reaffirmed the original message of *Thought and Change*. 'History is *neither* the conflict of classes *nor* of nations.'³² The development of nations and the change in class relations do not take place in two *distinct and independent realms*: 'in reality, both are aspects of *one single transition*'.³³ *Thought and Change* carried the same message already in the 1960s. If one took seriously Ernest Gellner's thought about change, I concluded, this was how one should teach – and write – the intellectual history of the nineteenth century. It was therefore under his inspiration, or what I took it to be, that I decided to treat communism and nationalism *together*, as entities enjoying equal status and, more importantly, as dealing with the same subject.

This being evident to Gellner (and his readers) did not mean it was evident to nationalists or Marxists of the past. Their philosophical and ideological principles and assumptions presumably were impediments to their seeing the full picture and meaning of the process, even if they also stimulated them to see correctly, realistically, one or the other aspect of the single process: these nationalists and Marxists may have resembled those men in a famous tale who, with their eyes tied, were asked to touch and then to describe an elephant. (Perhaps Gellner would have corrected this analogy to say that nationalism and Marxism see the world with one eye, right or left, open: consequently, nationalism sees one side of the picture, and Marxism the other.)

For obvious reasons (one of them clarity), the ideas of one key figure, Marx, had to be presented in one part of the book, and those of List in another. But as my story moved on from List and Marx to their successors and followers, it was becoming harder, sometimes impossible, to isolate in separate chapters socialist figures and their ideas from their nationalist rivals. Some 'nationalists' spoke and acted like (sometimes even as) Marxists, while in other cases 'Marxists' could be equally legitimately labelled as nationalists. This was the case in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, for example in Bulgaria and in Italy, and even more so in Russia. But the original boundaries between Marxism and nationalism became quite blurred in the post-1945 colonial and postcolonial world, where some of the central ideas of List came to be attributed to Marx under the label of 'dependency theory'. After this and other similar revelations, I was prepared to believe Dieter Senghaas that List had been 'an early Maoist'.³⁴

But as I learned while writing my book and then continuing to read

on these topics thereafter, one did not need to go to Mao or to dependency theory in Latin America to see cases of a convergence between nationalism and Marxism or between any of these two and social science. In Europe two relevant examples are provided by Max Weber and Antonio Gramsci.

Weber's Olympian stature as a scholar may have been one of the reasons why nationalism in his thought was overlooked. A number of publications have corrected this view and I feel safer now than I did when in response to Benedict Anderson's remark that 'nationalism did not produce its grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes or Webers', I wrote: 'The Weber of nationalism was *Weber*'.³⁵

In his recent book on Russian politics, Jeremy Lester analyses Gramsci's argument 'that social classes which exist at the economic level are not necessarily duplicated at the political level' and that 'the process of articulating a collective will able to effect a political hegemony in society' requires first 'the ability to create "inter-class" political subjects'. Gramsci further argued, Lester continues, that 'victory in a hegemonic struggle' will be achieved when 'a collective will' becomes a 'popular religion': by this Gramsci means, according to Lester, that this will happen when a collective will 'becomes imbued in the national consciousness of a given society'.³⁶ Lester and other scholars provide support for the argument that Gramsci's Marxist ideas can be 'converted' or 'translated' to communicate something important in the language of nationalism. (In that language, societies with the 'inter-class' political subjects postulated by Gramsci are called nations.) It seems legitimate to see in the grandfather of Eurocommunism also a theorist of nation-building and also a figure in the *Risorgimento* tradition.³⁷

Such trans-ideological convertibility was exactly what should have been taking place if the world was as Gellner described and interpreted it. Since Marxism and nationalism were concerned with 'aspects of *one single* transition', the more original, the more open-minded thinkers of one school should have been driven by the logic of their pursuit to set aside ideological blinkers imposed on them by their respective outlook and to enter the others' territory. Ideas of those who did so especially successfully, one might further reason, would not only be 'translatable' or 'convertible' into the language of the other current but would enter a common knowledge about history, society and politics. Step by step, the walls separating what Gellner called 'political myth' (see the epigraph to this paper) from what he termed 'a social current' and that from 'philosophy' would be dismantled.

Epilogue

Indeed, as I see it *today*, Gellner had anticipated something of this kind himself. At a time when the USSR appeared to the world as a Marxist success story, he speculated that 'though there may be little to suggest that the Soviet state will wither away, there may be some hope that Marxism itself will do so'. It would end up, he thought, occupying 'the kind of modest place in Russian national pride, patriotism and disbelief, as do traditional faiths in the life of other nations'.³⁸ In other words, Marxism would become an item in the repertoire of Russian nationalism. But then in Gellner's view Marxism in Russia had performed the function of nationalism from the beginning: 'It is nationalists above all who flirt with Marxism';³⁹ 'Marxism is not intended for the overcoming of the ills of industrialism: its role is to bring them about. Marxist revolutions precede, and do not follow, industrial development.'⁴⁰ Russia's Marxist revolution had been engendered by the diffusion of industrialisation and once in power it carried industrialisation out to a successful completion: this accomplishment proved it was nationalist! QED.

But, it is also evident to me – now, decades following the publication of his *opus*, during which major works on nationalism by other scholars have also appeared – that Gellner overlooked some other important things. First, perhaps forgivably at the time, he ignored the non-Russian nationalities in the USSR and *their* national ideas and ideals. Secondly, he did not consider the possibility that the Russians themselves might have other ideas, besides the official one, about their national identity. Even less did he allow the more general proposition, namely that in nationalist intellectual debates important issues were considered and then resolved as some visions of the nation established themselves as dominant. He thus refused to concede what Gramsci had acknowledged after traversing a very different intellectual journey: national identity is a subject of intranational contestation and the ideological sphere is a battlefield in the struggle for hegemony within the nation.

To admit this required recognising that nationalist ideas and nationalist thinkers *did* matter. Such an admission would have been perfectly compatible with Gellner's acceptance of nationalism's correct appreciation of what industrialisation was doing to society. Why not allow that nationalism attracted minds at least as bright as those drawn to Marxism? But while bright minds tend to disagree even when they share some basic views, their disagreements are not always a waste of time. To the best of my knowledge Gellner never said that Marxist ideas did not matter, that the controversies between Bernstein and Luxemburg,

between Lenin and Plekhanov or Martov, and so forth, did not contribute to the eventual determination of what Marxism became when in power. Why did he not concede the same importance to nationalist debates and struggles for the definition of national identities and national policies? (But then this may be wrong: when he spoke about Marx's 'preposterous eschatology', which for real believers makes Marx, Marx, he showed that his failure to do justice to nationalism was matched by the same in regard to Marxism.)

To understand Gellner's lack of attention to conflict and cooperation *within* the particular ethnic group in the process of its formation as a modern nation one needs to bear in mind the larger framework in which he viewed the nation-making process. According to Ronald Findlay, 'in common with much of nineteenth-century evolutionary type of thinking', Gellner treated states and nations as 'the collective units . . . lined up on parallel tracks with the trains leaving at successive dates'. This explains why 'any interaction between the units in either conflict or cooperation' is missing in Gellner's account.⁴¹

There is merit in Findlay's point. It is, as the Russians say, no accident that one of Gellner's last books, *Plough, Sword and Book*, was subtitled *The Structure of Human History*. What excited him was Change, the global transition from Agraria to Industria. In this regard Gellner's real precursor or *Doppelgänger* was neither List nor Marx but the man who inspired them both. Henri de Saint-Simon was a great interpreter and the prophet of industrial civilisation. (I have often wondered why that name is missing from all the books of Gellner's I have seen.) But what Saint-Simon had seen as a future Gellner knew as a recent past and the present, and thus, unlike the former, he had to explore the connection between industry and nationalism and Marxism.

In other words, Gellner had to deal with a history that was not reducible to sociology. As a historical phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe, the transition from Agraria to Industria took place as transition from the ancient empire of 'Megalomania' to new nation-states, such as 'Ruritania' and its siblings. ('Megalomania', of course, was the Habsburg monarchy, and Gellner's own Czechoslovakia was one of the 'Ruritania's'.) But he paid little attention to intranational and international relations, including situations, common in East Europe, when one and the same ethnic group was an object of rival nation-building efforts at the same time – invoking different ethnic, historic and political arguments for its cause and proposing *different* national responses to modernity.⁴² Perhaps because it fitted so ill under any broader type, Poland is also conspicuously absent on his map of nationalism: the Poles *had* their own elite even when they were under

foreign rule, their nationalism had by far anteceded industrialisation, and at no time could they be called an 'awakening nation'. (Their condition could rather be diagnosed as national insomnia.) Gellner touched upon the condition of Poland indirectly, in an essay on the Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who spent his youth under Austrian rule. (He seems to have written more on him than on all the other Poles combined. Did he detect some similarities between the Pole's and his own life path?)⁴³ His view of the monarchy, even though it had been destined, in his scheme, to be replaced by new nations, was not all negative: the empire of the Habsburgs was a 'kindergarten of nations'.⁴⁴

This was brilliant. But the empire was also something else. It contained also nations or parts of nations which on Gellner's timetable (not to mention their conduct) were long past kindergarten. But he was less ready to recognise that modernisation profoundly affected also the so-called 'old continuous nations' – that *they* too were undergoing a crisis during the transition to modernity, as they faced the task of creating *their* nation-states on the ruins of their respective imperial 'Megalomanias'.

As Findlay points out, in Gellner's view 'there could be no such a thing as "old industrial country" nationalism'. For Gellner, nationalism was 'exclusively an "ideology of delayed industrialisation" . . . associated with a movement against an alien ruling elite'.⁴⁵ But Francis Joseph I, the monarch under whose 'auspices' (*sub auspiciis imperatoris*) the young Malinowski received his degree at the University of Cracow, and whose many titles included that of Grand Duke of Cracow, had among his subjects also Adolf Hitler, and was also titled Duke of Auschwitz. When it came to actual life experience, nobody needed to tell Ernest Gellner that 'modernity' had had another side and had been the source of problems other than discontents arising from industrialisation. He recognised, as we saw, 'not only the now well-advertised essential incompleteness . . . but also a kind of amorality, one might even say a moral dullness' of science. 'It reveals a world that supplies no morals, which at best indicates possibilities and excludes some others. No closed, meaningful, reliable cosmos emerges.'⁴⁶ But when he commented on this aspect of the world – which I think he did rarely in print – he did so in a different genre from the academic. Without claiming to know sufficiently well his published works, it appears to me that his essay on Hannah Arendt, 'From Königsberg to Manhattan (or Hannah, Rahel, Martin and Elfriede, or, Thy Neighbour's *Gemeinschaft*)', presents most completely Gellner's view of that other side of history from the age of the Enlightenment to Hitler.⁴⁷ But his own system, his grand vision of global scientific and industrial transformation, did not

allow for the possibility of Auschwitz, or the Gulag, and did not claim to have an *ex-post* explanation of their occurrence.

NOTES

I would like to thank Anatoly Khazanov and John A. Hall for their encouragement and suggestions; also Patrice M. Dabrowski and Benjamin R. Frommer.

- 1 E. Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994, p. 199.
- 2 According to John A. Hall, when commenting on an earlier draft of this paper, *Legitimation of Belief* and *The Psychoanalytic Movement* and 'maybe others' are 'contained therein quite as much'.
- 3 B. O'Leary, 'Ernest Gellner's Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview', or, 'What is Living and What is Dead in Ernest Gellner's Philosophy of Nationalism', this volume, p. 46.
- 4 I ordered a copy of *Thought and Change* from Blackwell whilst in Vienna, after finding an intriguing reference to it in some weekly. (I had first heard of Ernest Gellner in 1959, when I was a newly arrived student in England, but I did not read his *Words and Things* then and did not much follow the polemic it generated.) In Vienna, I was studying the life and thought of Masaryk (see note 25 below), and had planned to spend a major part of my research leave in Prague; 21 August 1968 made it Vienna only.
- 5 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, p. 124. B. O'Leary, 'On the Nature of Nationalism: An Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 103, speaks of 'Gellner's contempt for nationalist doctrine'.
- 6 E. Gellner, 'Nationalism and Marxism', in *Encounters with Nationalism*. This review article of R. Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List*, Oxford and New York, 1988 was originally published in *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 4, 1990.
- 7 E. Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, 1965, p. 72.
- 8 Ibid., p. 74.
- 9 Ibid., p. 72. Further clarification and elaboration of his meaning was given on p. 74, and in a footnote to that page.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 122–3.
- 11 Ibid., p. 123.
- 12 Ibid., p. 117.
- 13 Ibid., p. 126.
- 14 Ibid., p. 126.
- 15 Ibid., p. 126. Italics in the original.
- 16 Ibid., p. 172. Italics in the original.
- 17 Ibid., p. 166.
- 18 Ibid., p. 178.
- 19 Ibid., p. 171.
- 20 Ibid., p. 171n.
- 21 Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 11. My emphasis.
- 22 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 172.

- 23 Ibid., p. 173.
- 24 Ibid., p. 195.
- 25 R. Szporluk, 'Masaryk in Search of Authority', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 7, 1965. I developed this interpretation more fully in *The Political Thought of Thomas G. Masaryk*, Boulder, 1981, especially in ch. 4, 'Religion as Nationalism'.
- 26 This is borrowed from P. Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, Chicago and London, 1995.
- 27 R. Szporluk, 'Pokrovsky's View of the Russian Revolution', *Slavic Review*, vol. 26, 1967 and M. N. Pokrovskii, *Russia in World History: Selected Essays*, ed. with an introduction by R. Szporluk, trans. R. Szporluk and M. A. Szporluk, Ann Arbor, 1970.
- 28 To my knowledge, the many books with Marxism (or socialism) and nationalism in the title are without exception about what Marxists have had to say about nationalism. R. Munck's *The Difficult Dialogue: Marxism and Nationalism*, London, 1986 is a monologue.
- 29 I had heard of List before reading Gellner, of course, and the history of nationalism was not a *tabula rasa* for me when, with Gellner's guidebook in hand, I started my journey of discovery. But Gellner supplied the instrument that permitted me to locate List as the central figure in the nationalist constellation. I do not know of works in which comparisons are drawn between any aspects of Gellner's and List's thought – with the exception of Ugo Pagano, who argues ('Can Economists Explain Nationalism?', in A. Breton, G. Galeotti, P. Salmon and R. Wintrobe, eds., *Nationalism and Rationality*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 175n) that List had 'anticipated some considerations on the role of the nation in the organisation of the division of labour that have been later independently developed by Gellner'.
- 30 My search for a 'generic' nationalism had obviously been stimulated by Anthony Smith's argument on nationalism's 'core doctrine'. On this, see A. D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, New York, 1973, pp. 20–4 and Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism*, pp. 93–4.
- 31 H. J. Laski, 'Introduction', to K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, New York, 1982, pp. 50–1.
- 32 Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 199. Italics in the original.
- 33 Ibid., p. 195. Italics in the original.
- 34 D. Senghaas, 'Friedrich List und die neue internationale ökonomische Ordnung', *Leviathan*, vol. 3, 1975, p. 297, quoted in Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism*, p. 274n. Senghaas may be going a bit too far but there is a trace of Gellner here: List and Mao alike were concerned with late modernisers/industrialisers. Wasn't List's idea of 'the world city' (his characterisation of England) that was exploiting a 'global village' Maoist? (Or should we call Mao a late Listian?).
- 35 'Preface' to *Communism and Nationalism*, (1991, pbk.) p. vi. O'Leary, 'Ernest Gellner's Diagnoses of Nationalism', p. 87, thinks it 'strange' that Anderson 'fails to classify Weber as a nationalist grand thinker, stranger still that Rousseau, Burke, J. S. Mill and Friedrich List are not seen as nationalist grand thinkers . . .'. In a recent article on Marx, List and Smith ('The World of Nations: Some Economic Implications of Nationalism', *Critical Review*,

- vol. 9, 1995) Liah Greenfeld adds more names. While Greenfeld restates the interpretation of Marx given in her *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), see pp. 577–9 and 581–2 of the new article for her view of nationalism in Adam Smith.
- 36 J. Lester, *Modern Tsars and Princes: The Struggle for Hegemony in Russia*, London, 1995, pp. 7–8.
- 37 Gramsci's well-known and often-cited 'Marxist' analyses of the October 1917 revolution in Russia and its aftermath show that the Bolshevik seizure of power took place in a country in which nation-building had not yet taken place. See Lester, *Modern Tsars and Princes*, pp. 19–21 and Walter Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*, Berkeley, 1980, p. 221, whom Lester cites. R. Bellamy, *Modern Italian Social Theory: Ideology and Politics from Pareto to the Present*, Oxford, 1987 writes on Gramsci's place in the history of Italian nation-formation.
- 38 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 125.
- 39 Ibid., p. 135.
- 40 Ibid., p. 137.
- 41 R. Findlay, 'Notes on the Political Economy of Nationalism', in Breton, Galeotti, Salmon and Wintrobe, *Nationalism and Rationality*, p. 149.
- 42 To take an extreme example: the 'Ruthenes' of Hungary before 1918 were being told at various times that, on the basis of certain 'objective' criteria, they were Hungarian, or Ukrainian, or Russian, or Ruthene or Austrian. (Because a supra-ethnic, 'imperial-Austrian' national identity was not created, or did not survive for long, we should not forget that there were times when serious attempts were being made to promote such a national identity. On this matter, see W. Leitsch, 'East Europeans Studying History in Vienna (1855–1918)', in D. Deletant and H. Hanak, eds., *Historians as Nation-Builders: Central and South-East Europe*, London, 1988.) In such situations, choosing one nationality against others implied making choices in politics, in attitudes towards 'industrialisation', and so forth, because some nationalisms were more 'scientific' and others more 'Utopian'.
- 43 [Editorial Note: Roman Szporluk's guess can now be answered positively: see E. Gellner, *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski, and the Hapsburg Dilemma*, Cambridge, 1998.]
- 44 Gellner, 'A Non-nationalist Pole', *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 78.
- 45 Findlay, 'Notes on the Political Economy of Nationalism', p. 148.
- 46 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, pp. 122–3.
- 47 E. Gellner, *Culture, Identity and Politics*, Cambridge, 1987.

2 Ernest Gellner's diagnoses of nationalism: a critical overview, or, what is living and what is dead in Ernest Gellner's philosophy of nationalism?

Brendan O'Leary

The theoretical problem is to separate the quite spurious 'national' and 'natural' justifications and explanations of nationalism, from the genuine, time- and context-bound roots of it. (Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*)¹

Nationalism, so far the most potent principle of political legitimacy in the modern world, holds that the nation should be collectively and freely institutionally expressed, and ruled by its conationals. In numerous essays and four books, Ernest Gellner, an exceptionally brilliant, fluent, prolific and witty philosopher, anthropologist, sociologist and multilingual polymath provided lucid and persuasive accounts of why nationalism is a necessary component of modernity, and why it is its typical and major principle of political legitimacy.² This chapter seeks to provide a preliminary posthumous analysis of Gellner's legacy. It needs little justification since all worthwhile subsequent writing and research on nationalism will benefit from Gellner's work, whether they build on his presumptions or dissent from them.

Gellner's arguments about nationalism disturbed both conservatives and secular rationalists. The reasons are not hard to find. Nationalism relegates religion to a secondary, and even inessential, principle of a stable and legitimate political order and thus challenges traditionalist conservatism. Nationalism also suggests that law, reason, utility, material prosperity and social justice are secondary principles in establishing a stable and legitimate political order, and has therefore provoked persistent condemnation from rationalist liberals and socialists for some two hundred years.³ Gellner's writings on nationalism were a sustained criticism of one very pious Oakeshottian conservative, the late Elie Kedourie; but they were also intended to reassure rationalist

liberals (including social democrats). One question is whether he provided the right reassurances.

This chapter scrutinises the core arguments of Gellner's *Thought and Change*, *Nations and Nationalism* and *Nationalism*. His other writings on the subject are treated in parentheses. This textual focus is not difficult to justify. *Nations and Nationalism* was Gellner's most elaborate statement on the subject; and was largely a rich expansion of the themes first sketched in *Thought and Change*. His last work, *Nationalism*, completed but not published in the summer before his death, does not repudiate the key propositions advanced in *Nations and Nationalism*. However, it does contain some tacit and important qualifications, as well as elaborations, of his views – as did his *Encounters with Nationalism*, a late collection of essays and reviews, and as did his 'Reply to Critics', who included this author, in *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, edited by J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie. Benefiting from these late writings this chapter will close by answering the question in the subtitle above.

Thought and Change

Gellner's first extensive statement on nationalism asserted that both liberalism and Marxism got it wrong.⁴ Most liberals assumed nationalism was a doomed legacy of outmoded irrationalism, superstition and savagery; most Marxists thought it was a necessary but temporary stage in the path to global socialism. They were both a touch previous in their assumptions. Indeed, while Marxism, as an organised ideocracy, is now fast heading towards its grave and political liberalism is wracked with self-doubt, nationalism seems in vigorous and rude health.

Marxism and liberalism were not wrong, however, because two other popular theories are right, namely 'Dark Gods theory' and 'naturalness theory'. Dark Gods theory has it that nationalism is the inevitable expression of the atavistic, irrationalist passions that motivate human beings – an original sin.⁵ Gellner rejected this idea as 'utter nonsense', even when it included sensible premises like the importance of belonging, identification and exclusion in human behaviour.⁶ That human beings have always been organised in groups with loyalty-instilling capacities must be distinguished from their more recent and historically novel propensity to identify with the modern anonymous nation. Naturalness theory has it that people have nationalities in the way that they have eyebrows and blood groups; that it is natural that those who share a nationality should wish to share the same political unit; and this is a good thing. Gellner, by contrast, insisted on the contingency of

nationalism. It is, however, underpinned by social foundations: 'there are undoubtedly overwhelmingly powerful factors in the *contemporary and recent social conditions* which *do* make these [nationalist] suppositions . . . natural and probably irresistible'.⁷

Gellner rejected naturalism theory and Kedourie's idealist argument that nationalism is the result of a world-historical intellectual error: an accidental and bad set of ideas, loosely derived from Kant, and disseminated by philosophical incompetents with disastrous consequences.⁸ Contrary to the assumption of the naturalism of nationalism, the typical political units for most of history were not animated by nationalist principles – which did not feature in small tribal or village units, city states, feudal entities, dynastic empires or in the loose moral empires of a shared religion. Premodern political units rarely, and only accidentally, coincided with those of 'nations', 'i.e. linguistic and cultural boundaries'.⁹ Within them the nationality of the governors was not a fundamental issue of legitimacy; the governed simply asked of their rulers whether they were 'less corrupt and grasping, or more just and merciful' than their predecessors.¹⁰ Now, to use the nouns of social anthropologists, the relationships between 'structure' and 'culture' are utterly changed. Nationalism is a principle of political legitimacy for us precisely because culture has become so important that it 'does not so much underline structure: rather, it replaces it'.¹¹

Once social 'structure', i.e., social roles, were tightly circumscribed, nested and ascriptive, and for this reason shared linguistic and cultural communication was not essential to the preservation of social order and effective interaction; but now social roles are open and changeable, and 'those who communicate must speak the same language, in some sense or other', and the classification of people by 'culture' is classification by 'nationality'.¹² The negative social foundations of nationalism are thus explained by the erosion of rigid social structures. A shared culture has become much more important in creating and sustaining social cohesion than it was. The positive social foundations are explained by economies of scale in the production of literate citizens by state-sponsored educational systems. The minimal political unit, formerly circumscribed by defence or economic requirements, 'is now determined by the preconditions of education',¹³ which means it must be larger than the family, village and city-state. Moreover, the relevant educational system must operate 'in some medium, some language (both in the literal and the extended sense)'.¹⁴ Literacy, an essential aspect of a normally socialised modern human being, is generated by state-sponsored educational systems, which are multiply facilitated if the idioms of the home and the school are the same. In turn, modern

educational systems explain the cultural identifications that move so many human beings. These identifications are, however, historically recent and novel, and are not (authentically?) nostalgic: modern people 'do not in general become nationalists from sentiment or sentimentality, atavistic or not, well-based or myth-founded: they become nationalists through genuine, objective, practical necessity, however obscurely recognised'.¹⁵

Thought and Change provided a schematic account of why modern loyalty-invoking units are not very small and local, like tribal, feudal or classical units: functioning educational systems have to operate on a broader scale; and of why they are cultural units: a shared culture is an indispensable feature of a modern social system. Gellner went one stage further and asked why these cultural units tend to be smaller than those of agrarian religious civilisations (e.g., Christendom or Islam), even though these wider civilisations could have furnished a shared language or culture. In other words, he sought to explain the divisiveness of nationalism – why it fractures wider political entities, such as the empires of the *ancien régime*. His answer was that 'nationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion'.¹⁶

The uneven impact of successive waves of industrialisation and modernisation generate sharp stratifications between peoples that are not hallowed by custom, that are not easily politically regulated, but that are remediable through 'national' secession. Intelligentsias that experience blocked social mobility, and who share cultural traits with proletarians experiencing multiple humiliations in urban environments, and discrimination in labour markets, provide the personnel for nationalist movements. They seek to establish their own nation-states if they presently have no feasible prospect of being fairly treated or assimilated – which Gellner seemed to treat as the same thing. These new nation-states will be modern, or at least they will be structured as such, even if in ideological self-deception the intelligentsia romantically believe themselves to be restoring their old nation. They will talk like *narodniks* but act as westernisers.¹⁷ Contrary to the wisdom of historiographers, poets and philologists: 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if . . . these are purely negative.'¹⁸

These are the core propositions of *Thought and Change*. Gellner anticipated criticisms by clarifying and qualifying his theses in three ways.

First, he recognised that 'some pre-modern loyalty-evoking political

units', notably the strong dynastic states of the Atlantic seaboard of Europe, embraced populations and territories 'similar to those which one would expect to be produced by modern nationalism', and posed the question 'do these rather different phenomena, so close to "nationalism", contradict the theory?'¹⁹ In a dense and slightly confusing passage, he suggested three possible theory-saving options:

- (i) he could accept that the modernising forces generating nationalism have been operating in Europe at least since the Reformation, or
- (ii) he could refuse to classify these phenomena with modern nationalism (which left open the possibility of a non-modern nationalism?), or
- (iii) he could accept that a pre-modern shared culture, including membership of a dynastic state whose boundaries roughly overlapped with a language, might be a factor, amongst others, in inclining people in the direction of particular bedfellows for the construction of a modern nation.

Gellner wanted to protect his theory from the charge that it is tautological and/or unfalsifiable, and to separate the modern phenomena of nationalism – 'citizenship through education, group *differentiae* in terms of the language of instruction, and unmediated membership of mass co-cultural societies' – from other superficially related premodern phenomena, 'even if a few of those others also make a banner of language-and-culture'.²⁰ The latter are the religious and linguistic imperialisms of some ethnically based pre-modern dynasties.

Secondly, Gellner insisted that 'it is impossible to predict with confidence, prior to the crystallisation of this or that nationalism, just which "nations" will emerge'.²¹ Cultural differences are widespread and real, and injustices, exploitation, humiliation are equally so, but it isn't easy to tell just which identifications and oppositions will emerge to produce specific nationalisms. This predictive weakness may make his theory look suspiciously untestable, but he left the impression that it can be tested in other ways, and that it has the merit of rejecting two alternative theses:

- (i) that all pre-modern cultures will inevitably generate nations, and
- (ii) that some pre-modern cultures are far more likely than others to form the raw materials of modern nations.²²

Thirdly, he recognised that nationalism is not an all-powerful or all-pervasive political force. There are exceptional zones that have resisted the norm of 'one culture, one polity': Switzerland, Belgium and Canada. The last two cases did not concern him because the weaknesses

of Belgian and Canadian nationalism confirm the assumption that bilingual or multilingual states will be less nationally stable than those that are monolingual. Switzerland is more embarrassing: Gellner described it as 'a traditional society which has weathered modernisation' so it can tolerate linguistic pluralism. Also, there 'is a sense in which various kinds of Swiss "speak the same language" even if they do not do so in a literal sense';²³ a curious argument. Gellner additionally recognised that just as nationalisms can be obstructed or modified 'by special circumstances', so they can also be facilitated by power politics which may manipulate nationalist ideas, or by the dissemination of political norms which are infused with nationalist assumptions. He mentions what for him was a homely example, the formation of the Czech national state which resulted from a coalition between Czech intellectuals and western foreign policy.

He closed his first discussion of nationalism by briefly evaluating it. He wasted no time condemning nationalist chauvinism in the standard manner of liberal cosmopolitans. Instead he considered that the 'main boon which nationalism has conferred on mankind . . . may well be political'. The benefits are not merely psychological though these are important – the dignity and self-respect arising from the elimination of 'second- or *n*th class citizenship' and the joys liberated peoples enjoy from not being 'bossed and knocked about by others with whom they cannot or are not allowed to identify', and being bossed and knocked about by 'their own' people instead.²⁴

The major political benefit that nationalism has given to humanity is that it has preserved pluralism in the world, and thereby preserved political liberalism. This conclusion was reached by considering the most feasible counterfactual alternatives to a world of nation-states: a world government or a world in which the major empires of the late nineteenth century had been preserved. In both these situations, Gellner reasoned that liberalism would have been obliterated. A world government passing through the second, global phase of industrialisation would have resembled South Africa under apartheid, a coercively organised hierarchy of races and ethnic communities; while a world of industrialising empires would have been wracked by ferocious battles over citizenship fought between the metropolitan cores and the more numerous and poorer peoples of the territories they had conquered. The ironic message was that nationalism, unintentionally, preserved the miracle of western liberalism because it inhibited global despotism and helped destroy the world of the European empires. For this reason, if no others, Gellner thought that liberals should take comfort from the benign repercussions of nationalism.

Nations and nationalism

The theory articulated in *Thought and Change* went largely unnoticed in the writings of political scientists, political sociologists and political philosophers – perhaps because it was buried within a wider discussion of philosophy and social change, and perhaps because it was patronisingly classed as a provincial 'English' variation on the themes of the modernisation school ascendant in American social science.²⁵ *Thought and Change* was known, if at all, for sharply stating the conventional wisdom of the emergent affluent society of the late 1950s and the early 1960s: a modern state has one major principle of political legitimacy, the GNP must increase. The other major principle, that the state must be a nation-state, was less remarked upon.

In complete contrast, Gellner's book-length statement, wittily expounded nearly two decades later in *Nations and Nationalism*, was very well received amongst political scientists and political sociologists who study nationalism, and those who do not, and rightly so.²⁶ *Nations and Nationalism* was at once more sociologically ambitious than *Thought and Change*, bearing the imprint of Gellner's dialogues with Durkheim and Marx; more conceptually novel, displaying the value-added of his theory of industrial society; and more empirically promising, as it set out a typology of nationalism-inducing and nationalism-thwarting situations.

There are, however, fundamental continuities between *Thought and Change* and *Nations and Nationalism*. First, Gellner continued to reject four erroneous theories of nationalism:

- (i) the nationalist theory that it is natural, self-evident and self-generating;
- (ii) Kedourie's theory that it is a contingent consequence of 'ideas which did not need ever to be formulated, and appeared by a regrettable accident', and is inessential to the life of industrial societies;²⁷
- (iii) Marxism's 'Wrong Address Theory': the liberationist message intended for classes was 'by some terrible postal error' delivered instead to nations; and
- (iv) 'Dark Gods Theory'.²⁸

The thesis is restated that nationalism is an essential component of modernisation, of the transition from agrarian to industrial society – the latter requiring a state that can produce and be maintained by one common, literate and accessible culture. The vocabulary in which this idea is expressed has, however, become part of a wider philosophy of history. Nationalism is now defined as:

the general imposition of a *high culture* on society, where previously *low cultures* had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases the totality, of the population. It means the general diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of a reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is the establishment of an anonymous impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomised individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of the previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves.²⁹

The preconditions (and maintenance) of nationalism include widespread or universal literacy, and a society committed to economic growth through its formal commitment to social mobility – both horizontal and vertical. Industrial society requires effective and widespread context-free communication through a common medium, a ‘high culture’. Communicative media are placed centre-stage in generating and maintaining nationalism, but the argument stresses the functionality of a shared culture for the effective operation of modern work organisations and bureaucracies.³⁰

In *Nations and Nationalism* nationalism is still seen as distinctive to modernity, but it is now part of a philosophy of history that distinguishes three phases in human progress, the pre-agrarian, the agrarian, and the industrial. In a reworked and non-teleological form of historical materialism, Gellner maintained that each of the three key phases is associated with characteristic modes of production, coercion, culture and cognition.³¹ Nationalism is distinctive to industrial society, and intimately connected to its mode of production. It would have made no sense in tribal societies because such societies were and are stateless, and the ambition to unify the national culture and the state would therefore have been incoherent. In the ‘agro-literate’ polity or the agrarian empire, nationalism also would have made no sense, because such empires did not need their elites and peasant masses to share a common culture. In the industrial society, by contrast, nationalism is an essential part of the cultural atmosphere – its ‘exo-socialisation’, i.e., educating persons in a culture that mostly frees them from familial and corporate ties, is a *sine qua non* of social cohesion. To these suppositions Gellner added a modified Durkheimian account of normative orientations through the ages. Whereas tribal societies worship themselves indirectly (as spirits), agrarian societies worship their rulers directly or indirectly (in monotheistic religions), while in industrial societies the participants directly worship themselves (nationalism). Nationalism is the functional equivalent for industrial societies of the world religions of agro-literate polities, and of the animistic cults of pre-agrarian bands, nomads and tribes.

Table 2.1 *Gellner's typology of the inducing and thwarting of nationalism*

Type	P	-P	
	-E	-E	
1	A	B	typical prenatalist situation
2	A	A	untypical prenatalist situation
	E	-E	
3	A	A	early industrialism without ethnic catalyst
4	A	B	<i>ethnic nationalism</i>
	E	E	
5	A	A	<i>mature homogeneous industrialism (established nationalism)</i>
6	A	B	<i>classical liberal western nationalism</i>
	-E	E	
7	A	B	<i>diaspora or 'middle-man' nationalism</i>
8	A	A	Decembrist revolutionary, but not nationalist, situation

Source: adapted from *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 94. (Nationalism-generating situations in italics)

Gellner also provided a typology of 'nationalism-inducing and nationalism-thwarting situations' which considerably amplified the crude 'model' sketched in *Thought and Change*.³² There are three dimensions to the typology. Gellner differentiated

- (i) power-holders from the rest: P and -P;
- (ii) those who have had access to a modern education or a viable modern high culture from those who have not: E and -E; and
- (iii) a polity in which the power-holders and the rest, and the educated or uneducated, share a homogeneous culture (A and A), from one in which they do not (A and B).

These three dimensions generate the eight possibilities in Table 2.1: a line containing A and A represents a culturally homogeneous territory, whereas a line containing A and B represents a bicultural territory.

The typology suggests four situations in which nationalism will be engendered, and four in which it will be absent or thwarted. Consider the latter. In types 1 and 2, where no one, power-holder or non-power-holder, has access to modern education, nationalism cannot exist, *ex hypothesi*. The typical agro-literate polity, type 1, is not culturally homogeneous, although a few such specimens might exist, type 2.³³ In the third scenario, type 8, the old ruling class of the agro-literate polity retains power, and is challenged by a politically weak, but educationally and economically privileged intelligentsia – a 'Decembrist' revolutionary situation, type 8. No *nationalist* problems and conflicts arise here, said

Gellner.³⁴ In the last case, type 3, early industrialism within a culturally homogeneous society, the power-holders are differentiated from the non-power-holders by the former's monopoly of modern high culture. This situation gives rise to class conflict, which may be moderately ferocious, but without the catalyst of ethnic differentiation is unlikely to be especially politically destabilising – contrary to the assumptions of classical Marxism.

The typology implies, by contrast, four nationalism-engendering situations:

- (i) *satisfied nationalism*, type 5, characteristic of mature homogeneous industrialism in which the power-holders and non-power-holders share access to the same style of modern education, and are co-cultural conationals – in which case we can expect no [internal] nationalist conflicts and problems;³⁵
- (ii) *classical liberal nationalism*, type 6, characteristic of territories in which some have power and others do not, and this difference correlates with cultural differences, even though the relevant persons are both educationally equipped for modern society – a situation, Gellner suggested, which historically corresponds to the 'unification nationalisms' of nineteenth-century Italy and Germany;³⁶
- (iii) *ethnic nationalism*, type 4, characteristic of territories in which power-holders have privileged access to the central high culture, which is their own, while the powerless are also the educationally deprived, sunk in low cultures. The small intelligentsias of the powerless spearhead efforts to make their low culture into a high culture – a situation, Gellner suggested, which historically corresponds to the nationalisms of Eastern, Slavic and Balkan Europe;³⁷ and
- (iv) *Diaspora nationalism*, type 7, better described as 'middle-man' nationalism, arises in societies in transit from Agraria to Industria, and is characteristic of groups that historically had access to commercial and educational high culture, often through their caste-roles as pariah 'middle-men' in the agrarian economy. These groups are economically better equipped for modernisation than those who historically lacked access to a high culture. They are also ethnically distinctive, but lack political and military power – and so are likely candidates for genocidal assaults or mass expulsions as economic competition grows within a modernising and nationalising polity; and in consequence, are likely to generate 'diaspora nationalisms'. Gellner had in mind the Jews, Greeks, Armenians,

overseas Indians in Africa, overseas Chinese in south-east Asia and the Ibos of Nigeria.³⁸

This typology rested on a theory of social conflict, explicitly directed against Marxist propositions. Conflict is predicted to occur 'where "ethnic" (cultural or other diacritical marks) are visible and accentuate the differences in educational access and power', and above all, when they inhibit the 'free flow of personnel across the loose lines of social stratification'.³⁹ In short: blockages in social mobility, when tied to ethnic or other diacritical markers, are at the heart of nationalist conflicts. Exclusionary control of cultural capital, or usurpationary attempts to capture it, rather than exclusionary control of propertied capital or usurpationary attempts to expropriate it, give rise to vigorous social wars, and nationalist conflicts.

This theory of conflict is tied, in deliberately provocative language, to a discussion of 'social entropy' and equality in industrial society.⁴⁰ An ideal-typical industrial society should have a systematic randomness, and thus be 'entropic': social origins should not matter in determining placement in the occupational and prestige hierarchies, and in this sense industrial society should be egalitarian. 'Entropy-resistant traits' constitute a very serious problem. They 'have a marked tendency *not* to become, even with the passage of time . . . evenly dispersed throughout the entire society'.⁴¹ Such traits can be invented, Gellner suggests, to apply to a particular class of persons, but: 'the entropy-resistance of a concept, in this sense, will normally be of interest *only if it is a reasonably natural notion*, one already in use in the society in question, rather than artificially invented for the present purpose'.⁴²

He then discussed a range of entropy-resistant traits, physical or genetically transmitted, and religious-cultural habits which are often just as resistant to the industrial 'melting pot'.

This illuminating discussion sits uneasily with the arguments in *Thought and Change* which had suggested the almost plasticine materials with which modern nation-builders could 'invent' their nations and nation-states. Nevertheless Gellner restated his conviction that we cannot predict which cultures will be blessed with success in their efforts to become nationalist cultures with political roofs.⁴³ He went further, and suggested that the 'weakness of nationalism' is much greater than it might appear at first glance.⁴⁴ The number of languages in the world may be some 8,000, and the number of other cultural or historical materials which might be used to mark potential national cultures is even higher. Yet there are at present about 200 states in existence – many of which are postage-stamp states that cannot be counted as

aspirant nation-states. The potential number of nation-states may be higher given the existence of numerous unsatisfied nationalisms which may succeed, one day. Yet the ratio of effective to potential nationalisms is a small one – much less than nationalists might imagine. The implication is that a blind, unpredictable and evolutionary process selects which nationalisms shall succeed, and which shall not. There is an apparent paradox here. Nationalism is a very strong force in the modern world; in most cases it prevails, and it does set the standard for what constitutes a modern state. However, very few potential nations are strong enough to make it to modernity and statehood.

Reviewing and reformulating the theory in *Thought and Change* and *Nations and Nationalism*

Gellner's theory has been subject to diffuse criticisms, which I have grouped into five principal categories. The next section addresses how robust the theory remains in the light of these criticisms, and how it might be reformulated.

The philosophical functionalism of the argument

Both in *Thought and Change* and *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner's argument seems to be explicitly, brazenly and unashamedly, functionalist. Functionalism is characteristic of historical materialism,⁴⁵ and forgivable in a social anthropologist, but less easily accepted by social scientists committed to causal explanations or methodological individualism. It is ironic that it is Perry Anderson, grandfather of the Marxist New Left, who complains that the 'most arresting feature of [Gellner's] theory of nationalism is its single-minded economic functionalism'.⁴⁶ He cites in support a passage from the conclusion to *Nations and Nationalism*:

So the economy needs both the new type of central culture and the central state; the culture needs the state; and the state probably needs the homogeneous cultural branding of its flock . . . In brief, the mutual relationship of a modern culture and state is something quite new, and springs, inevitably, from the requirements of a modern economy.⁴⁷

There is no denying the functionalist cast of these arguments. If one is sceptical about functionalist arguments in the social sciences the important question is whether Gellner's case can be reconstructed in a non-functionalist manner. It is clear that for him nationalism is explained by its beneficial consequences (functionality) for modern society.⁴⁸ A strongly functionalist version of his argument would go as follows:⁴⁹

- (i) Nationalism is an *effect* of modernisation.
- (ii) Nationalism is *beneficial* for modernising states – because a highly specialised division of labour requires a unified high culture, which is underpinned by a highly developed and specialised educational system.
- (iii) Nationalism (in Gellner's sense) is *unintended* by the actors producing modernisation.
- (iv) The causal relationship between nationalism and modernisation is not recognised by the agents operating in modernising societies.
- (v) Nationalism functionally maintains modernisation by a feedback loop operating through the actions of modernising states.

Formulated in this way Gellner's argument would display the vices of functionalist reasoning – in which events and processes occur wholly, or largely, beyond the understanding of human agents, in which consequences precede causes, and in which suspicions arise that supra-individual and holistic entities are tacitly invoked to do explanatory work.

One obvious way to reconstruct Gellner's argument is to deny (iv), and replace a functionalist with a 'filter explanation'.⁵⁰ It would take the following form: modernising elites believe that nationalism is essential for modernisation, precisely because it breaks down barriers to modernising success. Nation-building nationalists *recognise* the beneficial consequences of nationalism, and this fact helps explain its political diffusion. Nationalists believe that nation-building will break down traditionalist or religious inhibitions on economic growth, and political blockages – such as imperialist domination or caste-like barriers that prevent the liberation of productive economic, political and cultural energies.⁵¹ It is not at all difficult to find wide-ranging support for this filter explanation. Prospective nation-builders, like Pádraig Pearse and Jawaharlal Nehru, embraced nationalism because they believed it would liberate the Irish and Indian nations, and free them to develop their educational, economic and political systems, and the Japanese reformers of the Meiji restoration deliberately imitated features of German and French nation-building in their efforts to build a modern Japan. The idea that nationalism could lead to a renewal – or revival – of social energies was implicit in the advice rendered by Rousseau in *The Government of Poland*, which commended a citizen's army and a comprehensive state-controlled education system.⁵²

Although this 'filter explanation' would avoid strong functionalism, it remains vulnerable on two grounds. First, the 'real' filter in explaining the actions of the first nation-builders and nationalists may have been

the perception that nationalism was essential for military success or geopolitical security, rather than economic success. Therefore the historical relationship between nationalism, modernisation and industrialisation may have been more indirect and unintended than Gellnerian theory suggests⁵³ – and it may be that Gellner's theory accounts better for the maintenance of nationalism than it does for its origins.

Secondly, the universal truth of the 'filter explanation' may be doubted, that is nationalism may not be essential for modernisation. Communist regimes in the USSR, China and North Korea did not primarily rely – although one might argue that they did rely tacitly (remember Stalin's 'socialism in one country') – on nationalism for 'first-stage industrialisation', although one might argue, correctly, that none of them are exemplars of modernising success. There have been some highly successful industrial city-states, for example Hong Kong, which have not required nationalism to travel to their version of modernity. And, a point to which I shall return, Gellner himself appeared to suggest that Islam, unlike the other world religions, might be capable of performing modernisation's necessary support functions – thereby making nationalism inessential for the breakthrough to modernisation.⁵⁴

These qualifications, do not, however, imperil the general thesis that nationalism is beneficial, and even possibly optimal, for modernisation, providing we accept the qualification that this relationship is widely recognised by nationalists themselves. It is also tempting to draw a distinction between explaining the genesis of nationalism and explaining its diffusion. The *genesis* of nationalism may have been at least partially autonomous of modernisation and industrialisation, and its functionally beneficial consequences may only have been partially related to modern economic development. The *diffusion* of nationalism, its attractiveness to those who followed the first modern nations, may be more centrally linked to their belief in a Gellnerian-style filter explanation. Rather than being foolish victims of the contagious bad ideas, as Kedourie implied, nationalists believed that nationalism would assist modernisation in the way that it had the British, the Americans, the French and the Germans.⁵⁵ In short, it is possible to argue for the core Gellnerian thesis that there is a functional relationship between nationalism and modernity, but it does not have to be expressed in a strongly functionalist form.

The place of nationalism in a philosophy of history

Delineating stages in history is partly a matter of taste. Some completely reject the idea of a philosophy of history; those who do not may dislike

three-stage tales of human progress; and some prefer explicitly evolutionary to non-teleological and episodic conceptions of the transitions between stages in human history. My position, in this chapter, is that of a critical supporter of Gellner's philosophy of history. But within that philosophy there are three potentially embarrassing questions about nations and nationalism:

- (i) could there have been nations before nationalism, and, if so, can Gellner's theory cope with such anomalies?
- (ii) could there have been nations and nationalism before industrialism, and if so, can Gellner's theory be reformulated to cope with this difficulty?
- (iii) can there be post-industrial national conflicts, and if so, how do they fit in with Gellner's general theory?

Nations before nationalism, and nationalism before industrialism?

Gellner's is a strongly 'modernist' theory. He informed his readers that nationalism only became an historical possibility from approximately the eighteenth century – indeed he cast the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the role of the first alienated intelligentsia, 'the westernisers of the west'. Nationalism invents nations, rather than the other way around.

Yet a considerable number of specialists on nationalism, implicitly or explicitly, reject the stark modernism of Gellner. Thus historians write of the 'old continuous European nations', and compare them with the 'new nations' of eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world.⁵⁶ Historical sociologists write in a similar vein: John Armstrong's *Nations before Nationalism* and Anthony Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* are sustained criticisms of the (strong) modernist interpretation of nations and nationalism.⁵⁷ Smith, for example, argues that ethnic culture and social organisation were persistent, intensive, widespread and salient in much of Euro-Asian antiquity and the medieval era. Moreover, particular kingdoms were often based on ethnic communities: for Smith, nationalism represents 'the transformation and universalisation of a pre-existing political and social norm'.⁵⁸ Similarly, Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism* treats sixteenth-century England as the first nation and the site of the first nationalism, and her researches on England, France, Russia, Germany and America extend back to the Renaissance.⁵⁹

Can one defend Gellner's theory against these arguments? He anticipated one possible line of defence in *Thought and Change*: the forces of modernisation have been at work since the Reformation, or before. This reply is not, however, convincing; it seems to operate against the

placement of nationalism within Gellner's triadic stages of history, and to suggest that Protestantism and vernacular print languages were more important than industrialism in spawning nationalism. Yet it seems empirically sensible to concede that 'national consciousness' developed in some territories before full-scale industrialisation: consider just the colonies of Latin America, North America and Ireland.⁶⁰ Moreover, it seems sensible to concede that protonationalist ideas existed, at least in embryonic forms, in commercial societies like early modern England and Holland.⁶¹ This leaves Gellner with his other, and theoretically more consistent, line of defence – to refuse to classify the phenomena of pre-eighteenth-century ethnic or national consciousness with modern nationalism or nationalism proper. There are good grounds for doing so.

Many of the authors who survey the rise of 'nations' before nationalism are conceptually confused;⁶² and, secondly, many of them concede that nationalism 'both as an ideology and movement, is a wholly modern phenomenon'.⁶³ Gellner's theory can not be embarrassed by the existence of the word nation in pre-eighteenth-century England, or indeed by the presence of national consciousness, especially of a religiously mediated kind. It would be embarrassed by explicitly nationalist doctrines of legitimacy, nationalist programmes and nationalist movements flourishing in the time of Henry VII. Most of those who discuss 'nations' before 'nationalism' are in fact establishing the existence of cultural precedents, and ethnic and other materials subsequently shaped and re-shaped by nation-builders. But it is a conceptual confusion, or so at least a Gellnerian must insist, to assimilate the materials upon which nationalists will draw, to nationalism itself. Consciousness of a shared cultural, religious or territorial identity is not of the essence of nationalism. Its essence is a theory of political legitimacy: the governed must be conational with and representative of the governed. That said, the work of Armstrong, Smith and Greenfeld may be used to qualify Gellner's work in one respect: they furnish evidence that the first nations were *innovations* rather than *inventions*, and that predicting or 'retrodicting' which nations would emerge in the age of nationalism may be less difficult than Gellner declared.

Most of those who have written of nations before the age of nationalism, whether they be historians like Hugh Seton-Watson, or historical sociologists, like Armstrong, Greenfeld and Smith, concede the modernity of nationalist doctrine and political programmes. They recognise that the writers of the Enlightenment and their romantic critics, and the phenomena of the American and French revolutions, produced an explicitly novel set of doctrines, nationalism proper. Gellnerian theory can thus, in principle, be saved: there may have been talk about nations,

and indeed national consciousness, before nationalism, but, so to speak, there was no nationalist talk of nations and national consciousness before nationalism. That said, Gellner was left the problem that the historical evidence does not suggest a neat causal or functional relationship between industrialisation and the onset of nationalism, and I will consider later how he sought to manage this little 'local difficulty' in his last writings.

Nationalism after industrialisation?

Another possible embarrassment for Gellner's philosophy of history would be evidence of revived or new nationalist secessionist movements emerging within a fully industrialised environment, after the 'great transformation' from Agraria to Industria has been completed. Do the phenomena of 'ethnic revivalism', 'ethnonationalism', 'mininationalism' or 'neonationalism' as they have been variously and sometimes misleadingly labelled, both in advanced OECD countries and among and within the post-Soviet successor states, constitute a problem for Gellner's theory?

It is not transparent how exactly such evidence would refute the theory. The evidence would be consistent with some of the propositions in *Nations and Nationalism*, where Gellner differentiated between early nationalism and late nationalism – which occur respectively in the conditions of early and mature industrialisation.⁶⁴ In early industrialism there is 'a terrible difference' between the life-chances of the well-off and the starving poor, whereas in late industrialism there is not such acute objective social discontent – and, in consequence, although a late nationalism may be motivated by blocked social mobility and inequality, it will, on materialist assumptions, presumably, be less virulent. In short, on these premises, Gellner's theory would be most embarrassed by violently virulent nationalist secessionisms within advanced 'Industrias', not by the existence of such movements themselves, which, after all, might be occasioned by 'counter-entropic' traits.

Gellner is presumed by many to have argued that the world is drifting towards advanced industrialised homogeneous nation-states in which secessionisms are less likely – and that is one possible reading of his *obiter dicta* on the 'future of nationalism'.⁶⁵ A moment's reflection, however, should make clear that an industrialised world characterised by divergent demographic growth rates across culturally differentiated communities, displaying counter-entropic traits of whatever kind, and large-scale migratory movements, in which migrants can retain their original high culture (if they have one), is not going to be free either of nationalist secessionist possibilities, or of 'integral nationalisms'. Conse-

quently, even if Gellner can be convicted of the view that nationalist secessionist movements are less likely after industrialisation – a view for which I think there is no explicit textual warrant – his theory itself is not deductively linked to such a view.

Another line of defence would be that the scale of virulent nationalist secessionism, or nationalist irredentism, at least within the OECD, has not been very substantial. There are no significant secessionist or irredentist movements in Austria, Australia, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland or the USA. There are significant 'devolutionist' movements in Wales within the United Kingdom, in Catalonia in Spain, in Brittany and Corsica in France, and amongst both linguistic communities in Belgium. There are also significant, but peaceful secessionist movements in Canada, amongst the Québécois, and in Great Britain amongst the Scots – who seek independence 'within' the NAFTA and the EU respectively. There has also been a recent effervescence of what may become full-fledged secessionist sentiment in Italy, notably in 'Lombardy' or 'Padania' – though it seems likely to remain a form of regional resentment; and similar traits can be found in Belgium. Germany has been unified, but it has officially abandoned its other possible irredentist ambitions. Within 'western Europe' only Greece, the Republic of Ireland, and possibly Finland retain, in principle, ambitions to complete their nations, and in each case (apart, possibly, from Greece), the support for 'reunification' with the relevant conationals situated across recognised sovereign boundaries is generally peaceful, sentimental and inactive – which is not to say that it is finished.⁶⁶ Significant cases of protracted violent secessionism or unificationism in Europe have existed in the Basque country and Northern Ireland, but even here the relevant movements have smaller support-bases than their peaceful and regionally inclined conational competitors. The two Cypriot communities are, however, undoubtedly capable of further war.

Yet all in all there is not a great deal in the European Union, or the OECD, to embarrass Gellner's theory.⁶⁷ Extensive armed violence and insurrection by aggrieved nationalist groups within the OECD is rare. Basque separatists in Spain; Irish republicans and loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland; Israelis and Palestinians in and outside of Israel/Palestine are responsible for the lion's share. Sporadic activities by Corsicans, Tyrolese German-speakers and Bretons are small beer by comparison. In most regions of OECD states the aggrieved ethnic communities would appear to be capable of being satisfied by public policy changes and/or constitutional changes which recognise their

national cultural claims. This *may* be so of the Québécois in Canada, the Scots and Welsh in the UK, the Walloons in Belgium and the Catalans in Spain. A similar argument may be advanced for the bulk of Basques and Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland: Basques may be satisfied with extensive autonomy, northern Irish nationalists by the functional equivalent of shared sovereignty.⁶⁸ Indeed many of the actual or potential national and ethnic conflicts in advanced industrial countries may be remediable by accommodative political institutions, such as consociations, federalisms and condominiums, a point on which Gellner is weak, and to which I shall return.

If the scale of nationalist secessionism within advanced democratic capitalist societies seems exaggerated, the success of nationalist secessionism within the industrialised states of what were the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia is a fact. And there are further secessionist movements within the debris of these former communist systems: in Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechen-Ingushetia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Dniester, Gagauzia, Kaliningrad, Crimea, Krajina, Kosovo and the Vojvodina. These phenomena are, however, not an overt embarrassment for Gellner's theory – unlike some other theories.⁶⁹ The respective communist systems failed to invent durable Soviet and Yugoslav nationalisms or 'high cultures', but they did industrialise through adapting – and in some cases creating – national cultures, and, incidentally, national political units, which then, in most cases, became the bases of secessionist movements when the communists lost their grip on power – which in turn was connected to their failures in managing industrial performance. This said, not all of the conflicts which generated secession from these communist polities are fully explicable within Gellnerian theory, which, as presently formulated, cannot treat sensitively the importance of the state-system and political regime types in explaining what encourages or thwarts nationalist secessionisms.

A superfluous defence of the Gellnerian theory is also available: most other social and political theories are left in a much worse state by evidence of secessionism in industrialised societies. Marxists, who thought future statelessness was also to be nationlessness, when we were all expected to be class-less and culture-less (or perhaps monocultured in a multicultural way), have an embarrassing affinity with liberal functionalists, who anticipated that the outcome of modernisation would be an instrumental and cosmopolitan world-federal order rather than a world of nation-states, who thought that *ideocracy* would vanish beneath the benefits of affluence, and that the fate of the nation-state was to be undermined from above, by international organisations, and from below, by political decentralisation.⁷⁰

How predictionless or retrodictionless is the theory?

Gellner explicitly denied that one can predict which nations will acquire political roofs, and, by implication, just which phenotypically or culturally counter-entropic traits, or other materials, will provide the markers for the nations built by nationalists. There are at least two difficulties here. First, the selection process that determines which of the thousands of potential nations eventually become member states of the United Nations may not be as blind, or as unpredictable, as Gellner suggested. Secondly, if 'invented' or 'designed' nations are less stable than the 'old' or 'continuous' nations such evidence would suggest that 'real' ethnic or other foundations are more vital to the success of nation-building than Gellner suggested. I shall only elaborate the first point since the second point has been well made by Anthony Smith.

Historical evidence does suggest that while many may be called to be nations only a few are chosen – who now remembers the Burgundians? However, Gellner's own theory, in principle, has greater retrodictive potential than he implies. His suppositions point towards a key selection mechanism: *ceteris paribus*, those possessed of a high culture, or on the verge of possessing one on the eve of modernisation, should be better endowed with nation-building potential than other potential nations. Those who have no 'high culture', or potential 'high culture', presumably are bereft of an intelligentsia, and lack the requisite quota of poets, balladeers, bibliophiles, engineers and officers for successful nation-building. For this reason Gellner's casual citation of the nationalist potential implicit in the existence of 8,000 languages should not be accepted at face value. How many of these languages have the capacity for rapid transformation into a high culture, that is, one with an extensive vocabulary, a formal grammar, an alphabet, a literary tradition, a capacity for context-free communication, etc.? This question is open to empirical resolution but the number of feasible potential nations on the eve of modernity must have been less than a fundamentalist Gellnerian would imagine. A Gellnerian should also assume that viable candidates for nationhood must have a threshold population of around 250,000 (the population of Iceland which has successfully produced a national high culture) on the grounds, suggested in *Thought and Change*, that economies of scale are required to sustain a 'non-parasitic' and modern, education system. If so, then the numbers of potential nationalist 'peoples' on the eve of modernity was probably much less than 8,000. This question is capable of resolution through appropriate investigation of demographic and anthropological data.

Empirical appraisal of the selection mechanism implicit in Gellner's

theory need not, of course, be confined to the linguistic and demographic properties of potential nations. In *Nations and Nationalism* Gellner recognised that those communities which are tightly integrated into a literate world religion are more likely to be candidates for successful nation-building or secessionist movements than those which are not. On Gellner's own logic, one should therefore predict greater nation-building capacity in some premodern cultures than others, and expect the number of feasible nations on the eve of modernity to be less numerous and more predictable than he implies. This argument is one way of reconciling Gellner's general theory with the arguments advanced by the 'nations before nationalism' school. Moreover, nothing in this argument commits one to an objectivist definition of the nation in which one trait, say race, is given pre-eminence.

If one were to extract from the mechanism of possession of a proto-high culture possible retrodictions or predictions about which cultures are most likely to generate modern nations, and test them against the historical evidence, one would, however, run into the issue of rival 'selection mechanisms'. The most obvious alternative selection mechanism affecting which cultures become nations, or at least realised nation-states, is *exogenous* rather than *endogenous*. Power politics may best explain which states have the borders that they do, and therefore which nations get to win their own nation-states or stakes in a multi-national state. Since the onset of modernity – whenever that was – the state-system and the great powers have been decisive arbiters of the prospects of nations' achieving statehood or autonomy. The four great waves of modern state-creation have accompanied the collapse or weakening of empires: the formation of the states of Latin America in the 1820s and after, the new European states recognised at Versailles, the new Asian, African, Caribbean and Pacific states established after 1945; and the new successor states established on the ruins of the former tsarist and Soviet empires after 1989.

Most politically realised nations owe their existence, or at least their territorial shape, to the calculations, decisions and indecisions of the extant great powers which watched another great power collapsing or caused it to collapse. Even if the Gellnerian ingredients of blocked social mobility and strong diacritical markers are present to fertilise nationalism a potentially secessionist nationalism may be prevented from being successful by its exogenous environment: the Irish, the Poles and the Eritreans, to name but a few, took a long time to win their freedom. 'Nation-state' formation frequently takes place, as it were, by permission, rather than as a by-product of the strength of indigenous mobilisation for nationhood. Thus the French helped the birth of the American

nation; the British empire hastened the collapse of the Spanish empire; the victorious Allies decided the fate and shape of 'nations' at Versailles and presided over the redistribution of the debris of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires; and the departing colonial powers shaped the frontiers of the so-called new 'nations' (mostly multiethnic and multinational states) which they left behind. The best-known illustration of the salience of great states in determining the fate of nations is the fact that the principle of self-determination was widely ignored by the great powers after World War I, because they wanted to create economically and strategically (rather than nationally) viable states as checks and balances on Germany and the Soviet Union.⁷¹ So the boundaries of Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia in the interwar years were established with scant respect for ethnic boundaries. Plebiscites were used to establish local preferences in some frontier zones, but not in geopolitically significant territories like the Sudetenland or the South Tyrol. Subsequently, from 1948 until 1989, the superpower system preserved borders which make no sense on any reasonable construal of national 'self-determination'.

Sadly, it also seems reasonable to suggest that within collapsing empires the proto-nations that enjoy strategic positions or resources – be they demographic, military or economic – are likely to do better than more marginal communities, which may face the threat of genocide, mass-population transfers or coercive assimilation. Better, in short, to be Tartarstan than Chechnya, or Croatia rather than Bosnia. There is no need to elaborate further: power politics, and power resources, provide an alternative (or at least a supplementary and overdetermining) selection mechanism to that implicit in Gellner's theory.⁷²

The typology and forms of nationalism

Gellner's typology was an admirable effort at theoretical parsimony. Three dimensions are used to generate four types of nationalism (outside of or against satisfied nation-states): western liberal nationalism, ethnic nationalism, diaspora nationalism and mature homogeneous nationalism.

There are, however, problems with the typology, even if we leave aside the simplicity of the dimensions. First, its explanatory capacities are implicitly limited to nationalist conflicts within states; it has little to say about nationalist conflicts between states. Secondly, it is not clear that classical liberal western nationalism emerged from the conjunction of a clash between educated power-holders from one high culture facing educated non-power-holders from another high culture, whereas ethnic

nationalism emerges from a clash between educated power-holders from one high culture facing uneducated non-power-holders from a low culture. Gellner cited as the classic exemplars of classical liberal western nationalism the 'unification nationalisms' of Italy and Germany, and suggested that 'a few battles' and 'some diplomacy' were all that were required to sort out the right political roofs for the previously subordinated high cultures. By contrast, in eastern Europe and the Balkans matters were much messier, because nationalism was mobilised behind 'a high culture as yet not properly crystallised' which made matters a great deal more ferociously 'ethnic' – population expulsions, liquidations, coercive assimilation and other horrors occurred. Gellner euphemistically recognises the 'markedly un-benign'⁷³ forms German and Italian nationalisms took in the twentieth century but does so in a parenthesis that almost suggests that it is a problem for John Plamenatz, who developed one form of the contrast between western and eastern nationalisms, rather than for him! Yet, German and Italian nationalisms were markedly 'un-benign' in frontier zones. Indeed the German variety notoriously excelled Balkan nationalism in its bloodthirstiness.

This difficulty suggests that the important difference between ethnic (or what Gellner calls Habsburg) nationalism and classical liberal (or western) nationalism is not the availability of a high culture functional for modernity in the latter case but not in the former, but rather, amongst other things, the fact that in the Habsburg-type of nationalism there are multiple and roughly equal but intermixed and counter-entropic cultures (i.e., B₁, B₂ . . . B_n), whereas in the classical liberal case the B group can feasibly homogenise – or at least courteously control – all the possible other Bs in its nation-building ambitions. Alternatively, some nationalists can afford to be liberal – and choose to be so, while others fear that they cannot afford to be liberal – and choose to act accordingly.

The key complaint I am making here is that the typology was used by Gellner to classify actual historical 'types' which do not follow logically from it. The typology is only useful for considering 'homogeneous' and 'bicultural' situations; and it cannot, by definition, be used to explain 'multicultural' situations.⁷⁴ The typology is also a typology of cultural nationalisms, rather than one of political nationalisms, which have been far more common in the literature on the subject.⁷⁵ And precisely because the typology is bereft of political content – other than a very crude distinction between power-holders and non-power-holders – it is difficult to assent to Gellner's illustrations of his 'types'. For example, exclusionary and integral nationalisms (which normally have a strong ethnic content – although frequently denied in, e.g., the French case)

have developed amongst peoples possessed of a high culture in combat with those who also have a high culture; while inclusive and civic assimilationist nationalisms have developed amongst peoples who have not historically had a crystallised high culture but have been engaged in combat with those who have had a high culture (e.g., the contemporary Eritreans).

The apolitical character of Gellner's theory

Gellner's theory of nationalism rests on cultural and materialist premises. What it appears to lack is a sustained and developed sense of the political – with the notable exception of Gellner's perception of the precariousness of western liberal pluralism, and his preparedness to give retrospective thanks to nationalism for preserving it. The apolitical charge can be substantiated in several ways:

- (i) his typology is geared towards explaining the development or thwarting of nationalist secessionism, but does not provide a politically sensitive account of what may dampen nationalist secessionism;
- (ii) the theory appears to rely on culturally or materially reductionist accounts of political motivation;
- (iii) as we have already claimed Gellner neglects the role of power-politics in explaining which cultures become nations, and the possibility that nation-builders explicitly see the functional relationship between nationalism and modernity which he posits;
- (iv) although Gellner sees the connections between nationalism and egalitarianism in modern societies, he does not, strangely enough, see the mutually reinforcing relationships between nationalism, egalitarianism and democratisation;
- (v) and lastly, but relatedly, he displays contempt for nationalist doctrines.

These points are elaborated below.

(i) Gellner did not provide a politically sensitive account of what may dampen nationalist secessionism. He appeared to assume that the range of possibilities in modern times is bifurcated: there is a simple choice between nationalist homogenisation through assimilation, and nationalist secessionism which produces another nationalist homogenisation: 'Nowadays people can live only in units defined by a shared culture, and internally mobile and fluid. Genuine cultural pluralism ceases to be viable under current conditions.'⁷⁶

This argument is not empirically tenable, unless it is rephrased as an

equilibrium theory, which asserts that homogeneous nationalism is the most stable outcome in modern times. In modern times states have frequently adopted what John McGarry and I call strategies for eliminating national and ethnic differences, through four principal devices: genocide, mass-population transfers, territorial restructuring through partitions/secessions, and cultural engineering through integration or assimilation.⁷⁷ Their widespread usage confirms the intuitive sense in Gellner's idea of a nationalist homogenising tendency. Yet one initial qualification must be made: political integration of diverse peoples often occurs without full-scale cultural assimilation, which suggests that Gellner too easily assumed that a political nationalism must be a (high) cultural nationalism.

More importantly here, modern political entities have also developed strategies for managing national and ethnic differences that, *prima facie*, counteract the potency of nationalist homogenisation. There are four major 'macro-methods' through which genuine cultural pluralism (if not democracy) may operate: systems of control; arbitration; federation/autonomy; and consociation. The last three of these are compatible with liberal and egalitarian pluralist principles.⁷⁸ Throughout modernity these methods have existed at various times, and in many parts of the world, and new versions of them are continually springing into being. Thus Belgium has recently federalised, South Africa is (or was?) temporarily consociationalised, and the European Union is increasingly embattled because of the ambitions of federalists.

All four of these systems of cultural pluralism, viz. control, arbitration, federation and consociation, may, as Gellner's theory suggests, be less stable than homogeneous nation-states. Systems of control, like empires, communist dictatorships and majoritarian or 'ethnic democracies', as some prefer to call systems dominated by a *Staatsvolk*, have shattered in many places. An orthodox Gellnerian might, reasonably, classify some of these cases as imperial 'hang-overs' from 'Agraria', succumbing to modernising pressures – the break-up of Ethiopia might be an exemplary illustration. External and internal arbitrations of ethnic conflicts are also infrequently successful.⁷⁹ Democratic biethnic or multiethnic federations are few and in regular crises. Czechoslovakia broke up very quickly after democratisation. Consociations frequently break down, and when they are successful they can lead to integration, as some believe has occurred through 'depillarisation' in the Netherlands, or they can be transit mechanisms to record a shift in ethnic power, as may be happening before our eyes in South Africa.

Yet the persistence of such strategies, and regimes based upon them, are empirical embarrassments for Gellner's theory. The equilibrium

condition of one nation, one state, seems to be continually elusive. Switzerland is a real anomaly for Gellner's theory. *Multietnic* and *multi-national* states in which there is a common sense of political (not cultural) nationhood exist. Some would even argue that Gellner lived in one – though as an Irishman I cannot be expected to be as generous as others might be on that point.⁸⁰ The key issue is that Gellner's theory too readily assumes that the general case, that the political nation and the cultural nation must be one, is the universal and, in the long run, the irresistible tendency. While Gellner admits that nationalism is 'occasionally defeated by some other force or interest, or by inertia',⁸¹ he leaves little for the creative possibilities of political design and architecture. Constitutional and political engineers do not figure in this sociologically reductionist conception of modernity, in which all nationalisms must (eventually) be cultural nationalisms.

(ii) Although he denied it, Gellner appeared to rely on culturally or materially reductionist accounts of nationalists' political motivations. He defended himself against the thesis that he was economically reductionist, suggesting that it is a parody to claim that the nationalist foot-soldier fights for his tobacco shop pension. Nevertheless the impression is conveyed in his writings that job-hunting and job-deprived intelligentsias and proletarians provide the nationalist personnel. Gellner recognised that a range of cultural humiliations and repressions may provoke nationalist protests and insurrections, but once experience of repression, as opposed to blocked social mobility, explains the propensity to engage in nationalist movements then we appear to have moved some distance from industrial society theory. A flexible and non-repressive regime, that has authentically egalitarian and pluralist characteristics, may be able to thwart secessionist pressures precisely because it gives the culturally and educationally differentiated a share in political institutions. In short, the political regime within which national minorities operate, rather than their material or cultural grievances, may best explain their predispositions to be secessionists, federalists or consociationalists, and that is not obvious in the texts *Thought and Change* or *Nations and Nationalism*.

(iii) We have seen that Gellner underplayed the role of power-politics in explaining which cultures become nations, and the possibility that nation-builders explicitly see the functional relationship between nationalism and modernity. In this respect he appears as a strict historical materialist: nationalist politics is the superstructural by-product of cultural fissures that are in turn shaped by the uneven diffusion of industrialism. Yet numerous scholars suggest that the genesis of nationalism, and its maintenance, owed much to the functional relationship between nationalism and military success rather than economic performance.

The education and cultural standardisation of troops in the European *ancien régime* preceded that of the general citizenry, and there is more than humour in the thesis that a language differs from a dialect in that the former has an army and a navy. The state bureaucracies of the old European regimes were mechanisms for the genesis of 'official nationalism', partly through the Gellnerian mechanisms of the development of literacy, the decay of sacred religious languages and their replacement with vernacular high cultures produced by a new clerisy, the meritocratic bourgeoisie. These elites, however, deliberately used protonationalism for military purposes that operated autonomously from the logic of industrial society.

(iv) The connections between nationalism and egalitarianism in modern societies were persuasively observed by Gellner, but he did not spell out the mutually reinforcing relationships between nationalism, egalitarianism and democratisation. The first political nationalisms in the USA and France were explicitly democratic in character,⁸² and there are social structural arguments, congenial to Gellner's philosophy of history, which explain why the wider distribution of power-resources in modernity has made democratic outcomes more likely than in agrarian societies.⁸³ Preoccupied with the miracle of western liberalism, and the virtues of its civil society, Gellner appeared to assume that democratisation has been a lucky accident in some industrialised societies, rather than a systemic trait. Yet it is odd to take the view that nationalism is no accidental by-product of modernisation, indeed to claim that it is intrinsic to its more egalitarian conditions, but not to notice that exactly the same arguments can be made about democratisation. Moreover, the relationships, politically and culturally, between nationalism and democratisation, at least at the doctrinal level are very clear, or, at least, so one can maintain.

(v) It was central to Gellner's definition of nationalism that the doctrine holds that nations should be ruled by conationals. It is central to liberal nationalism that that should be the case with the express consent of the conationals. Nationalism, with qualifications, is therefore a defensible doctrine for modern liberals, and so there is no necessary reason why someone convinced of the explanatory merits of Gellner's account of the roots of nationalism must share his contempt for nationalist political doctrine. Consistent nationalists hold that all nations should be free, free to express themselves, culturally and politically, and, that this freedom is constrained by other nations' rights to the same cultural and political freedom. Nationalism can be a liberal political doctrine, one which emphasises freedom, with at least the following corollaries:

- (i) that all people are or should be members of nations;
- (ii) that membership of a nation is a beneficial good;
- (iii) that nations are the most important cultural and political collectivities;
- (iv) that all nations have the right to determine their form of self-government and, relatedly, that all nations have the right to self-determination; and lastly
- (v) that the activities of states should, in general, be subordinated to nationalist principles.

Gellner, like most postwar academic commentators on nationalism, refused to treat nationalism seriously as a political doctrine because he shared, understandably, the anti-nationalist animus of the European intelligentsia who matured during or after the Nazi holocaust (although he did so with greater intellectual detachment and hard-headedness). He happily conceded to cosmopolitan critics of nationalism that nationalist authors are either self-evidently vacuous or incoherent. His theory of nationalism is consequently vulnerable to the charge that it ignores the autonomous significance of political doctrine in shaping social life – which is not, be it noted, an argument that rescues Kedourie's approach to nationalism by the back door.

The claim can be made, but not fully defended here, that nationalist political doctrine is not merely not vacuous, but that all self-professedly modern political doctrines, liberal, socialist or conservative are parasitic upon nationalist assumptions; and that the political success of these doctrines in argument and political struggle rests on these assumptions. Gellner suggested that nationalism has received little attention from political philosophers because 'there was not enough in the way of good doctrines and texts, which is the kind of material they used to like, for them to get their teeth into'. Even if they had, he maintained, nationalist thinkers could not really have made much difference: 'If one of them had fallen, others would have stepped into their place.' In any case 'their precise doctrines are hardly worth analysing' since nationalist ideology 'suffers from a pervasive false consciousness . . . we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets'.⁸⁴

This style of argument was characteristically provocative.⁸⁵ Gellner told his readers that nationalist thought is not worth examining in much the same manner that the *philosophes* and Marxists held that religious doctrine was not worth examining, because it represented an inchoate mixture of myth, superstition, error and false consciousness. Indeed Gellner's criticism of Kedourie was just like Marx's criticism of the *philosophes*: do not waste one's breath examining the bad ideas, instead

seek to explain their material roots. Gellner presumed not just that nationalist ideas are bad, or low-brow, as Kedourie complained, but that they are epiphenomenal. The message was that he had no wish to disturb the bad press which nationalists' writings have received. This bad press holds nationalism responsible for many disasters and catastrophes, wars, forced mass-population transfers, imperialisms, fascisms and genocides. Depending on the particular intellectual's account of the source of all evil, nationalism is held to be an expression of patriarchy, capitalism or socialism: feminists interpret nationalism as a by-product of patriarchal thought, penile aggression and other features of male malevolence; Marxists hold capitalism culpable for nationalism; while economic liberals generally see it as a species of collectivism because nationalists demand public regulation of capital and labour markets and are critical of the Ricardian theory of free trade.

One reason Gellner did not take nationalist doctrines seriously is that there have been few universalist theorists of nationalism, and those that have existed, like Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, have usually been read, criticised and admired for their nonnationalist writings. Moreover, universalist themes in nationalist authors, like Burke, Herder, Fichte and List, have generally been seen as motivated by the particularist concerns of their national cause.⁸⁶ The naturally parochial audience to whom exponents of nationalism have addressed themselves has meant that their writings and arguments are not treated with respect by cosmopolitan intellectuals addressing other cosmopolitan intellectuals. This cosmopolitan bias in the reading of nationalist writing is something one should never forget. However, rather than discuss Rousseau's *Social Contract* and *Government of Poland*, Burke's views of political obligation, Herder's theory of language or Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* I shall simply note here that liberal nationalist doctrine may be no less coherent than liberalism, conservatism or socialism,⁸⁷ and that although nationalism often comes packaged with fairy-tales its myths are no less plausible than the myths of social contracts, of class struggles, of wars between the sexes, of immemorial traditions, of intimations or of natural harmony of interests.

Lest we forget the enemies of nationalism and national self-determination have been, and are, imperialists, cosmopolitans and the godly. And their professed fears about the exclusivism of some nationalisms, historically understandable, can be nicely answered: 'Particularistic nationalism bears the same relation to universal nationalism as selfishness does to individualism, selfishness being the pursuit of one's own interests without regard to the interests of others, and individualism being the doctrine that it is legitimate to pursue one's own

interests on the same terms on which theirs are free to pursue others.⁸⁸

Nationalism is most famously associated with the doctrine of national self-determination, which it is fashionable to scorn as incoherent and destructively chaotic in its repercussions.⁸⁹ Yet the idea is simple enough: a nation must be free to establish its preferred form of government, whether that be as a constituent component of a multinational state or federation or as an independent state. (Gellner mistakenly implies that only separatist or irredentist nationalisms are properly nationalist.) The idea of national self-determination is attacked as dangerous because it spells chaos to the world's map-makers, threatens the permanent instability of frontiers,⁹⁰ and fails to specify who constitutes the 'self' with the right to self-determination, and how that self might be realised. Properly understood, however, national self-determination is a recursive principle of democratic consent: every nation should have the right to seek self-determination, including the right to secede to create its own state, providing the members of the nation consent to such self-determination, and providing they grant the same right to those who do not regard themselves as part of the nation concerned.⁹¹ Imperialists, cosmopolitans and the godly riposte with searching questions: 'who are the people?', 'what if there is more than one nation in a given region?', and 'how does one ensure that each nation is granted self-determination in territories where nations are intermingled?' These are important questions, but they do not demonstrate the incoherence of national self-determination. All that they prove in the first place is that implementing the idea of self-determination may not be easy. Liberals, socialists, conservatives and feminists have difficulties with working out the implementation of their core ideas, so nationalists are not alone in their problems with their doctrines. Note, secondly, that there are ways in which multiple nations may grant one another free and equal self-determination – through consociational or federal arrangements, or even through genuinely agreed partitions and negotiated exchanges of populations. Indeed the liberal nationalist must agree with John Stuart Mill that there are cases where nationalities are so intermingled that the nations concerned must make a virtue of necessity by developing appropriately complex forms of political accommodation and respect, such as democratic condominium.⁹²

Nationalism implies that loyalty to the nation should be the first virtue of a citizen. This idea has internal and external implications. It suggests that loyalty to the national community should transcend loyalty to more particular identifications, personal, cultural, economic, or political, and that members of one's nation have higher moral claims

than members of other nations. Whatever may be said of the merits of such thinking, and note carefully that I am not endorsing it without qualification, it is scarcely fair to say that it is incoherent. Nationalist moral doctrine is at odds with cosmopolitanism – the doctrine that one owes equal duties to all members of the human species – and with personalism – the doctrine that you owe first moral obligations to your personal friends;⁹³ and it is at odds with statism – that your first loyalty is to the state (except when one's nation is a nation-state). Cosmopolitanism, personalism, statism and nationalism have all attracted rational arguments and exponents – and it is not credible to insist that nationalism is alone in its weaknesses. Nationalist thinking is not incompatible with the belief that nations may be duty-bound towards other nations; indeed it is *internationalism* proper to observe (genuine) international law and to provide charitable assistance to other nations. In brief, liberal nationalism does not deserve the contempt with which Gellner wishes to be associated.

Nationalism also has prescriptive public policy content, independently of particular political ideologies. Most obviously, nationalism suggests a doctrine of citizenship. Who should and who should not automatically be entitled to membership of the nation? Nationalists vary in their answer to the question, depending on the stress they give to ethnic or civic conceptions of the nation, but at least they provide an answer. Liberals, socialists and conservatives in practice accept the nationalist answer or debate its frontiers. The nationalist theory of citizenship is in turn closely bound to the development of the modern welfare state, in which, in principle, conationals are treated as members of a collectivity engaged in mutual insurance and assurance. Nationalism also has prescriptive implications for education – educating potential citizens in a national culture, in respect for nationally endorsed institutions, in prescribing the moral universe of rights and obligations, in preserving and developing distinctive cultural idiosyncrasies, and in freeing the educated from the prejudices, be they patriarchal or otherwise, of the home or the sect. Nationalism additionally limits the operation of free markets: nationalists rarely believe in the unrestrained movement of labour, though they may embrace the free movement of capital.⁹⁴ Nationalists are anti-Smithians – Adam not Anthony – who seek to inhibit particular consequences of homogenising capitalism, or for that matter of homogenising cosmopolitan socialism. They have, in the current parlance, some minimal communitarian values. These are core elements of coherent political reasoning endorsed tacitly by millions of people on this planet. They may, of course, be mistaken, but they are not obviously mistaken.

Nationalism should not be equated with fascism or racism, as Gellner recognised, although it may become infected by the latter notions. Nationalism, as a doctrine, from Herder onwards recognised the equality of nations. In both its romantic and instrumental-developmental versions it celebrates the diversity of national differences, and, therefore, in principle, is not genocidal or racist. Racism and religious creeds have arguably been more responsible for genocides than nationalism. Racism, by contrast with nationalism, ranks races in an evolutionary and moral hierarchy, and is therefore dispositionally genocidal; while religious believers, dogmatically convinced of their possession of the truth, may well be disposed to engage in mass killings of non-believers. The fusion of racism and religious chauvinism with illiberal nationalism is a dangerous and potentially murderous phenomenon but to suggest that the rise of nationalism *is* responsible for genocides in the modern world is contestable. The argument may seem plausible when nationalism is defined as the ethnocentric glorification of the in-group, as the religious deification of the nation, or in Conor Cruise O'Brien's characteristically inflammatory words as 'the most effective engine for the mobilisation of hatred and destruction that the world has ever known'.⁹⁵ The 'argument' is that from the ideal of the nation-state it is but a short step to putting people into cattle trucks to exterminate them. The implication is that nationalism cannot tolerate ethnic, racial or religious differences but must eliminate them. Such arguments are refuted, at least to my mind, by the existence of multiethnic, multiracial and multireligious nations, and by the fact of peaceful international relations between liberal democratic nations. Yet because Gellner treated nationalism as the doctrine of 'one culture, one state' he leaves it open to the charge that its central doctrine spells a simple choice between assimilation on the one hand, and genocide and forced expulsion or emigration on the other hand. But even vigorously nationalising nation-states have a range of intermediate strategies: their choices are not confined to *either* compulsory assimilation *or* genocide.

Nationalism: Gellner's elaborations, responses to his critics and his last words

In the last two decades of his life Gellner re-engaged with his eastern European roots and with Marxist-Leninist scholarship in the Soviet Union, experiences that culminated in the establishment of a Centre for the Study of Nationalism at the Central European University. These activities helped generate a range of essays and books, in which Gellner elaborated his theory, modified it in places, and replied to his critics.

The most important is the posthumous book, *Nationalism*, which integrates material contained in essay form in *Encounters with Nationalism* and in other occasional contributions. The most important of the essays is his 'Reply to my Critics' – in which he responded directly to the arguments made above, as well as to those made by other critics.

Nationalism

Nationalism is a typically fluent and witty Gellnerian long essay, or mini-book. It maintains the key arguments of *Nations and Nationalism*, especially its philosophy of history and its industrial society theory; defends the theory against real and alleged misinterpretations; recognises, honestly, some of its real difficulties; and lastly, adds some novel perspectives.

Elaborations, qualifications and defence mechanisms

Three key elaborations and qualifications are made in defence of the theory against unnamed critics. First, Gellner denies that his theory is reductive in the sense that it neglects the psychological authenticity and depth of the emotional power of nationalism. Not so, he replies. The merit of his theory is that it seeks to explain why these emotions exist, why they are invested in nations and their fates, and why they feel (and are) authentic and powerful in the breasts of nationals.⁹⁶ Secondly, while insisting that he is a pure and proper paid-up modernist, Gellner recognises in multiple passages that some premodern cultures were better equipped than others to become modern national cultures. As he put it, intellectual modernists are anti-creationists on the schooling of children in biology, but they are the creationists in this debate, whereas their opponents are the Darwinians, emphasising slow evolutionary change with occasionally important discontinuities in the nature of ethnic communities. Gellner finally accepted that some nations have genuine and authentic navels, meaning that they have ancient roots (as Anthony Smith maintains); others have had navels invented for them (in Gellner's view, the majority); whereas still others are 'navel-less'. It is, however, an empirical question, to be resolved by research, which of the three types of nation is most common. This is a fair and reasonable concession on Gellner's part, but he did not address whether states built on authentic ancient national pasts are more stable and durable than those that have had their national pasts invented – or which simply lack any past, authentic or invented.⁹⁷ Lastly, and importantly, Gellner partially downplayed the primacy of industrialisation in the aetiology of nationalism: bureaucratic centralisation (and its standardising impli-

cations), and 'Protestant-type' religions (with their egalitarian and high-culture diffusing properties) are granted their due as semi-independent agents in the generation of nationalism. Nevertheless, the functional link between industrialisation and nationalism is maintained, and its 'last instance' role in Gellner's theory is apparent.

There is one important recognition of difficulty: Gellner recognises that Greek nationalism in the 1820s preceded industrialisation – 'the Morea did not look like the Lancashire dales'⁹⁸ – a matter of no small import as he also believed that the first nationalist rising was that of the Greeks. Leave to one side whether the originality of the Greeks in this case is suspect: the United Irishmen of the 1790s, the North American revolutionaries of the 1770s, and Bolivar's South American revolutionaries, arguably have prior claims.⁹⁹ Instead, let us focus on how Gellner seeks to finesse the difficulty. In an explicitly *ad hoc* argument he claimed that despite their peripheral agrarian location the 'Balkan bandits', i.e., the Greeks, were very susceptible to the diffusion of Enlightenment and Romantic ideas. Though no Balkan specialist, I suspect the argument is correct, but the trouble is that it does not solve Gellner's problem. He has invoked the autonomous role of doctrine and ideas and their cultural resonance, rather than industrialisation, to account for the nationalists in the first nationalist uprising. Elsewhere he made a better response to Ken Minogue: industrialisation casts a long shadow over preindustrial peoples, enabling certain communities to anticipate its consequences and reorder their identities and actions accordingly.¹⁰⁰ That response is consistent with the filter explanation I discussed above.

Novelties

There are three novelties in *Nationalism* compared with *Nations and Nationalism* – though the first two were foreshadowed in essays published between 1984 and 1994. The first novelty is Gellner's new preference for a more explicitly historical conception of the stages of nationalism, and the 'time-zones' of nationalism within Europe – and his apparent loss of interest in his own typology of nationalism-inducing situations. The five stages are the time of the Congress of Vienna, the age of Irredentism, the age of (Woodrow) Wilsonism, the era of ethnic cleansing and the age of attenuated and satisfied nationalism. I shall not quibble here with the historical details in this delineation of stages – though I could. What should be apparent to the reader is the absence of a neat link – or attempts to forge links – to either industrialisation or uneven economic development, in accounting for the transitions between the stages. With the exception of the era of attenuated

nationalism the sequence of stages seems to operate according to the rhythms and ruptures of the politics of the great powers rather than the functional logic of industrialism and the stresses of uneven development. By contrast, the great merit of the typology in *Nations and Nationalism* was that it attempted to link nationalist types to the variables emphasised in industrial society theory.

What of Gellner's three (or is it four?) time-zones of nationalism in Europe? In the first zone, the Atlantic seaboard, nation and state cohabited in premodernity before the era of modern nationalism. From the cohabitation came Portugal, Spain, France and England. In the second zone, the nation existed but was stateless, and had to be forged though war and diplomacy. The bride was ready, but a groom had to be found: so shot-gun marriages occurred between Germany and Prussia, and between Italy and Piedmont. In the third zone, neither the nation nor the state existed, and ethnic cleansing was necessary to generate the nation-state form. Now we are in the lands of the Habsburg, Ottoman and Romanov empires. The fourth time-zone, was the area captured by the USSR (and Yugoslavia). The question there is: in which of the five stages and which of the three time-zones will the successor entities find themselves?¹⁰¹ And so on. This tale and its question are not without interest, though the tale does read suspiciously like the potted story of nationalism of Hans Kohn, Alfred Cobban and others – in which nationalism, such a good thing in the west, becomes an increasingly venomous and murderous creature as it travels east. Gellner's defence would be that he is seeking to explain the truth in that tale – why the sociology of central and eastern Europe meant that the repercussions of nationalism would be very different there to what happened around the Atlantic seaboard. Nevertheless his is a great-power centred account. In which time-zones or stages do we fit Ireland, the Low Countries or the Scandinavians?¹⁰² But at least the time-zones, unlike the stages, do have the merit of being linked to his wider theory: the equilibrium condition of modern politics and culture is the nation-state; its formation in particular locations will be a function of the preceding national, political, agrarian and industrial materials.

The second novelty in *Nationalism* is Gellner's explicit consideration of the relationship between Islam and nationalism. This question married two fields in which he distinguished himself as an original scholar. The combination, however, seems unhappy. Some of the very traits that Gellner had sketched to argue that Islam is functional for modernisation¹⁰³ are the same as the cluster he associates with nationalism – egalitarianism, diffusion of a high culture, non-magicality, and unmediated relations between the individual and community. The traits

which allegedly make Islam secularisation-resistant are then invoked to claim that Islam can, and may well trump nationalism as a legitimisation formula, in a way that Christianity can no longer do in the west. Indeed, Gellner claims that fundamentalism is presently victorious over nationalism – though he did not make this a prediction for the future.¹⁰⁴ Though no Arabist or Islamicist I have great scepticism about the merits of these arguments – perhaps because I want to believe that Islam will not be secularisation-resistant, in the long run, and certainly because I do not want to accept that contemporary Algeria has this message for the Islamic world: *de te fabula narratur*.

Gellner applies his arguments almost wholly to Arabic lands – though he has interesting remarks to make about Kemalist Turkey and Khomeini's Iran. But one does not need to be an Islamic specialist to see the difficulties with his case. Kemalist and post-Kemalist Turkey show that Islam can compete with nationalism, whether or not it controls the state, but Gellner himself noted the vitality of Kemalism as an institutionalised 'Decembrism' that controls Turkish Islam, and a more corrupt version of Decembrism still persists in Algeria. Elsewhere it is not evident that fundamentalist Islam has trumped nationalism in South-East Asia, South Asia, or indeed the Middle East. Has Islam triumphed over nationalism in Malaysia and Indonesia, or is it in alliance with it? The break-up of Pakistan in 1971 suggests that a polyethnic or multinational state in which Islam is the sole unifying cultural bond rests on brittle foundations. There have been wars between Islamic states with different dominant ethnonational groups, e.g. the Iran-Iraq war. The ethnonational instability of present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, or of the successor states in former Soviet Central Asia, is a commonplace. The treatment of Muslim Kurds by Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria points, if anything, to the primacy of ethnonational conflict over pan-Islamic integration. Gellner, in my judgement, too readily concedes Islamist anomalies for his general theory of nationalism – anomalies that he would, I suspect, have sought to explain away if they had been presented by other area specialists or other comparative sociologists of religion.

The last novelty of *Nationalism* is that Gellner felt prompted into politics proper, into making political prescriptions, or drawing practical implications.¹⁰⁵ He describes these prescriptions as 'banal', perhaps because he may have been conscious of how far they support the conventional wisdom of Euro-liberals. He rejected the doctrine of national self-determination as 'rubbish', and maintained that there can be no just solutions to national conflicts¹⁰⁶ – though two pages later this had become an argument that there can be no solutions to national conflicts based on justice alone.¹⁰⁷ He expressed a preference for

stability, i.e. the avoidance of the break-up of existing states without an orderly passage to successor regimes. He also hoped that the (shared?) affluence of industrial society would attenuate most conflicts, and that the 'de-fetishisation' of territory as a means to wealth would simultaneously entrench stability and economic growth. More significantly, he hoped that major order-maintenance functions could become supranational, while social functions could become cantonised, so that cultural pluralism could co-exist with the benefits of modernity.

'Reply to My Critics'

In his lengthy, generous and funny 'Reply to my Critics'¹⁰⁸ Gellner made two important replies to objections to his theory of nationalism. The first, already discussed above, was to reject the claim that his theory is 'reductionist', that it ignores the power of nationalist identity, for individuals and communities. This he argued, is unfair, though he conceded that this misinterpretation is widespread. Nationalism is explained as important *both* for people's interests and their identities – which are, of course, partially interdependent. His final restatement of his position was unambiguous. Personally I find it convincing, and Table 2.2 is intended to provide a simple expression of Gellner's views on this issue compared to what I take to be the position of some other theorists. Nevertheless, in *Thought and Change* and *Nations and Nationalism*, the stress is on the instrumentality of nations and nationalism rather than upon their expressive identifications – so, for me at any rate, late Gellner corrects early Gellner, or at least brings into sharper relief what young Gellner believed.

Secondly, Gellner responded to the charge of functionalism. He denied that his theory is teleological; avoided deciding whether it should be classified as a (non-teleological) functionalist argument; but instead insisted that it is causal. Industrial society, its diffusion, its discontents and its uneven impact upon existing ethnic and cultural terrains cause nationalism. His reply means that my labours above were not in vain. A filter explanation – e.g. nationalists realise that nationalism is beneficial for modernisation – can account for the self-conscious nation-builders, whose existence no one doubts. It can also account for the diffusion of nationalism – and indeed for the anomalies occasioned by Greek nationalism before Greece or its hinterland had experienced industrialisation. However, the much stronger functionalist claim, that nationalism is functionally explained (without intentionality) by its beneficial consequences for industrial society, or the straightforward causal claim that industrial society causes nationalism, are now brought into sharp relief

Table 2.2 *Gellner compared with other theorists of nationalism*

Nations are	primarily tools of manipulative elites or ideological masks for interests	primarily expressions of authentically felt identities	both tools of elites and authentic expressions of identities
perennial and permanent features of humankind	Pierre van den Berghe	Johann Gottfried Herder (& most nationalists)	Johan Gottlieb Fichte
(often) continuous with premodern <i>ethnies</i>		John Armstrong	John Hutchinson Anthony Smith
(mostly) modern	Paul Brass Eric Hobsbawm		Ernest Gellner Benedict Anderson Walker Connor

as strong hypotheses open for empirical testing or modification. To treat the causal claim properly serious empirical research must establish the operational meaning of industrial society (or a range of its possible meanings) and its (alleged) most important nationalism-engendering traits, and proceed to test their interrelationships.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

What is living in Gellner's philosophy of nationalism?

With qualifications, Ernest Gellner's arguments about the elective affinity between nationalism and modernity are plausible. His criticisms of naturalism, wrong address, dark gods, and accidental-but-bad-ideas theories of the genesis and diffusion of nationalism are short, sharp and persuasive. Nationalism or nations have not been permanent features of human history – or so the evidence suggests. Nationalism has both expressive and instrumental dimensions that appear to be linked to modernisation, and its imperatives. Nationalism may be used to legitimate elites and counter-elites, it may be an ideology of mobilisation especially favoured by the disaffected intelligentsia – though that does not mean that it is specially embraced by 'the lesser-examination passing classes' in Hobsbawm's inaccurate phrase.¹¹⁰ Nationalist arguments may, of course, be manipulated for illiberal purposes: whether articulated by anti-colonial movements, or by established political elites, they may be used to obtain and exploit territorial, administrative and

economic monopolies. Yet like Gellner we must accept that unless nationalist doctrine made some rough sense of the modern world, unless that world continually stimulated such identity formations, then it could not be tapped by manipulative elites: why else is nationalist manipulation so often more successful than many other kinds? Lastly, on his own logic his theory has greater retrodictive or predictive power than he initially thought, and it need not deny that successful nation-building may depend much more on successful innovation than on fabricationist invention.

What is dead (or at least doubtful) in Gellner's philosophy of nationalism?

The criticisms sketched here are not fatal to Gellner's theory; they are merely necessary qualifications or reformulations. What is dead (or at least doubtful) is his explicitly functionalist argumentation. What is also doubtful is the primacy he gives to industrialisation in explaining the genesis and maintenance of nationalism, unless industrialisation means something broadly synonymous with modernisation, commercialisation and democratisation. Other mechanisms have been conducive to the genesis and maintenance of nationalism – including explicitly political mechanisms, and it is hard to see how the primacy of one or another mechanism might be proven. Gellner's typology of nationalisms is deficient in its range, and defectively elaborated; while his later historical stages, and time-zones, are specifically European, problematic and disconnected from the central premises of his own theory.

Many of the dead or doubtful aspects of Gellner's philosophy of nationalism, in my view, stemmed from Gellner's almost Olympian apoliticism. His last words on the subject, his last political prescriptions, express anxieties about nationalism's destabilising properties, whilst his hopes were expressed, it seems to me, independently of his theoretical convictions. His theory holds that the nation-state is the equilibrium condition of modernity, so he had no good reason for his hopes of a different world-order in which power would be transferred both to supranational and sub-state levels. If however, the nation-state is just one political form amongst many capable of managing or eliminating ethnonational conflict, and if the nation-state can be structured in culturally pluralist ways (consociational, federal or through other modes of co-sovereignty), then the world may not be governed by the logic of the strong version of Gellner's theory.

In my judgement Gellner missed the interdependencies between nationalism and democratisation, and failed to treat nationalism as a

political doctrine that, when suitably furbished, is consistent with most of the liberal values Gellner held dear. Almost intellectually uninterested in ethics, perhaps because he didn't believe in their power, he was tempted to assume that just resolutions of ethnonational conflicts are impossible. That remains to be proven. National self-determination is not a doctrine which inexorably points towards madness and murder; and I am not alone in thinking that, suitably dressed, it might offer some prospect of structuring our world with both authority and justice, but then I believe that nationalism is the major form in which democratic consciousness expresses itself in the modern world. It will be to Ernest Gellner's eternal credit that his wonderfully wide-ranging, clear and often hilarious thought helps us all understand why that is so, and why it must be so.

NOTES

The subtitle of this chapter is stolen from Benedetto Croce's *What is Living and What is Dead in Hegel's Philosophy?*, but whereas Croce's relationship with Hegel was purely intellectual, my relationship with Gellner was personal. He was the external examiner of my Ph.D., and a reliable and generous referee in my academic career. For critical comments I am grateful to Brian Barry, Alan Beattie, James Kellas, James Mayall, David Miller, Karin von Hippel, George Schopflin, Albert Weale, and to my students at LSE. I am especially grateful to John A. Hall for his guidance and patience. I am also grateful but sad to have received, posthumously, Ernest Gellner's warm-spirited response to a previous version of this chapter.

The first draft of this chapter was presented to the Seminar on International Political Economy held at LSE in December 1993, a second to the Political Economy Seminar at the University of Western Ontario in March 1994. Three variations on this second draft resulted in publications: 'On the Nature of Nationalism: An Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism', *Papers in Political Economy*, University of Western Ontario, vol. 47, 1994; 'On the Nature of Nationalism: A Critical Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 27, 1997; and 'On the Nature of Nationalism: A Critical Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, Amsterdam, 1996. This essay supersedes the preceding, not least because it alone considers all of Gellner's writings on nationalism, including those written after my first essay.

1 E. Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, 1965, p. 151.

2 See especially *ibid.* Gellner, 'Scale and Nation', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 3, 1973; 'Nationalism, or the New Confessions of a Justified Edinburgh Sinner', *Political Quarterly*, vol. 49, 1978; *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983; 'Nationalism and the Two Forms of Cohesion in Complex Societies', in his *Culture, Identity and Politics*, Cambridge, 1987; 'Nationalism and Politics in Eastern Europe', *New Left Review*, no. 189,

1991; 'The Coming of Nationalism and its Interpretation: The Myths of Nation and Class', in G. Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation*, London, 1996; *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994; 'Reply to Critics', in Hall and Jarvie, *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*; and *Nationalism*, London, 1997.

- 3 A famous nineteenth-century illustration of a liberal criticism of nationalism is Lord Acton's 1862 essay on 'Nationality' (reprinted in J. R. Fears, ed., *Essays in the History of Liberty: Selected Writings of Lord Acton*, Indianapolis, 1985). A recent illustration of socialist criticism is E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge, 1990.
- 4 A later essay, presented in the Soviet Union, discussed further why both Marxism and liberalism have been wrong about nationalism, viz., 'From Kinship to Ethnicity', in *Encounters with Nationalism*.
- 5 The contemporary version of 'Dark Gods' theory is socio-biological, see, e.g. P. van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, New York, 1981.
- 6 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 149 and *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 130.
- 7 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 151.
- 8 E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4th edn, London, 1985. Kedourie mocked the quest for a general theory of nationalism as 'the sociological temptation', identified Gellner's theory as 'a species of economism' and maintained that it did not 'fit the chronology either of nationalism or of industrialisation' (pp. 145, 147–8). The vicissitudes and political contradictions of Kedourie's own position on nationalism went unremarked by Gellner: Kedourie, a religiously orthodox Iraqi-born Jew, and a victim of ethnic cleansing from Baghdad, was a tacit critic of Zionism in 1960, but at the end of his life was a supporter of the state of Israel.
- 9 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 152.
- 10 Ibid., p. 153. Gellner was citing the famous conclusion to Kedourie's *Nationalism*. Kedourie thought that his question was the only criterion of legitimacy capable of universal defence. Gellner replied in *Nations and Nationalism* (pp. 127–8) that:
The question which Professor Kedourie asks with such eloquence is indeed one which a typical burgher in an agrarian society would ask himself, if one morning he just heard that the local Pasha had been overthrown and replaced by an altogether new one. If, at that point, his wife dared ask of the burgher what language the new Pasha spoke in the intimacy of his home life – was it Arabic, Turkish, Persian, French or English? – the hapless burgher would give her a sharp look, and wonder how he would cope with all the new difficulties when, at the same time, his wife had gone quite mad.
The sensible implication is that Kedourie's question is no longer coherent in a world in which accountable, participatory and representative government is possible, and in which a modern economy requires a national system of communication.
- 11 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 155.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 155, 157.
- 13 Ibid., p. 159. Gellner added (p. 159, n. 1) that 'It is of course possible for nominally independent political units to exist in a kind of educationally parasitic way. But the present argument is not really undermined by the existence of Monaco or Andorra.'

- 14 Ibid., p. 160.
- 15 Ibid., p. 160.
- 16 Ibid., p. 166.
- 17 Ibid., p. 171.
- 18 Ibid., p. 168.
- 19 Ibid., p. 173.
- 20 Ibid., p. 173.
- 21 Ibid., p. 174.
- 22 Gellner could not consistently claim to reject this thesis and accept, as he appeared to do above (see p. 143), that some pre-modern cultures were a factor in making up the materials of modern nations.
- 23 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 174. Highly educated French, Swiss-Deutsch and Italian-speakers frequently speak to each other in English as a neutral second language.
- 24 Ibid., p. 177.
- 25 Perhaps that explains why when Gellner re-expressed the argument in *Nations and Nationalism* nearly two decades later there were complaints that he had ignored the writings of North American scholars – see, e.g., B. Shafer's 'Review of Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*', *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, vol. 11, 1984. Many surveyors of writings on nationalism, and many students, appear to see little difference between Gellner's arguments and those of Karl Deutsch's *Nationalism and Social Communications*, Cambridge, MA, 1966. Yet there is this major difference: whereas Deutsch conveyed the notion that the idea of nationalism is transmitted by newspapers, books and radio (and now television) to previously non-nationalist peoples, Gellner insisted that it is the media, 'the pervasiveness and importance of abstract, centralised, standardised, one to many communication, which automatically engenders the core idea of nationalism, quite irrespective of what . . . is being put into the specific messages transmitted . . . That core message is that the style and language of the transmissions is important, that only he who can understand them, or can acquire such comprehension, is included in a moral and political community, and that he who does not and cannot, is excluded' (*Nations and Nationalism*, p. 127). In addition, unlike Deutsch's, Gellner's theory of nationalism does not suffer from facile optimism about the ease with which peoples can be assimilated into 'nation-building' projects – for decisive criticism of Deutsch at this point, see W. Connor, 'Nation-building or Nation-destroying?', *World Politics*, vol. 24, 1972.
- 26 See for example, B. Barry, 'Review of Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*', *Ethics*, vol. 95, 1984; J. Kellas, 'Review of *Nations and Nationalism*', *International Affairs*, vol. 60, 1984; A. D. Smith, 'Book Review: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*', *Millennium*, vol. 13, 1983; B. Crick, 'The Gad-fly and the Eagle', *New Statesman*, 16 September 1983; and J. Dunn, 'For the Good of the Country', *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 21 October 1983.
- 27 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 129. One of Kedourie's arguments was that nationalism could be cleansed from the planet by the education students used to undergo when they took his courses on the History of Political Thought (Pierre Trudeau, one of Kedourie's students, acted on

Kedourie's premises, refusing to make significant concessions to Quebec nationalism, and thereby helped destabilise the Canadian federation).

Another implication was that Kant was the source of all evil. Gellner contested both Kedourie's history of ideas as well as his idealist insistence on the power of (bad) ideas. He defended Kant in *Nations and Nationalism* (p. 133), maintaining that there is no relationship, other than a verbal one, between individual 'self-determination' and 'national self-determination': Kant was 'a very model for that allegedly bloodless, cosmopolitan, emaciated ethic of the Enlightenment' which romantic nationalists detested. All that nationalists and Kant have in common is that neither are, in Kedourie's sense, respecters of tradition.

28 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 129–30.

29 Ibid., p. 57. The italics are mine.

30 Unlike Benedict Anderson who insists on the pivotal importance of 'print capitalism' (*Imagined Communities*, London, 1983), Gellner stressed the importance of print *per se*. Given that the large-scale production of bibles, so important in the development of European vernacular languages at the expense of Latin, was a state (or state-church) sponsored project, why should we regard capitalism, rather than the mass production of texts, as the salient cause in the origins and spread of languages?

Gellner shared Anderson's emphasis on the impersonal nature of the nation, but unlike Anderson had no time for the metaphoric pun involved in describing nations as 'imagined communities': a pun that plays on (and confuses) the difference between the non-real and the not-immediately visual. Gellner's emphasis on the anonymous, impersonal and unmediated nature of nations captures what is best in Anderson's notion of 'imagined' community.

31 This philosophy was later stated at length in his *Plough, Sword and Book* (London, 1988), published coterminously with the end of Gellner's long engagement with Soviet Marxist scholarship – *State and Society in Soviet Thought*, Oxford, 1988.

32 Ibid., pp. 164–71.

33 Pre-modern examples might include Iceland, Korea, Thailand and Japan.

34 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 95. This argument is odd. It excludes a widespread form of nationalism, a reforming nationalism 'from above' – imposed by a Jacobin intelligentsia on a less than modern peasantry.

35 The square brackets are mine. Gellner strangely treats this case (ibid., p. 97) as a 'nonnationalist one' though it is plainly what historians would call a 'satisfied nationalism'. This suggests that his typology was directed towards explaining nationalist conflicts rather than forms of nationalism.

36 Ibid., p. 98.

37 The contrast between ethnic nationalism and western liberal nationalism is Gellner's reworking of John Plamenatz's contrast between eastern and western (European) nationalisms – itself not dissimilar to Hans Kohn's contrast between civic and ethnic nationalisms: see J. Plamenatz, 'Two Types of Nationalism', in E. Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism* (London, 1973) and H. Kohn, *Nationalism* (Princeton, 1955). Gellner argued (*Nations and*

Nationalism, p. 101) that the key advantage of his approach is that the contrast between 'western' and 'eastern' nationalism emerged logically from the three dimensions of his typology.

38 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 101–9.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 63–87.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 65. The emphasis is mine.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–50.

45 See *inter alia*: G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, Oxford, 1978, pp. 249–96; J. Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 27–37; and B. O'Leary, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Oriental Despotism, Historical Materialism and Indian History*, Oxford, 1989, chs. 4–5.

46 P. Anderson, 'Science, Politics, Enchantment', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *Transition to Modernity: Essays on Power, Wealth and Belief*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 207.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

48 I use the expressions 'modern society' and 'modernisation' throughout, in anticipation of the difficulties attached to Gellner's arguments about the relationships between nationalism and industrialisation.

49 See Jon Elster's formalisation of functionalist argumentation, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 28–35 and *Explaining Technical Change*, Cambridge, 1983.

50 Elster, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, p. 30.

51 The same logic explains why nationalists were often liberal feminists, promoting the education of boys and girls, and men and women, outside the home in national educational systems.

52 J. J. Rousseau, *The Government of Poland*, trans. W. Kendall, Indianapolis, 1985, ch. 12 and ch. 4.

53 This is the principal burden of M. Mann, 'The Emergence of Modern European Nationalism', in Hall and Jarvie, eds., *Power, Wealth and Belief*.

54 There are multiple suggestive – and ambiguous – passages in his writings on this theme. Compare two paragraphs (from his *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, 1981) separated by a few pages:

The elective affinity of scripturalist rigorism or fundamentalism with the social and political needs of the period of industrialisation or 'development' is fairly clear . . . it may well be that, for the viability of a religion, its specific doctrines on faith and morals matter far less than their spirit. Whether that spirit can also remain compatible with an economically developed society, as opposed to a developing one, remains to be seen.(p. 61)

The two processes, 'purification' or radicalisation of religion, and nationalism, are often intimately intertwined, to a degree that it is hard to say which one is 'merely' the external form of the other.(p. 59)

55 In responding to Gellner, Kedourie advanced the remarkable view (*Nationalism*, p. 148), which does not survive any historical scrutiny, that 'the areas . . . where industrialism first appeared and made the greatest progress, i.e., Great Britain and the United States of America, are precisely those areas

where nationalism is unknown'. Only a truly deferential child of the British empire could hold such a pious view.

- 56 See *inter alia* H. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, London, 1977, pp. 15–88, which treats the British, French, Irish, Iberian, Dutch, Scandinavian, Swiss and Russian nations as 'old and continuous'.
- 57 J. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, 1982 and A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986. Smith, however, happily concedes the discontinuity between modern nationalism and pre-modern 'ethnicism' – his criticism of Gellner is that this discontinuity builds on historical continuity, i.e. a modern nation is most successfully constructed when it builds on an actual ethnic communal base.
- 58 Smith, 'Book Review', pp. 280–2.
- 59 L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, MA, 1992. Greenfeld's position on the relationship between nationalism and modernity is more extremist, and more indefensible, than Gellner's. For her, 'modernity is defined by nationalism', and she wants to reverse the normal order of causality – maintaining both that nationalism precedes and causes modernity and that it is constitutive of it (pp. 18, 21).
- 60 The same point is made forcefully by his chief protagonist, Kedourie: 'Nationalist ideology spread in areas like Greece, the Balkans and other parts of the Ottoman Empire when they were innocent of industrialisation' (*Nationalism*, p. 148).
- 61 The 'vast disagreement among eminent authorities' on the modernity of nationalism 'has been made possible by the near absence of conclusive evidence. The fact that members of the ruling elite or intelligentsia manifest national sentiment is not sufficient to establish that national consciousness has permeated the value system of the masses. And the masses, until recent times totally or semi-illiterate, furnished few hints concerning their view of group-self' – W. Connor, 'When Is a Nation?', in his *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, 1994, p. 214.
- 62 The conceptual confusions are illustrated by Greenfeld's opening gambit: The word 'nationalism' is used here as an umbrella term under which are subsumed the related phenomena of national identity (or nationality) and consciousness, and collectivities based on them – nations; occasionally, it is employed to refer to the articulate ideology on which national identity and consciousness rest, though not – unless specified – to the politically activist, xenophobic variety of national patriotism, which it frequently designates. (Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, p. 1)
This strategy elides the admittedly much-tangled concept of nation, national identity, national consciousness, patriotism, nationality and nationalism. No wonder that 'nationalism' can be found in the 1500s if the term has such empirical range – though lay usage admittedly accepts this approach.
Connor has been a stern critic of 'terminological chaos' in this field: see 'A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a . . .', in his *Ethnonationalism*.
- 63 Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 18. Smith recognises that nationalism has the etymological range which Greenfeld suggests, but narrows his definition – in his *National Identity*, London, 1991, pp. 72ff. – to 'an

ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential "nation".

64 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 74–5.

65 Ibid., pp. 110–22.

66 The most feasible form in which widespread secessionism will occur across Europe will be in departures from the European Union if it becomes a federation – with the late entrants with glorious imperial pasts as the most likely anti-federalists, viz., the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark and Austria. Given that the European Union has been deprived of its recent geopolitical rationale, and has to rely largely upon materialist incentives for cooperation, it may become subject to the predictable strains that nationalism brings to federal systems.

67 A proper answer to the question 'has there been a nationalist revival in the liberal advanced industrialised OECD?' would require hard data on (a) support for nationalist movements and parties; (b) the formation and impact of new nationalist parties, and nationalist grievances; (c) evidence of relearning of old languages and cultural traditions; (d) opinion poll data on nationalist secessionist of (re-)unification sentiment; and (e) irridentist/jingoistic political rhetoric amongst politicians, intelligentsias and mass media.

68 See B. O'Leary and J. McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*, London, 1993, ch. 8; B. O'Leary, T. Lyne, J. Marshall and B. Rowthorn, *Northern Ireland: Sharing Authority*, London, 1993; and J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images*, Oxford, 1995, especially ch. 9.

69 For example, James Mayall's otherwise excellent *Nationalism and International Society*, Cambridge, 1990 (especially p. 64) suggested that legal and political opinion within the state-system, and the geopolitical interests of the two superpowers, had placed an effective moratorium on the prospects of further secessions. Perhaps Mayall's mistake was to suggest that 'there are no more empires to collapse'.

70 We were all expected to become monocultured, though our monoculture would be the rationalisation of all cultures. In efficient states we would eat Italian food, listen to Mozart on Sony Walkmans, distribute welfare like the Swedes and make love like the French; in inefficient states we would eat American food, listen to Swedish pop music on Korean tape recorders, distribute welfare like the Italians and make love like the English.

71 A. Cobban, *The Nation State and National Self-Determination*, Glasgow, 1969, pp. 83–4 notes that 'The more we study the Peace Conference, the less it seems to have been under the control of the principle of self-determination.'

72 Gellner recognised that the major difference between Edward Carr and himself was that the latter was interested in the impact of nationalism on the state-system, whereas he was interested in the societal transformation (from 'Agraria' to 'Industria') which generates nationalism. See Gellner's 'Nationalism and the International Order', in his *Encounters with Nationalism*.

73 Ibid., p. 100.

- 74 In any case there are difficulties with the alleged 'western liberal nationalisms'. These are supposed to have been the civil-territorial forms, by contrast with the ethnic-communitarian types of the Hapsburg lands. Britain, France and the USA are meant to be the exemplars of western liberal nationalism. Yet the Catholics of the British Isles, the provincials and Jews of France, and the Red Indians and black slaves of the USA do not have histories which resonate with this 'type'. It seems best to say that civic nationalism is the name often given to the nationalism of a people who already have a state or territorial unit of government; whereas ethnic nationalism is the name often given to a people who do not have such an identity. This problem is not, however, Gellner's alone: it starts with the first academic treatments of nationalism, in the writings of Hans Kohn and Carlton Hayes.
- 75 Peter Alter usefully distinguishes 'risorgimento nationalism', 'reform nationalism' and 'integral nationalism' (*Nationalism*, London, 1985); Wolfgang Mommsen differentiates liberal, imperialist, fascist and contemporary nationalisms ('The Varieties of the Nation-state in Modern History: Liberal, Imperialist, Fascist and Contemporary Notions of Nation and Nationality', in M. Mann, ed., *The Rise and Decline of the Nation-State*, Oxford, 1990); whilst John A. Hall distinguishes nationalisms 'from above', nationalisms based on 'desire and fear blessed by opportunity' (Latin America), risorgimento nationalism, integral nationalism, decolonising nationalism and nationalism by trade (*Coercion and Consent*, Oxford, 1994).
- 76 Ibid., p. 55. This statement sits oddly with a later (p. 138) disclaimer: 'It is not claimed that, even in the modern world, nationalism is the only force operating, or an irresistible one.'
- 77 J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, 'Introduction: The Macro-Political Regulation of Ethnic Conflict', in J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts*, London, 1993.
- 78 Ibid. Federation includes all types of genuine territorial autonomy. Mixed types are also possible: e.g. a democratic condominium in a bicultural region could combine principles of arbitration, federation and consociation.
- 79 See the sober case studies in W. J. Durch, ed., *The Evolution of UN Peace-keeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis*, New York, 1993.
- 80 Social democratic and more conservative appraisals of the United Kingdom as a multinational state can be found respectively in R. Parry, 'State and Nation in the United Kingdom', in M. Messner, K. Armes and K. Martin, eds., *State and Nation in Multiethnic Societies*, Manchester, 1991 and R. Rose, *Understanding the United Kingdom: The Territorial Dimension in Government*, Harlow, 1982.
- 81 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 138.
- 82 The 'people' of course were narrowly defined to exclude women and slaves in the American case, and women in the French example.
- 83 See, for example, T. Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratisation: A Comparative Study of 147 States*, New York, 1990. Gellner would have rejected the socio-biological foundations of Vanhanen's arguments – which, in my judgement, are inessential to Vanhanen's case – but he would have shared Vanhanen's view of the inescapability of hierarchy in agro-literate polities.

- 84 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 124–5. Compare the verdict reached by Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*, pp. 14–15): ‘unlike other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes or Webers’. Therefore, he reasons, nationalism should not be compared with political doctrines, but rather with kinship and religion.
- It is strange not to classify Weber as a nationalist grand thinker, stranger still that Rousseau, Burke, John Stuart Mill and Friedrich List are not seen as nationalist grand thinkers, and exceedingly odd, and I say this as an atheist, to imply that religion has never produced its grand thinkers.
- 85 Gellner’s contempt is more provocative than the inaccurate and cliché-ridden view that nationalism is the ‘starkest political shame of the twentieth century, the deepest, most intractable, and yet most unanticipated blot on the political history of the world since the year 1900’ (J. Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 55). The starkest political shames of the twentieth century were the genocidal regimes of Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union, both formally transnational in nature. The most unanticipated blot on our history in this century was also provided by these regimes. Nationalism by contrast helped to destroy both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and to bring down the other European empires.
- 86 Burke can be read, like Rousseau, as an exponent of the thesis that nations have the right to resist rulers who do not meet the obligations expected of them by organically developed nations, and List consistently advocated a system of national economy for the USA and France as well as his native Germany – on which see R. Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List*, New York, 1991, pp. 96–114.
- 87 See *inter alia* D. Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford, 1995, Y. Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, 1993 and M. Lind, ‘In Defence of Liberal Nationalism’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, 1994. These authors are not, of course, identical, nor am I saying that I entirely agree with any one of them.
- 88 B. Barry, ‘Nationalism’, in D. Miller, J. Coleman, W. Connolly and A. Ryan, eds., *The Basil Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 352–4.
- 89 For a conservative’s perplexed glance at national self-determination, see Kedourie’s *Nationalism*, pp. 62–91.
- 90 D. P. Moynihan calls his recent diatribe against self-determination *Pandemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics*, Oxford, 1993, while A. Etzioni lists ‘The Evils of Self-Determination’, *Foreign Policy*, vol. 89, 1992.
- 91 See H. Beran’s ‘A Liberal Theory of Secession’, *Political Studies*, vol. 32, 1984 for a provisional attempt to grapple with these issues. Neither Buzan nor his critics think his article is the final word on the subject.
- 92 O’Leary and McGarry, *The Politics of Antagonism*, ch. 8; O’Leary, Lyne, Marshall and Rowthorn, *Northern Ireland*; and McGarry and O’Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland*, ch. 9.
- 93 Barry, ‘Nationalism’.
- 94 Brian Barry provides an astringent review of the arguments of cosmopolitan liberals who believe in the unrestrained movement of people and money in ‘The Quest for Consistency: a Sceptical View’, in B. Barry and R. Goodin,

eds., *Free Movement: Ethical Issues in the Transnational Migration of People and of Money*, University Park Pennsylvania, 1992.

- 95 C. C. O'Brien, 'A Lost Chance to Save the Jews', *New York Review of Books*, vol. 30, 1989. Gellner wrote an incisive criticism of O'Brien's views on nationalism, which is now in *Encounters with Nationalism*.
- 96 Gellner, *Nationalism*, pp. 11–13.
- 97 *Ibid.*, pp. 90–101.
- 98 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 99 *Nationalism* is not definitive on this issue. Perhaps Gellner simply meant that the Greeks were the first Europeans to rise in nationalist form against the settlement of the Congress of Vienna, but since he appears to claim that the Congress of Vienna is stage 1 in demarcating the history of nationalism in Europe he is vulnerable to my charge of simple error about the timing and location of the first nationalist risings.
- 100 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', p. 7.
- 101 In an exemplary illustration of the merits of comparison, Rogers Brubaker has made a strong case for arguing that for many entities the post-Soviet period is rather like the post-Versailles era (*Nationalism Reframed*, Cambridge, 1996, especially chs. 2 and 5).
- 102 Gellner recognised (in *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 29), the Republic of Ireland as the sole case leading to major frontier adjustment in time-zone 1, but states that it is 'not clear' whether the separation of Belgium from Holland or Norway from Sweden should count as 'specimens of modern nationalism'. The latter anomalies are interesting: if the secessions of Belgium and Norway were not specimens of modern nationalism then what type of nationalism were they – proto-modern?
- 103 Gellner, *Muslim Society*.
- 104 Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 85.
- 105 Gellner, *Nationalism Observed*, pp. 102–8.
- 106 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- 107 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
- 108 Anyone who wants to read a delightful assault on Oakeshottian political philosophy should read Gellner's response (pp. 8–13) to Ken Minogue.
- 109 Gellner also replied to people like the present author who embrace some liberal nationalist ideas. He argued that we should not make nationalists a present of their ontology, e.g. by endorsing the notion that nations should be free. However, a *tu quoque* is in order here. As Gellner acknowledged, I, like him, regard nations as a largely modern phenomenon; moreover, just as he claimed he did, I acknowledge that nations are authentically felt expressions of collective identity. So apparently the only real difference between us is this. He did want to devalue the authenticity of present national identifications by explaining their origins – refusing nationalists their ontology. But this is precisely what he accused me of being wrong to do with his arguments when I charged them with reductionism, i.e. I was accused of assuming that his explanation of nationalism somehow denied the authenticity of nationalist sentiment. It is a shame that we could not have had this debate, preferably with wine and food.
- 110 Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 118.

Part II

The classical criticisms

3 Real and constructed: the nature of the nation

Miroslav Hroch

When, thirty years ago, I began to write my book about the social composition of the leaders of national movements, it was not my intention to present a 'theory' of the origins of nations.¹ My aim was far more modest: to determine just which social circumstances were favourable for the successful spread of national consciousness among the broad mass of the population – in other words the conditions for the success of those activities which I grouped together under the term 'national agitation'. At the same time I hoped to clarify the place of the Czech 'national revival' in the European context. If I had any ambitions beyond the realm of empirical research, these lay in the field of methods rather than theory: I tried to demonstrate the utility of comparative methods at a time when their use was not yet a commonplace in European (and even less in Czech) historiography. I also aimed to investigate the possibilities of quantification as a modified form of 'Namierism'.

In order to apply comparative methods, it was first necessary to select an approach which would exclude voluntarism and above all avoid the error of attempting to compare things that are not comparable. Therefore it was necessary to define the subject of comparison (the 'nation' or 'nationality') and to choose a set of processes involved in the formation of nations that have enough features in common so as to be brought together under a single type. My definition of the 'nation' at that time was thus a wholly provisional one intended to promote a better understanding of the issues. Behind all this of course stood a certain theoretical conception: the view that the great social group known as the 'nation' was formed in historical time, that it really exists in the present and may thus serve as an object of empirical research far more conveniently than the irrational and foggy notion of 'nationalism'.

As the objects to be compared I chose only those which belonged to one of two basic types of processes of national formation, the one which I called the 'formation of smaller nations' – in traditional terminology a 'national revival'. Here the adjective 'smaller' had a qualitative rather

than quantitative connotation. This consisted in the fact that, at the beginning of its development towards a modern national state, the 'smaller nation' lacked its own ruling classes, while its language had been significantly weakened, so that it possessed only an enfeebled or interrupted literary tradition. Its leaders were just launching their efforts to gain the sympathy of the people for their idea of the nation and to win recognition from the ruling state-nation. I called this twin effort a 'national movement'.

In order to compare national movements it was necessary to establish a periodisation which would not only permit a synchronic comparison but also one according to analogous situations. Of the three phases of the national movement I chose the second, 'Phase B', that of national agitation, in which the decision was taken to proceed to a mass-based national movement. The criterion of comparison, then, was the social and territorial composition or origin of the national leaders, the 'pioneers' of the agitation in Phase B of the national movement. This composition was not limited to a consideration of professional grouping but also included the wider context of property, relation to the state, position in the distribution of goods, and varying life-styles – in short membership of classes (landlords, yeomen, urban middle class) and social groups (various categories of officials, professionals, craftsmen, students, clergy).

The English translation of the book was prepared at the end of the 1970s, at a time when publication in western Europe, even of an old manuscript, carried the risk of repression at home. For a number of reasons publication was delayed, so that the book appeared only after the new and significant theoretical works by Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner, but too soon for me to be able even to refer to them in the preface or notes.² It therefore appeared in the context of those studies which attempted a comprehensive theory, and so it was judged in a context which its author had not anticipated when it was written twenty years earlier.³ This explains, among other things, why the book devotes scant attention to analysis of the relationship between the 'revival' of the nation and the social transformations during the transition to modern society, even though the author, inspired by historical materialism, considered this relationship to be of decisive importance and practically self-evident.⁴

At the time the book was written, the problems of the formation of nations were considered to be outdated, and 'nationalism' itself was studied as an antiquated deviation, a historical error.⁵ This represented an advantage for scholarly analysis: it was possible to work free of ideological constraint, independently, especially when the chief object of

analysis was quantification of social and geographical structures. Practically no models existed, and thus it was not difficult to choose path-breaking procedures and to open new horizons.

Since the 1960s, of course, conditions have changed: new researchers appeared on the scene, and the informational base expanded. The need to explain and clarify the process of the formation of modern nations took on the aspect of a currently relevant task for the social sciences, and the study of 'nationalism' was raised to a political and ethical duty. In these circumstances it was necessary to reckon with a scholarly boom in the field and with the advisability of presenting as quickly as possible the most original and effective results. The social sciences saw an over-production of new theories; on the other hand, historians recognised that they could not limit themselves to mere empiricism. They were also obliged to take into account the findings of the social sciences, at least at the level of middle-range theories.⁶

With the growing number of studies, a certain terminological poverty became increasingly widespread – especially the monotonous and unreflected repetition of the term 'nationalism' in the most varied contexts and applied to the most varied phenomena. Sometimes an individual state of mind is meant, sometimes that of a certain group or even of an entire society. Sometimes the term is applied to the activities of individuals, sometimes to that of groups.⁷ The result is frequent misunderstanding and an inability to provide explanation. If we regard 'nationalism' as the prime mover, then we merely shift the explanation from the level of empirically grasped social activity to that of a 'state of mind', which is not susceptible to historical investigation. This is perhaps the reason why contemporary historical research on 'nationalism' has yielded so few relevant (i.e. generalising) results. I do not presume to pass judgement on the results of research in the social sciences.

As long as the historian has not given up on perceiving development in causal contexts, then the notion that the nation is a mere myth or construct will be of little help, as will the authoritative *a priori* thesis that the conflict of nations is unrepresented in history.⁸ Even if national identity is not the sole determinant of an individual's place in society, one cannot ignore the fact that from a certain point in the history of modern Europe there have existed large groupings of people who are integrated by a combination of several kinds of relationships (economic, historical, political, religious, linguistic, cultural, geographical, etc.), and by their subjective perception of a collective consciousness of belonging together. Many of these ties could be mutually substitutable, but among them, three stand out as irreplaceable: a memory of a common past, treated as a destiny of the group; a density of linguistic or

religious ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group than beyond it; and a conception of the equality of all members of the group organised as a civil society. The fact that members of these groups term themselves as a 'nation' – a term whose equivalents in different languages have varying connotations – is no reason to doubt the existence of such groups. These, or similar groups, would still exist if they were assigned another verbal designation or some sort of code.

This does not mean that nations should be regarded as eternal categories. In this connection it is necessary to note that I have used the term 'revival' in a metaphorical sense, though it is a term which comes from a vocabulary characteristic of the primordialist vision of the nation and was a typical commonplace for the national movements of the nineteenth century. But if we wish to analyse the processes of national formation, we must take into account the fact that objective relationships and ties, which were characteristic of the coherence of a large group (the nation), took centuries to be formed.⁹ The process whereby nations were built was not preordained or irreversible. It went through two distinct stages, of unequal length and intensity. The first stage had an extensive character and began during the Middle Ages. The second, which was intensive and decisive, took place during the nineteenth century and was a part of that basic social transformation referred to above.

The relation between the formation of nations and this transformation occupies a key place in our discussion. Some authors, such as Hans Kohn and his followers, limit this relation to the diffusion of the ideas of the French Revolution. Sometimes greater emphasis is placed on other intellectual currents, such as the influence of Herder or of German Romanticism. But the origin of nations cannot be satisfactorily explained without reference to the changes in the spheres of society, politics and economics. The fact that the rise of modern capitalist society comes in the same period as the rise of nations is not merely a chronological coincidence. At the same time I think it is unimportant whether we call the great social transformation a transition from feudal-absolutist society to capitalism, a process of modernisation, or (in Gellner's usage) a process of industrialisation.¹⁰

Two basic types of nation-forming may be distinguished, according to the starting-point of the second, decisive stage. The first was that in the early modern state-nation, as in France, the Netherlands or Sweden. The second type, which I first called the 'smaller nation', began under conditions of a non-dominant ethnic group, i.e. a group which formed an ethnic community and whose members possessed a greater or lesser degree of ethnic identity.¹¹ The non-dominant ethnic group was distin-

guished from the state-nation by three deficiencies: it lacked 'its own' nobility or ruling classes, statehood and continuous literary tradition in its own language.

Sooner or later a group of educated members of these ethnic communities reached the conclusion that their group also belonged to the category of the 'nation', but that it was still an 'unconscious' nation which needed to be awakened, revived and made aware, but also required recognition from the other, already established nations. In time there began a purposeful activity aimed at achieving all the attributes of a fully formed nation: they started a 'national movement'. The success of this movement was by no means preordained. My research was focused on this second type of nation-forming process, the national movement. Therefore the central role was occupied neither by the ideas of the French Revolution, nor by the theories of Tocqueville nor by the politics of Bismarck.

In a historical explanation, the term 'national movement' has a significant advantage over 'nationalism' in that it refers to empirically observable activity by concrete individuals. We can analyse their goals and demands, their forms of organisation, their numbers and their social composition. At the beginning of the national movements there was activity which was above all devoted to scholarly inquiry into and propagation of an awareness of the linguistic, cultural, social, economic and historical attributes of the non-dominant ethnic group (Phase A). In the ensuing period, Phase B, a new range of activists emerged, who now sought to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible to the project of creating a modern nation, by patriotic agitation. Once the major part of the population came to set special store by their national identity, a mass movement emerged – Phase C.

This periodisation, originally worked out in order to compare analogous stages of various national movements, has met with the approval of many researchers. It gradually became clear that its usefulness extended beyond its original role as a purely working approach; it can be used for the measurement of national territory, for codification of language and for determining the basic components of national identity. The attitude of the patriots, their relation to the state and to power – and also the response they elicited from within their ethnic group – varied according to which phase the national movement had attained. The same holds true for the national programme.

The essence of national agitation, which arose with Phase B, was the effort to spread the idea of national identity in an environment which until that time recognised several distinct identities. As has been mentioned, ethnic identity was stronger wherever it was supported by

institutions – ecclesiastical organisations, parliaments, armies and so forth – in which a ‘memory’ of political or cultural uniqueness survived. However, national identity cannot be reduced to a mere transformation of ethnic identity. With varying strength and social results, other identities were represented in the territory of the non-dominant ethnic groups: those defined by the state or dynasty, in a multiethnic monarchy focused upon the ruler; by the land or country, sometimes in the form of ‘land patriotism’; by the region, in the sense of enlightened patriotism; and finally by social group or religion.

In what ways did national identity differ from these older identities? In contrast with ethnic identity, national identity expressed a relationship to a large social group which (1) possessed, or should possess, a fully formed social composition, including an educated elite and an entrepreneurial class; (2) was at the same time a community of citizens enjoying equal rights; (3) acknowledged a body of ‘higher culture’ in the national language; (4) combined an awareness of a common origin with an awareness of a common destiny, to create a historical ‘personalised’ collectivity.

The relationship between national and state identity depended to a decisive degree on the level of modernisation attained during Phase B of the national movement. Wherever the idea of the state was still formed by the dynastic identity of the absolutist monarchy, the efforts towards a new, national identity could focus on a combination of the civic principle and cultural uniqueness. Wherever a constitutional system and civic society had appeared before the inauguration of Phase B, it became far more difficult to make national identity independent of state identity, as for example in Catalonia, Scotland or Slovakia.

In contrast to the premodern state identity, regional identity was compatible with national identity and in certain situations could act as a preparation for it. The difference lay in the fact that enlightened regional patriotism was based chiefly on the idea of the responsibility of the educated elite for the life of the people of the given region and on the moral obligation to be useful for these people. Its goal, then, was not the mobilisation of the mass of the people. What is now regarded as regionalism already posits the existence of a mass regional identity and depends upon it. This identity is of course based on vaguely defined borders, it usually lacks a firm awareness of ethnic community and a personalised conception of a common past.

The national movement did not operate in a social and political vacuum. Members of non-dominant ethnic groups lived in multiethnic states which had their ruling elites, administrations, and their fully developed social composition. The leaders of the national movements

therefore had to adopt an attitude towards the internal conditions of the given state and participate in its internal conflicts. The basic problem was the process of social transformation and modernisation mentioned earlier. Wherever the national movement began under conditions of late absolutism, it was obliged to take up a stance towards that system, and its social and cultural demands, whatever the intentions of the movement's leaders, were inevitably aimed against the old regime, even when their goal was only modernisation through reforms.¹²

The structure of the demands of national movements corresponded roughly to those missing elements which excluded them from the ranks of the fully-fledged nations. We may divide these demands into three groups:

- (i) Cultural and linguistic demands: the development of a national culture based on the local language and its normal use in literature, education, administration and political life.
- (ii) Political demands: the achievement of civil rights and political self-administration and participation; later also autonomy and independence.
- (iii) Social demands: here the specific demands varied according to the prevailing social and economic situation – emancipation of the peasantry, better conditions for the crafts, access to education, and so forth. However, all national movements endeavoured to attain a complete social structure within the ethnic group, including an educated elite, an entrepreneurial and sometimes a landowning class.

The combination of groups of demands varied, as did their timing, but it was not random, and certainly it cannot be inferred from the arbitrary decisions of the 'nationalists'. On the contrary, we can observe a remarkable correlation between the character of the demands and the social structure. Most of the national movements pursued cultural, linguistic and social goals during Phase B, while political demands were formulated only at the beginning or during the course of Phase C. However, some national movements already formulated political demands during Phase B, sometimes demanding complete independence (the Greeks, Norwegians, Serbs, Poles), at others only aiming for autonomy (the Irish, Hungarians). If we ask what these national movements had in common, the answer is clear: they were movements of ethnic groups which possessed 'their own' elites including 'their own' nobility or bourgeoisie. A second common feature is that these ethnic groups could point to the sometime existence of 'their own' state and demand its renewal.¹³

As mentioned earlier, the process of nation-forming acquired an irreversible character only once the national movement had won mass support, thereby reaching Phase C. This is a fact which has escaped most contemporary theoreticians of 'nationalism'. We know of a number of cases in which the national movement remained in Phase B for a long time, sometimes down to the present: here we may point to Wales, Brittany, Belarus or the eastern Ukraine. How can these differences be explained? Certainly not by reference to 'nationalism': for if we wish, we can find it everywhere.

The question of the 'success' of the national movement cannot be posed in the abstract, but concretely within the individual phases of the national movement. Three analytical levels need to be distinguished:

- (i) Why did some of the patriots from Phase A decide to begin national agitation? In other words, why did Phase B begin?
- (ii) Why did their national agitation win a mass response, and why was the national movement able to proceed to Phase C?
- (iii) Why and in what circumstances did the national movement achieve its cultural, social and political goals?

The first level of the problem has so far been accorded scant attention in empirical research.¹⁴ But we may infer the basic connections by evaluating the conditions in which the decision in favour of a new national identity was taken. This always occurred during a crisis of the old regime (whether we choose to emphasise its absolutist or its feudal character) at a time when the old relations and ties were disrupted and opened to doubt, and when the old religious legitimacy was challenged. The ruling elites – or more specifically some of their members – reacted to this crisis of the old regime with efforts at reform from above, at a systematic modernisation by decree. The immediate outcome of these reforms was of course a further disruption of the existing relations and certainties, and hence also of identity.

We may recall for example, that Phase B of the national movements in the Hapsburg monarchy began with reaction to the Josephine Reforms and to the shocks of the Napoleonic wars, which also certainly resulted in the turn towards the official Austrian state identity. The national movement in tsarist Russia reacted to the crisis of the monarchy in the 1850s and the ensuing reforms of Alexander II. The beginning of the Serbian and Greek struggles for independence followed immediately upon the political tremors within the Ottoman empire, which were preceded by Selim III's efforts to reform the backward system and which continued during the Napoleonic period.

Of course it must be admitted that in the beginning the weakening of

old certainties and the old system of values was only perceived by those who possessed a certain breadth of outlook and education; they concluded that it was necessary to search for new certainties and to create a new system of values which would correspond to the modern age. For some of them the solution was to look for new certainties in a new type of identity: by identifying with a group of equal citizens bound together by a common culture, destiny, social position, language and so forth.

For this new type of group solidarity the term 'nation' offered itself, and in many cases it echoed an analogous historical community to which it was possible to subscribe. Thus the term 'nation' was able to take on a new connotation, sometimes (though not always) under the influence of the French Revolution, which imparted to it the attributes of a political programme. The comparative study of the different connotations which the term 'nation' had at the beginning of Phase B (or also during Phase A) in the varying linguistic contexts of the European national movements would be an attractive theme for future scholars.¹⁵

The success of national agitation during Phase B, as has been mentioned, was a basic factor in the successful outcome of the nation-forming process within the non-dominant ethnic group. If national agitation is evaluated in this way, then the question arises of whether the modern nation cannot be regarded as the result of a wilful decision on the part of the 'nationalists'. Is it not possible to agree with Gellner's view that a 'rival conclusion' may be drawn from my analysis – that it was 'nationalism' that created nations?¹⁶

If this were the case, we would have to explain why it occurred to nobody at the beginning of the nineteenth century to launch a campaign to persuade, for example, the Irish that they were in fact Germans, or to win over the Hungarians to the notion that they were actually Chinese. What explains the failure to create a Slavic nation, as the Pan-Slavists attempted, or an Illyrian nation? Why did the idea of a united Czechoslovak nation fail among the Slovaks, even though in the interwar period the Czechoslovak Republic possessed all the necessary means of effective agitation to put across this view of state and national identity?

The answer is simple. The basic condition for the success of any agitation (not only national agitation) is that its argument at least roughly corresponds to reality as perceived by those to whom it is directed. National agitation therefore had to (and normally did) begin with the fact that, quite independently of the will of the 'patriots', certain relations and ties had developed over the centuries which united those people towards whom the agitation was directed. They formed a community united by inward ties, and they were at least vaguely aware

of this. There was of course a further psychological condition that was not entirely evident: this was the ability of the targets of national agitation to conceive of the existence of 'their' group outside the framework of their everyday experience.¹⁷ This conception in turn depended on the degree of education and the personal experiences of individuals. These were not circumstances which the agitators could themselves create or influence; they were results of the process of modernisation.

Along with these elementary and general conditions for successful agitation, four further factors must be mentioned, for taken together they were of decisive importance. The first was the successful course of Phase A: successful in so far as it clearly distinguished the nation-to-be from its neighbours, codified the language, provided basic information about the 'national' past, and so forth. The second was a basic level of vertical social mobility: some educated people must come from the non-dominant ethnic group without being assimilated. The third necessary condition was an increasing level of social communication, including literacy, schooling and market relations.

While these three conditions are more or less generally accepted as necessary to the nation-forming process, the fourth factor in national integration was more controversial. I have termed this factor a 'nationally relevant conflict of interests', i.e. a social or professional tension or collision that could be mapped onto linguistic divisions. Although I emphasised that these nationally relevant conflicts of interests 'definitely cannot be reduced to fundamental antagonisms' such as those between tenants and landlords, Gellner based his criticism of my book on the assertion that I had reduced history to the history of class conflicts and had explained the formation of nations as a result of such conflicts.¹⁸ In any case, among the examples of nationally relevant conflicts of interests I pointed chiefly to conflicts which *cannot* be classified in the repertory of class conflict.¹⁹

Especially it was the conflict between new university graduates coming from a non-dominant ethnic group and a closed elite from the ruling nation keeping a hereditary grip on leading positions in the state. Further, I pointed to the tension between craftsmen belonging to the non-dominant group and the large traders and manufacturers belonging to the dominant nation.²⁰ To these instances may be added the tension between the towns and the countryside, between the centre and the provinces, and so forth.²¹ Ultimately the struggle for positions of power may also be considered an interesting conflict.

In any case, I always used the phrase 'classes and groups' (i.e. social groups) in order to distance myself from a simplistic class 'reductionism'. On the other hand, I have searched the text in vain for the

term 'class struggle' ascribed to me by Gellner.²² Nor did I ever assert that the origin of the nation depended *exclusively* on the existence of nationally relevant conflicts of interests (they were only one of four factors), and in this connection I certainly never emphasised the class interest. Twenty-five years ago I considered 'the most outstanding and obvious result' of my empirical analysis to have been that 'no class or social group had a stable place in the structure of the patriotic communities'.²³

In interpreting the response to national agitation, I do not consider it to be of fundamental importance whether we refer to artisans or officials as 'classes' or 'social groups'. What is important is to demonstrate that national agitation was more effective wherever the conflict of interests could be articulated in national terms. And conversely, wherever the issues were only those of language and culture, or where conflicts of interests were articulated not in national, but in political terms, national agitation encountered marked difficulties, and Phase B lasted much longer, as in the case of the Flemings or Welsh.

I fully agree with Gellner's view that history 'is rich in countless kinds of conflict', and that it cannot be reduced to class conflicts.²⁴ But unlike him I believe that conflicts between classes (that is, those social groups which are distinguished by the nature of the ownership of productive forces) also have their place among these 'countless' conflicts. This difference of opinion is only a nuance in the interpretation of nation-forming and without any fundamental importance. What is important, however, is that nationally relevant conflicts of interests can only be applied as a factor in nation-forming in the case of national movements, and not in the type of nation-forming which began in the context of the nation-state. Here – in France, England, Sweden and so forth – conflicts of interests did not acquire a national relevance: they were firmly confined to the social sphere and were sometimes articulated in the political sphere. Since Gellner failed to take account of my typological distinction between two basic processes of nation-forming, it is perhaps possible to accept his criticism of the relation between class and nation in conditions of 'industrialism' as far as the first 'French' type of nation-forming is concerned, but not for the type which was the object of my analysis and which I designated as 'national movements'.²⁵

While Phase B of the national movement was chiefly a struggle for the very existence of the nation, Phase C decided the form that the emerging nation would take. This form was not defined merely by the political programme worked out by this or that national movement, which in Phase B inclined towards linguistic and cultural aims. For it was only in Phase C that most of the national communities achieved a fully formed

social structure. National elites appeared: industrialists, financiers, large traders, high officials, scholars. Meanwhile, at least a part of the peasantry or yeomanry had been won over for the national community, and there were efforts to integrate the national working class. Phase C, then, was marked by three significant novelties: first, a political programme was formulated, in which nationalism (in the proper sense of the word) was established; secondly, the nation acquired a fully-formed social composition; and third, the working class – or more precisely, an organised socialist movement – appeared on the scene.

In my view, the rise of a working-class movement was not significant, as Gellner supposes, because it signalled the end of capitalism and the rise of socialism,²⁶ but rather because the socialists offered the only relevant alternative to a national identity and nationalism, namely, a class identity and internationalism. For the study of the factors which influenced the process of nation-forming – and especially for the study of the spread of a national identity among the popular masses – the fact that this alternative did not ultimately win out is completely irrelevant.

If class identity did not in most cases replace national identity, this has its reasons which are susceptible to analysis, though this theme exceeds the scope of the present chapter. Apart from this, the rise of the socialist workers' movement is also of significance for the study of the nation-forming process itself. The Austro-Marxists (above all Otto Bauer) were the first to criticise the myth of the eternal nation, and the Marxist discussion concerning the relation between the working class and the national movements set the agenda for the ensuing discussion of the phenomenon of 'nationalism'.²⁷

That which we characterise as the political programme of the national movement contained several elements which emerged gradually and in connection with broad political changes within the given multiethnic state. The demand for local self-administration emerged quite early: the struggle for influence in 'City Hall' provided the first political school for most of the national movements. Another level of political demands was participation, which of course was only practicable within a constitutional regime. The demand for participation was followed by that for autonomy, that is, the possibility to take decisions within territory which the leaders of the national movement considered 'their own'.

If we accept Balibar's view that 'the bourgeoisie was always the state bourgeoisie',²⁸ it is logical that the demand for autonomy or statehood could appear in the programme of the national movement only after the social composition of the emerging nation had been completed, i.e. that it also included the bourgeoisie (or some parts of nobility as its substitute – as in the case of Hungary). Also connected with the

completion of the social composition was the internal differentiation of political programmes, which found its institutional expression in the appearance of political parties. It is symptomatic, and part of the nature of national movements, that all the political parties emphasised general national interests along with their particular party demands.

When can we consider the national movement to have been finished? On the plane of theory, the usual answer is: after it has achieved all attributes of a fully-fledged nation. But on the concrete plane, the question remains of what we consider to be the fulfilment of the individual elements of the national programme. This is especially important for the political programme. While full linguistic equality and cultural emancipation can be achieved in conditions of political autonomy, it remains debatable whether we can consider autonomy to be the 'fulfilment' of the political demands. Surely much depends on the degree of autonomy. With Dualism, Hungary practically became a national state, so that here we may speak of a completion of the national movement. On the other hand, Finnish or Galician autonomy was far from being able to create the conditions for a full national self-administration.

Full independence in the form of a nation-state, then, was part of the political programme of only some of the European national movements (Norwegian, Polish, Irish), while in most cases the right of self-determination was limited to autonomy. If in spite of this most of the national movements in fact ended with the formation of a nation-state, this was not the fruit of a deliberate and long-term effort on the part of the national leaders; rather it was a consequence of external events. The disintegration of three multiethnic empires at the end of World War I (together with the policies of the Allied powers) opened the way to national independence. Therefore it is a mistake to project the outcome back into the past and assign credit for eventual state independence to all political programmes of the nineteenth century.²⁹

In conclusion, I do not believe that my explanation of nation-forming was merely an unintended 'alternative vision' to Gellner's theory. On the contrary, it seems to me that our approaches to the basic question are concurrent: our shared view is that nation-forming must be explained and understood in the context of the great social and cultural transformation that ushered in the modern age. As a historian I cannot conceive of this transformation in the abstract but rather as a shift in relations among real, actually existing people, who had their specific interests and concrete social background, while their social and economic interests cannot be trivialised as a fiction or 'stereotype'. I also agree with Gellner that it would be a mistake to reduce the social and

cultural situation to relations between the classes. However, such a reduction cannot be ascribed to me. The basic difference of opinion lies elsewhere: I cannot accept the view that nations are a mere 'myth', nor do I accept Gellner's global understanding of nationalism as an all-purpose explanation including categories of which the nation is a mere derivative.³⁰ The relation between the nation and national consciousness (or national identity, or 'nationalism') is not one of unilateral derivation but one of mutual and complementary correlation, and the discussion about which of them is 'primary' can, at least for the present, be left to the philosophers and ideologues.

NOTES

John A. Hall encouraged me to contribute to this collection an explanation of my conception of nation-forming, in part as an answer to Gellner's recent critique of my work. I complied only after hesitation, and I regret that my reply appears after the death of this outstanding scholar.

- 1 The book appeared in German in Prague in 1968: *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae Philosophica et Historica, Monographia XXIV.
- 2 *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, Cambridge, 1985.
- 3 Thus it is flattering but chronologically inaccurate for Gellner to see – as he does in *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994, ch. 14 – my book of 1968 as 'an alternative vision' to his own 1983 monograph.
- 4 Whether we apply to this process of transformation the term 'transition from traditional to modern society' or 'transition from agrarian to industrial society' is not, I think, of any great importance.
- 5 Typical in this respect is E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London, 1960.
- 6 The most noteworthy result of this trend in recent years was the interdisciplinary conference held in Santiago de Compostela in 1993, the papers of which appeared in two volumes as J. G. Beramendi, R. Maiz and S. M. Nunez, eds., *Nationalism in Europe: Past and Present*, Santiago de Compostela, 1994.
- 7 Gellner's characterisation of my book as a study of nationalism suggests a serious misunderstanding. I never used the word 'nationalism' because I do not consider it an appropriate tool for scholarly analysis. Nor does the content of my book deal with an attitude that I would characterise as 'nationalist'.
- 8 Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 199.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 185–6. Gellner's presupposition that I do not recognise the 'earlier roots' (i.e. the pre-modern stage) of national development is again the result of misunderstanding. In a book about the social composition of nineteenth-century patriots, which did not aim at developing a general theory, there was no reason to discuss earlier developments, except for occasional remarks at

the beginning of particular case studies – on which, see *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, pp. 33, 44, 86, 98, etc.

- 10 Gellner's understanding of the terms 'industrialisation' and 'industrial' differs from that of most historians. In his text they do not refer to the age in which machine production was introduced in the factories but to the appearance of new forms of enterprise, social mobility and shifts in ownership patterns – in other words, roughly the sense of the category 'transition to capitalist society'. This is also the source of his mistaken impression that I did not place the process of nation-forming in the context of this great transformation. This context was for me self-evident: the difficulty lies only in the fact that Gellner's term 'industrialisation' was not applied to the transformation. In fact, one result of my analysis was that industrialisation (in the sense of the introduction of machine production, the rise of a modern proletariat, etc.), as far as it coincided with Phase B of the national movement, had no demonstrable influence on a positive response from the masses to national agitation. On this see *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, pp. 169ff.
- 11 I originally used the term 'smaller nations' for this type of development but now prefer the more precise 'non-dominant ethnic group', the term popularised and in a way codified by the European Science Foundation's 'Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850–1950', whose results were published in a six volume series under the same title by New York University Press, Dartmouth, 1990.
- 12 To Gellner's remark that I have assigned feudalism and absolutism to one period (*Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 183), I can only note here that I analysed the relations between the two in a book co-authored with J. Petrůň, *Das 17. Jahrhundert – Krise der Feudalgesellschaft*, Hamburg, 1981. Decisive for my not very different approach towards the problem of the formation of nations as part of the rise of modern society was that the absolutist system had more features in common with classical feudalism than with civic society.
- 13 I have analysed these and other elements of national demands in my latest study *V národním zájmu. Požadavky a cíle evropských národních hnutí v komparativní perspektivě*, Prague, 1996.
- 14 This is a serious weakness of my work of 1968 – which, however, Gellner overlooks. But even from this model we cannot explain why some individuals decided in favour of the new identity and embarked on national agitation.
- 15 On this subject there is a suggestive book by the Finnish historian A. Kemiläinen, *Nationalism: Problems Concerning the Word, the Concept and Classification*, Helsinki, 1964, which of course limits itself to the 'major' languages.
- 16 In this modification I locate the rational nucleus of Gellner's suggestion (*Encounters with Nationalism*, pp. 195ff.) that 'rival conclusions' may be drawn from the empirical data that I collected.
- 17 Benedict Anderson's metaphor of 'imagined community' must also be interpreted in this sense. In accord with this is the concept of operationalisation formulated earlier by Gail Stokes in 'Cognition and the Function of Nationalism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 4, 1976, pp. 530ff.

- 18 *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, p. 188; *Encounters with Nationalism*, pp. 196ff.
- 19 In any case, Gellner's critique contains no concrete examples of the class conflicts that he has in mind when labelling their role as a 'myth'.
- 20 *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, pp. 188ff.
- 21 M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966*, London, 1975.
- 22 I never wrote the sentence 'Class struggle on its own led to no revolution . . . was similarly ineffective' which Gellner cites (*Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 197). The quotation from my book (p. 185) actually begins 'Conflicts of interest . . .' Nor can the sentence 'It is the presence . . .' (cited by Gellner on the same page) be found in my book.
- 23 *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, p. 129.
- 24 *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 199.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 198ff. In this connection should be considered Gellner's claim that I 'map' class and cultural differences as if they were 'really independent'. I am not sure what the term 'independent' signifies in anthropology, but from a historical perspective the two phenomena cannot be regarded as 'independent', since in that case we would be unable to explain the dynamic of their change. On the contrary, the concept of 'nationally relevant conflicts of interests' is based on their functional interdependence – or, in Gellner's phrase, on the assumption that 'class and cultural differences overlap'.
- 26 If, as Gellner correctly asserts (*Encounters with Nationalism*, pp. 194ff.), I never mentioned the 'victory of socialism' or a 'socialist nation' (though both phrases would have been welcomed by the regime at the time), this surely had its reasons.
- 27 O. Bauer, *Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, Vienna, 1907; E. Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis*, London, 1991, pp. 50ff.
- 28 E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, London, 1991, p. 91.
- 29 The opinion that Gellner attributes to me (that national movements had to 'create their high culture before they could even strive for a state . . .') seems somewhat teleological. In any case, I mentioned several examples of national movements beginning to strive for a state prior to their formation of a high culture (Norwegians, Greeks, etc.).
- 30 I believe that this brief contribution convincingly shows that Gellner's critical objections to my book are based partly on misunderstanding and partly on an inadequate interpretation of my terms and concepts. I consider some of them as a demonstration of his efforts to distance his explanation from Marxism, to which in his historical materialism he was methodologically (though not politically) closer than most of the authors who have dealt with the problem of 'nationalism'. In any case, on the level of methods and working procedures, the distinctions between Marxism, 'semi-Marxism' and historical materialism are matters more of definition than principle.

4 The curse of rurality: limits of modernisation theory

Tom Nairn

Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Corsica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ngorno-Karabakh: this list of familiar trouble spots is neither complete nor extended beyond Europe, in which case it would be at least eight times longer. Originally coined for Ireland, 'troubles' in this sense have multiplied and become global, notably since 1989. No serious newspaper and few TV bulletins are without their quota of violent trouble items, which often enough make up most of the news.

Under such a barrage it is easy to feel 'trouble' as a climate of the age, and link it to one indiscriminate '-ism' or another. Yet even from the restricted sample quoted something else may spring to the eye, not so easily classified. Most such ethnonationalist conflicts seem to go on recurring in *predominantly rural situations*. Nor are these 'rural' merely in the sense of being agricultural or non-urban – like East Anglia, say, or the Beauce plain in central France. No, they are areas where 'rural' tends to mean 'peasant' – that is, where an historical pattern of small landholding prevails, or has until recently prevailed, marked by intense heritable rights, rigid morality or faith, customary exclusivity and an accompanying small-town or village culture.

It is certainly also true that the troubles are not literally confined to the countryside. Thus, Sarajevo was a key site for a good deal of what was none the less more accurately described as the Bosnian 'village war'. ETA is notoriously active and supported in the industrial suburbs of Bilbao and San Sebastian, as well as in the Basque mountain heartland. Belfast has undeniably been the focus of much of the Ulster conflict, and witnessed the forced segregation of the contending communities among different streets or quarters, as well as into separate farm towns or hamlets.

However, in none of these examples did the conflict itself originate in the cities. In Ireland, for instance, it notoriously derives on both sides from a centuries-old struggle over land rights – as Colm Tóibín wrote in his thoughtful travel book about the Northern Ireland frontier, *Walking along the Border*, it came out of the 'good and bad blood' generated by

violent expropriation, and involved both literal and land hunger.¹ Whatever else it may have become, today's Sinn Féin is also the inheritor of Republicanism's old social ideal: the rural and pious peasant family utopia which inspired the Irish constitution, and regulated most of its strategic development from 1922 until Ireland's entry to the European Community in 1975. The resultant generational warfare may penetrate or even take over cities, the urban sites to which extended families of land-dwellers have moved or (sometimes) been expelled. But the violent side of the conflicts appears invariably to have its origin in the peasant or small town world they have left behind.

Also, such violence may for a time – maybe quite a long time – be aggravated by the transition itself. 'Urbanisation' is the smooth-sounding, impersonal term for what was often an agonising process: the fearful undertow of modernity. During it rural emigrants look backward as much as forward, and pass from the remembrance to the often elaborate reinvention of the worlds they have lost. They are helped to do so by other strata without direct connection to the land. Some urban classes have a parallel if different motivation – above all, the intellectuals. They are seeking to 'mobilise' lost-world psychology in order to build a new world, that of the modern nation-state. Eventually this may owe very little to the old rural existence and its folk memories; yet while the original nation-building alliance holds good the debt feels important, and will go on finding expression in myths of rootedness. Hence many traits of the abandoned world may continue to 'haunt' an existence in other ways apparently broken in to city existence and civic conditions.

It seems to me there is another term for such haunting: ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is in essence a peasantry transmuted (at least in ideal terms) into a nation. It is the breath and reverberation of modernity's undertow, the deepest voice of 'transition'. Granted, the formation of modern national identities has notoriously involved a multiplicity of other factors, all attended to by different brands of social scientist: states, frontiers, literacy, industrialisation, school systems, symbols and complex cultural artefacts. But it can be read along this other axis too. Underneath all the accumulating paraphernalia of the modern lies a prolonged and massive social Calvary out of peasant subsistence and towards eventual urban interdependence. On that level of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* journey terrible accidents have been common. Peasantries may be 're-imagined' essentially as a form of leverage, a way of helping to erect the modern nation, and in the end such imagining of communities may turn into Green Politics and ecology. However, it is not impossible for the instrumental lever to

assume a life of its own and (at least for a time) to take over and dominate the processes by which nations are built.

The late Edward Thompson liked to insist that the working class was present at its own birth: the new workers were not only modelled by impersonal forces, he explained in *The Making of the English Working Class*,² but helped to *make* even their early history. But most 'workers' originated as ex-peasants. In many parts of the world they for long tried to combine aspects of both fates, and still do so today – most strikingly in the East Asian societies representing the latest round of industrial development. Nor, when it came to 'making', have they operated exclusively in the social, forward and outward-looking spirit most approved of by our century's socialists. Escape or flight backwards or sideways have also figured prominently – movement away from the rules of a 'progress' whose burdens or sacrifices came to seem (or were made to seem) insupportable. Occasionally such flights have taken the form of short-cuts to Utopia, a magically foreshortened 'end of history'.

One of the most revealing took place in Cambodia, between 1975 and 1979. There, a significant and concentrated historical attempt was made literally to reverse the entire process – to abort urbanisation altogether and forcibly reconstitute peasant society into a different sort of nation. In his important new study Ben Kiernan calls it 'the indentured agrarian state'.³ Everyone has heard of the horrors accompanying this attempt. And yet the episode itself remains ill understood. In its own day the Cambodian revolution was interpreted by the outside world primarily in terms of Cold War dogmatics, as an aberration of communism or Marxist ideology. But in the longer retrospect now so thoroughly divulged, one can see the inadequacy of that prism. Other coordinates were much more important. The Cambodian Hell was more truly an aberration of nationalist development than of socialism. Hence from the vantage point of the late 1990s it appears quite differently: as an extraordinary precursor of today's ocean of 'troubles'. Twenty years before such crises became common with the collapse of communist state power, it demonstrated fully how devastating the exercise of that power could be upon an explicitly ethnic or racial nationalist template.

'In this book I shall show . . . that Khmer Rouge conceptions of race overshadowed those of class', Kiernan states firmly in his introduction.⁴ 'In terms of population as well as of territory, history was to be undone', through absolute central control devoted, with ever-increasing fervour and ruthlessness, to what was then not yet known as 'ethnic cleansing'.⁵ The aim of Pol Pot's revolution was a pure-blood and almost entirely rural, self-sufficient Khmer nation-state. The shadow cast across history by the retreating peasantry is, I would contend, generally much longer

and deeper than most analyses have acknowledged. And, in Cambodia, certain exceptional circumstances let it attain for four years to an unexampled and murderous darkness. The political instruments of 'revolutionary' modernity were consecrated to the reconstruction of a nativist countryside – the rooted, Edenic community that had supposedly existed before the time of cities, social classes and individual guilt or shame.⁶

A dark monkey from the mountains

His real name was Saloth Sar. 'Pol Pot' – an emblematic title in the tradition of twentieth-century communist rebaptism – was not disclosed to the world until 14 April 1976, when he became prime minister of the new revolutionary government in Phnom Penh. The Saloth family were peasants all right (12 hectares, 6 buffalo) but with a difference. They had royal connections. His cousin was a palace dancer and 'favourite wife' to a king. An elder brother found employment as a lackey, and the future dictator joined him there at the age of six. As Kiernan points out, 'he never worked a rice field or knew much of village life . . . few Cambodian childhoods were so removed from their vernacular culture'.⁷

He went on to a royal monastery and a Catholic school for the privileged. It is still astonishing to recall just how privileged: with a population of about 7 million and after nearly a century of French colonial occupation, there was very little secondary education in Cambodia and no higher education at all. When independence was granted in 1953 only 144 Cambodians had the *baccalauréat*. While in France Saloth Sar met the woman who became his wife in 1956, Khieu Ponnary: she was the first Khmer woman to graduate from high school. So it is not surprising that even elite Khmers felt like country bumpkins in the wider world. When he first reached Saigon in 1948, on his way to Paris, Saloth and the other twenty-year-old with him felt themselves to be like 'two dark monkeys from the mountains'.

His scholarship was meant to turn him into a radio electrician, but it failed. He joined the French Communist Party (Cambodian Section) instead, and took part in the exiled independence movement. To avoid persecution the *émigré* cadres habitually used *noms de plume* like 'Khmer Worker', but Saloth Sar's was unusual: '*khmaer da'em*' or 'original Cambodian', an anticipation of that fidelity to native essence which, twenty years later, would turn Phnom Penh inside out and build the skull mountains at Tuol Sleng extermination centre.

Not that much of this showed on the surface, either in Paris or later. A

consensual social view of Saloth emerges from the many careful references in Kiernan's book: only with some difficulty would butter have melted in his mouth. In public he always displayed the palace façade – personally 'charming, self-effacing', cultivated, 'genteel' and quite humorous, and rarely showing anger in public. There is one account of Pol Pot breaking someone's leg in a vicious punishment session: his own deputy prime minister, Vorn Vet.⁸ But otherwise no record suggests burning eyes, Mussolinian blustering sessions or *heimatisch* warblings like the lyrics of Radovan Karadžić. In general, the outstanding serial-killer of the age shrouded his resentment so well that few could have known what it portended.

Living for death

In a three-hour speech delivered on 27 September 1977 Pol Pot included a few words in honour of the national anthem of Democratic Kampuchea:

Our national anthem clearly shows the essence of our people's struggle. As you know, our national anthem was not composed by a poet. *Its essence is the blood* of our entire people . . . This blood call has been incorporated into the national anthem . . .⁹

A colossal amount of actual blood was wasted by the Khmer Rouge regime. Kiernan estimates it as about 20 per cent of the previous population, or ' . . . at least 1.5 million'. Twenty years before Rwanda, 'the DK regime was on a genocidal track. There is no reason to believe the killing would have slowed, had it not been stopped by the Vietnamese army.'¹⁰

However, the anthem (which did in fact mention blood in almost every line) was not exalting mere haemoglobin. 'Blood' in this essentialist sense is the precious, inherited gist of an 'entire people', the secret of a nation passed on in trust from one generation to the next. But 'entire people' should not be read literally either: the meaning was not everybody who lived in pre-1975 Cambodia, and not even everyone 'of Khmer descent' in a certifiable or physical sense. Phnom Penh and the *ancien régime* had been full of traitors and *vendus*, as well as foreigners. These false Khmers had to be got rid of, which could be done only with the assistance of a 'true Khmer' stereotype. Although the Marxist ideology deployed by Pol Pot prescribed 'workers and peasants' for the slot, in practice Cambodia had only peasants. Not just any peasants, however: the well-off ones were no good, since privilege might have aligned them with the enemy. It had to be the poor – or, in terms of ancient piety, the *simple* – peasants who bore the blood-burden of the

national soul. This is why they figured so prominently in the hectorings of Khmer Rouge ideologist Khieu Samphan:

Did university graduates know anything about the true natural sciences? No . . . everything was done according to foreign books and foreign standards. Therefore it was useless. By contrast our children in the rural areas have always had very useful knowledge. They can tell you which cow is tame and which is skittish. They can mount a buffalo from both sides . . . They are practically masters of nature [and] only this should be called natural science because it is closely connected with the reality of the nation, with the ideas of nationalism, production, national construction and national defense . . .¹¹

Such true Khmers had to re-educate their fallen cousins in the meaning of 'national'. That was best accomplished on the spot, close to the soil. Instead of taking peasant brigades to the cities, therefore, the cities were emptied out into the fields. Foreign obsessions and selfish individualism would be beaten out of them there, by a regime of productive if arduous labour which would also raise food production and make Cambodia self-sufficient, or 'truly independent'. This would swiftly bring about a new society, sound, clean, free of corruption, hooliganism, graft, embezzlement, gambling, prostitution, alcoholism or any kind of hazardous games.¹²

All those who could not or would not be cleaned up, died. Betrayal of the slightest unclean impulse meant extinction.¹³ Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan were of course influenced by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. That is, they thought the Red Guards had chickened out. After beating up a few *ancien régime* egg-heads they stopped short of serious measures like vacating Peking and abolishing money. Now it was up to Cambodia. The flames of peasant nationalism had been fanned by Mao's Great Leap Forward. But the same fire was far more intense among the Khmers, a small and historically vulnerable people equipped with a relegation complex and an indurate hatred for its neighbours. By harnessing and directing that, the Cambodian Party thought it had the possibility of really forging an exemplary rural-socialist state. For the first time in modern history, 'autarchy' or total self-sufficiency might be realisable.¹⁴

As we saw earlier, Kiernan believes ethnic purity was one key theme in the resultant Cambodian frenzy. The other was what he calls 'the struggle for central control', or 'the Khmer Rouge Center's unceasing . . . struggle for top-down domination'.¹⁵ However, the one really implied the other. Stereotypically simple peasants could not themselves plan or organise their new hegemony, or decide who were the incompatible elements and what to do with them. That was the task of the party. It spoke 'in the name of' the soil cultivators, of course, as orthodox

communists did for the working class. But knowledge of tame and skittish cows did not take it far, and neither did a traditional rankling sense of 'us and them'. Most of the message had therefore to be made up by the revolutionaries as they went along. General Marxist apologetics was too forward-looking to contribute much: however deluded in detail, it was at least devoted to an imminent industrialised future, and to out-producing capitalism in its own unclean terms. The ethno-nationalist stereotype, by contrast, offered significant advantages as an instrument of control and coercion.

Ethnic boundaries are for the most part both murky and alterable. They compose a sign-system which lays claim to natural and self-evident status – something like the obvious contrast between (say) a Rwandan Hutu and a Chinaman. But in reality comparatively few signs carry such blatant meaning, and for these the sub-ethnic category of 'race' tends to be employed. Most ethnic markers rely on language (learnable), customs (adoptable or forgettable), faith (acquirable), or still more imprecise configurations like 'national character', common history or memory. One implication is that it often is quite difficult to contradict a verdict about just who is a what. When authority decides the matter, in effect it decrees: so-and-so either was or was not a 'Khmer' or (more to the point after 1975) a 'true Khmer', genetically patented to sustain the revolution of authentic Khmerism rather than to betray it. Mercifully, people do not carry around DNA birth charts or gene tattoos to refute such decisions. In practice contesting them involves something like an argumentative legal battle, with the production and weighing of evidence before a qualified and preferably impartial tribunal. But few are ever really in a position to undertake such procedures – and in the fury of revolutionary warfare, none at all were. Hence the decree was normally immediate, and final. In Democratic Kampuchea the Centre (*Angkar*, 'the organisation') tailored Khmerness to fit the rules of its rural national Utopia; but as time passed that meant simply to suit itself, or the day's message from the leader. Central control gains its own momentum, in other words, and (as in post-Yugoslav Serbia) may then turn nationalism into the most malleable instrument of absolutism. This is why (as Kiernan underlines in his all-too-brief Conclusion to this book): 'Despite its underdeveloped economy, the regime probably exerted more power over its citizens than any state in world history.'¹⁶

A further advantage of nationalism for autocrats lies in its fictive kinship. The idealised nation is perceived as a vastly extended family. This is supposed to bestow a general sense of psychic belonging and community (or, in the Cambodian case, of rural-commune solidarity).

In many cases what it most observably does is to legitimate the actual extended-family behaviour of a leadership clique. As in Syria and Iraq, Cambodian central power gravitated quite naturally into the hands of family relations: the 'people one can trust' from a particular kin network or village area. Nationalism sanctifies nepotism; but also, nepotism can be in a sense exalted by a genetically oriented or ethnic nationalism. As Karl D. Jackson wrote some years ago:

In essence the concept of collective leadership was infused into the tradition of Khmer family power . . . Rivals within the Communist movement were tortured and executed in large numbers along with their spouses, indicating the degree to which the Khmer leadership perceived power as flowing along family lines; to destroy an important political opponent it was necessary to root out the entire family.¹⁷

The 'rooting out' procedure can never be completed. Behind it lies a violent struggle for 'top-down domination' requiring a constant flow of new evidence of the enemy or anti-nation. Since it serves directly to justify power, such evidence must be made visible and catalogued for future time: proof of true descent, as it were, the birth certificate of Utopia. Tuol Sleng's function was to provide this. The agony of its victims was secondary, and their possible repentance unimportant: only seven survived (accidentally) of the over 14,000 sent there. The aim was proud commemoration. Their piteous confessions and photographs were filed for the gaze of Pol Pot and his lineage, and much of the archive has survived. In 1996 a BBC television programme, 'The Works', followed the activity of two American photographers in Phnom Penh, Chris Riley and Doug Niven. Twenty years later they are still labouring to complete the record of depravity, unearthing dusty negatives and yellowing log-books, and interviewing ex-prison guards.

Hell-holes are as distinctive as the revolutions they serve. Although Hitler and Stalin dealt in much larger numbers than Pol Pot, the latter greatly excelled them in puritanic zeal and ethnic thoroughness. 'Smashing' was the favourite Khmer Rouge term, and in fact simple rustic methods – boot, knife, water immersion, a blow to the head to save bullets – realised their purpose better than the high technology of Auschwitz and Sobibor.

Apocalypse then

In *Peasants*, his classical introduction to peasant anthropology, Eric Wolf observes how rural history has been punctuated by extraordinarily cruel uprisings: *jacqueries* (a fourteenth-century term) where 'the peasant band sweeps across the countryside like an avalanche' and tries literally

to drown its oppressors in blood. This 'seems in curious contradiction to the everyday life of the peasant, which . . . appears to be spent in such docile drudgery upon the land', and was often associated with millennialist visions of an imminent new order. Inevitably, such convulsions generated an even more violent reaction, like that called for in Martin Luther's infamous pamphlet of May 1525 – *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*. The cure was to be cruder than the ailment: 'Therefore let everyone who can, smite, slay and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or Devilish than a rebel.'

In more modern circumstances (Wolf goes on) peasant-based movements occur most readily 'in countries so devastated by war that they experience a breakdown of traditional leadership and social order'.¹⁸ This is the equivalent of the Black Death which preceded the great English Peasant Revolt of 1381. It creates a sense of total, oneiric alteration in which, since the time-honoured no longer functions, almost anything can be attempted. The world *can* be turned upside down. For Cambodians apocalypse came out of the air, in the shape of the prolonged American bombardment of their country during the last years of the Vietnamese War. 'The most important single factor in Pol Pot's rise', writes Kiernan, 'was the 1969–73 carpet-bombing of Cambodia's countryside by American B-52s.'¹⁹ As the Vietnamese army made increasing use of a supposedly neutral Cambodia, it was pursued and harassed there by the US Air Force. Naturally, most of the resultant carnage was Cambodian.

The beginning of Roland Jaffé's film *Killing Fields* tried to evoke something of the climate fostered by the attacks. One saw *New York Times* correspondent Sidney Schanberg visiting a border town 'accidentally' flattened by the bombers, and over its ruins the Khmer Rouge rebels advance to the capture of Phnom Penh. The Nixon–Kissinger government had not even the excuse of ignorance. One of the most telling of the declassified CIA documents quoted by Kiernan was already outlining the consequences in 1973:

The Khmer Rouge are using the damage caused by B-52 strikes as the main theme of their propaganda. The cadres tell the people that the Lon Nol government has requested the airstrikes and is responsible for the 'suffering of innocent villagers' . . . [hence] the only way to stop 'the massive destruction of the country' is to defeat Lon Nol and stop the bombing. This approach has resulted in the successful recruitment of a number of young men [and] been effective with refugees and in areas subject to B-52 strikes . . .²⁰

which by that time meant most populated parts of Cambodia. However, this was only the wooden tongue of a disregarded espionage service.

Kiernan quotes more tellingly from the eye-witnesses. Near Angkor Wat (the emblem of Cambodia's once glorious nationhood) for example:

The ordinary people sometimes literally shat in their pants when the big bombs and shells came . . . Their minds just froze up and they would wander round mute for three or four days. Terrified and half-crazy, the people were ready to believe what they were told, that was what made it so easy for the Khmer Rouge to win people over.²¹

Killing Fields continues with the sufferings of the Phnom Penh press corps and the evacuation of the American and French embassies. It would have been more costly to recreate on film what was happening in the background: the blowing-up of the Cambodian Central Bank (after which millions of bank notes were allowed to flutter through the capital's deserted streets) and the stone-by-stone disassembly of the Roman Catholic cathedral. Thus economics as we know it was ended, and no trace of western religion remained. After apocalypse, the ground plan of millennium was being laid down: no mere simple-soul vision, but an organised framework to fill the void, egalitarian *kibbutzim* of peasant-warriors where Adam would delve and Eve spin once more, free for good of cash, gentlemen and (above all) of foreigners.

Peasant chauvinism

Much of Kiernan's study is devoted to the downfall of the Khmer Rouge state.²² Fortunately, the infernal machine of party-guided ethnicity had an internal contradiction built into it. Pol Pot bit off more than he could chew, and (even before the Vietnamese chased him back into the jungle) had begun to choke to death. The maintenance of mass chauvinist tension inside the country demanded a parallel mobilisation against foreign foes, and particularly against the old national enemy, Vietnam. But the logic of this was suicidal. In late February of 1978 Hanoi secretly decided that the Pol Pot regime had to go, and one year later it had accomplished the task.

Ben Kiernan appears less secure when it comes to overall diagnosis of the Cambodian storm. This is of course what counts most in any Gellnerian perspective. Was it a peasant revolution? Or was it foisted upon the country by a specially evil combination of intelligentsia and hoodlums? The first view has become particularly associated with Michael Vickery, author of *Cambodia 1975-1982*, who perceives the 1975 takeover as 'a complete peasant revolution, with the victorious revolutionaries doing what peasant rebels have always wanted to do to their urban enemies'.²³ This was the source of the extraordinary violence. Pol Pot's Centre was an elite of deracinated intellectuals like

himself, driven partly by anti-colonial Marxism but (more significantly) by 'peasantist romanticism'. Peasantism was their equivalent of western 'workerism', a creed obliging them to obey what they interpreted as the impulses of the masses.

The opposite standpoint is presented in Kate Frieson's 'The Impact of Revolution on Cambodian Peasants, 1970–1975'.²⁴ There the rural masses of Cambodia are depicted as essentially innocent: 'unwitting participants' in a movement directed from outside their ken, by idea-led cadres seizing the unique chance provided by the chaos following the bombardments and the fall of Prince Sihanouk's old regime. By and large mass motivation remained traditional, she argues, if not timeless: the cultivating class kept its head down and did as commanded – 'digging in, bending low, and cursing inwardly'.²⁵ In time they even put up with the Khmer Rouge's 'high-level cooperatives' where communal eating was enforced and the family was phased out. Private land, the family and religious belief – the staples of peasant existence – disappeared, as they found themselves turned into unpaid indentured labourers.

Drawing on a much wider range of interviews and documents than previous scholars, what Kiernan comes up with is an uneasy compromise between these two interpretations. 'In my view, ideological as well as economic issues were at stake': that is, the peasants at first actively supported the Khmer Rouge takeover and then grew disillusioned, above all when they realised that family life itself was under threat.²⁶ Pol Pot's rural Utopia really aimed at ending rural life as they had known it. Individual land ownership and Buddhist faith were in the end less important to them than 'the devastating blows administered by the ending of home meals and the enforced separation of children from parents'. As for the violence and death, Kiernan judges the peasantry to be guilty but with (increasingly) extenuating circumstances: initially they must have had it in for city folk, particularly educated ones, but were later forced to repent. His final conclusion adds little to this save a last-minute emphasis upon the significance of racism.²⁷

The brood of Nicolas Chauvin

But what is really emphasised by this final flourish is the oddity of the preceding judgement. *The Pol Pot Regime* is a wonderful if dismaying portrait of ethnic nationalism unleashed. Ernest Gellner explained definitively why nationalism as such is not a malignancy. However (like its Nazi predecessor) the Cambodian version was manifestly a pathological diversion from the mainstream pattern he so often described. Although on the small scale of its nation, the Khmer head-count was

proportionately the most savage example of genetic pandemonium in history – at least until the Rwandan massacre of 1994, which matched Pol Pot's in numbers but was to outdo even it in intensity. Yet when trying to account for the whole event Kiernan ultimately falls back primarily on *social* factors. 'Social', that is, in the conventional sense which seeks for explanation in terms of class or individual *interests*: the peasants, the middle class, intellectuals and so on. A second explanatory motif is provided by a political category like 'central control' and then a more subordinate one by external affairs – the effects of French colonialism and American, Chinese or Vietnamese interference.

In reality, if 'racism' was so vital to the story – as the author asserts from beginning to end – then surely a frankly nationalist explanation-grid is more relevant. What bound the revolutionary intelligentsia and the peasant majority together was the historical formation (or malformation) of the Khmer national identity. A combination of marked retardation and uniquely maleficent external blows produced an equally (and fatally) singular reaction. In relation to its size Cambodia probably had the least developed urban middle class and intelligentsia in the world. Yet *this* had to be the country which was, in one of the century's grimmest phrases, 'bombed back into the Stone Age'. Twentieth-century history exhibits plenty of atrocities; does it show any more extreme example of identity assault and battery? Many forms of nationalism have operated in terms of threats of extinction, often exaggerated or imaginary, and preached a life-or-death struggle 'before it is too late'. But in Phnom Penh in 1975 there was nothing at all exaggerated about fear of extinction, and almost everyone must have thought, or half-thought, that it might already be too late. The French had incorporated the Khmers into 'Indochina', their South-East Asian empire; now, the new convulsions of the postcolonial war had swamped them in another way and put a decimated and almost helpless land at the mercy of the Vietnamese.²⁸

By the testimony so massively marshalled in Kiernan's book Khmer nationalism was a powerful yet very maimed and lop-sided sentiment. It was capable of uniting the peasantry with the country's tiny, nascent radical elite – but only through the bias of an exaggerated 'peasantism', as discerned in Vickery's analysis. The feeble native kingdom in whose ruins Pol Pot was raised had disappeared. There was no industry, and the cities were inhabited to a remarkable extent by foreign traders or middlemen. Father François Ponchaud, author of *Cambodia: Year Zero* and one of the last to quit Phnom Penh in the great exodus, wrote later: 'It is little wonder that Cambodian peasants perceived the centres of wealth and power as being dominated disproportionately by foreigners against whom they already held longstanding feelings of racial ani-

mosity.²⁹ What gave the sense of 'zero' or void was the absence of the articulation nationalist ideas normally undergo amid differing upper- and middle-class strata. In this void it was possible for a *jacquerie* to become the state. By exchanging Marxism for the vilest and most wilful form of chauvinism, that state was then able to remain in power for years though (fortunately) only by the violent erosion of its own foundations. Even so, it took outside intervention to kill it.

These were ideal conditions both for abrupt radical ascendancy and for what is more accurately called 'chauvinism' rather than nationalism. Few terms have been more abused in recent debate. It has become vague enough in denotation to be almost appropriated by gender politics, as a shorthand for 'male chauvinism'. French in origin (like most modern political vocabulary) the idea of 'chauvinism' arose in Paris during the post-Napoleonic era, and was linked to the popular wartime hero-figure of Nicolas Chauvin: *le soldat-laboureur* or ploughman-soldier. What the dictionaries of every modern tongue define as 'extreme or vulgar nationalism', 'foreigner-hating xenophobia', etc., had its source therefore in a particular person – or at any rate, in the supposed antics of that individual, as depicted on the vaudeville stage from the 1820s to mid-century.³⁰ But what matters here is that the Gallic original is essentially and incontestably *a peasant*. He always retires to his smallholding (usually with a wooden leg), where musket and bemedalled uniform are kept ready for action, and the village boys are regaled with lurid tales of the emperor, Bedouin-bashing and laying the foreigners' women. Blood and soil are evoked in crassly direct fashion: while ploughing, he is forever turning up the ancestral bones of those who died for *la patrie* in times past.

We know from Gérard de Puymège's superb study of early chauvinism that he never actually existed: 'Chauvin' was pure but very significant myth.³¹ With roots in antiquity, what it represented was the profound reverberation of the rural world among those who had (just) left it behind – the newly urbanised masses painfully adapting themselves to modern conditions, individual opportunity, shops and factories, literacy and the nuclear family. In its infancy, chauvinism was one aspect of how peasants were 'made into Frenchmen'. And what de Puymège reminds us of is that the very same process conserved Frenchmen as, so to speak, ideological peasants. That is, it reconfigured them as the subjects of a national myth-system incorporating and forever reproducing the primary ingredients of rurality, blood and soil.

This myth-system *also* instilled elements deriving from the revolutionary state-formation of 1789 and later – Frenchmen as citizens, embodiments (like Americans) of the Rights of Man and of a self-

consciously liberal and supra-ethnic Enlightenment. There was of course always a clash between these components of Frenchness. It has led to the profound internal warfare of all modern French Republics, and to what Raymond Aron and others have diagnosed as the weakness of political and ideological liberalism in France. One of its most striking later episodes (to mention a single important example) was the Dreyfus Affair in the 1890s – a drama which was to define for us the true twentieth-century meaning of the term ‘intellectual’, and illustrate its determining link to the thematic of nationalism.³²

However, such a national idea-system can perfectly well go on supporting ‘contradictions’ in a practical sense. All it means is that French men and women have had to learn to move between different *personae* in different situations, and also to try and compose links between these. If the clash is allowed to become too overt (as at the moment of the Dreyfus trials) then something like civil war threatens. But much effort is normally put into preventing that happening, notably *vis-à-vis* foreigners. Political and cultural weapons are customarily deployed to maintain in operation an identity structure which, *if laid out as doctrine*, would be absurd.³³ However, identities are devices for living, not for composing Doctorates. Irresolvable contradictions within them must either be concealed, neutralised by some kind of balancing mechanism or – in crises where the devices fail – fought out through open civil war. For the French, this war threatened again at the time of the Popular Front, was precipitated by the 1940 defeat and the formation of Pétain’s (literally) ‘chauvinist’ republic at Vichy, then prosecuted through the Resistance and its immediate postwar aftermath.

The spell of rurality

What the true story of ‘chauvinism’ suggests is that modernisation involves passage through something like a colossal mill-race, in which a multigenerational struggle between the (rural) past and the (urban-industrial) future is fought out. Sometimes images of ‘uneven development’ depict this as a relatively tidy process, where developmental poles or centres impact upon tradition like stones cast into the pool of the past, with outward-spreading ripples of reaction and emulation.³⁴ But in reality many stones were cast together, or at least fairly close together, the pond where they fell was fairly small (the world), and the resultant back- and counter-flows convulsed the entire body of the carrying stream. ‘Uneven and combined’ registers something of the complexity of this, but not its sheer chaos and pandemonium.

The mill-race of ‘Progress’ occasionally produces struggles to the

literal death, in particular circumstances. But in any case it is (in an appropriately epochal sense) always a life and death contest, where one global mode of existence perishes to make way for a successor. Nationalism is no side-effect of this battle, but its essence: it seems to me that was Ernest Gellner's fundamental intuition of the matter. However, his approach also placed disproportionate emphasis upon the future-oriented factors in the process. He thought modern philosophy was *really* about industrialisation – the disruptive impact of the future, as it were. 'Modernisation theory' in his original formulation could not help over-stressing the elements of literal modernity themselves – machine industry, the transformation of vernaculars into literacy, the inventive 'rediscovery' of the countryside by the new 'clerks' of national movements and so on. Greater attention is invariably given to these motives and instruments of change than to the 'raw material' itself – that is, the peasant masses who underwent the change and (like 'Nicolas Chauvin') got themselves not only made over into Frenchmen and Czechs but idealised into the very source of nationhood.

In reality, I suspect that the 'raw material' has played a far larger part in the overall genesis of nationalism than Gellnerian theory allows for. Czech nationalism was 'made in Prague', undoubtedly; but its *ethnic* characteristics came out of Bohemia, Moravia and the Sudetenland, and were not themselves 'made' in the familiar sense of invented, or converted into ideology. Whatever happens to them in the urban vaudeville (or the TV soap opera) 'traditions' are *also* a real matrix borne forward from past time by individuals and families. The kind of remaking which features in modern nationalism is not creation *ex nihilo*, but a reformulation constrained by determinate parameters of that past. And the past which has mainly counted here – and gives its 'bite' and sentimental incontrovertibility to all ethnonationalist belief-structure – is that of peasant existence.

The most telling critique of Gellner has been that focusing upon his cheerful over-rationalism. In an essay contrasting Weber and Gellner, Perry Anderson accuses the latter of 'skirting the really spectacular manifestations of 20th century nationalism – not the independence of Czechoslovakia or Morocco, but World War and Nazism'.³⁵ There is a bias towards economic functionalism in his theory which ends by making nationalism into too much of 'a wholesomely constructive and forward-looking principle' – a series of adjustments demanded by entry into the era of modernity, as it were, rather than a life or death trauma. Marxist 'historical materialism' used to be denounced for this style of economism, with its propensity to infer everything from alterations in the mode of production. 'Ironically' (Anderson continues):

there is a sense in which Gellner's theory might be described as immoderately materialist. For what it plainly neglects is the overpowering dimension of collective meaning that modern nationalism has always involved: that is, not its functionality for industry, but its fulfilment of identity . . . In his tour of reenchantments, Gellner has paradoxically missed far the most important of all in the twentieth century.³⁶

Hence he 'theorised nationalism without detecting the spell', in the sense of its binding or passionate attraction, and its capacity to inspire the phenomena of self-sacrifice and genocide.

But where is the 'spell' located? Anderson notes its psychological and emotive nature, but suggests no originating source. I believe that by far the most plausible origin lies in the link between most forms of ethnic nationalism and 'rural' existence as defined earlier. Those 'reenchantments' Gellner faltered over – above all German Aryanism and the Jewish genocide – were examples of unhinged ethnicity which retained a palpable or single-generation connection to peasant existence. The 'fantasies' of Hitler and Himmler envisaged forming another, earlier version of Kiernan's 'indentured agrarian state' – that is, a master race of reconstituted Germanic peasant-farmers extending across central and eastern Europe, with unfree Slav labourers doing the hard work on their farms. The anti-modern virulence of this vision derived partly from the very closeness of the traditions thus reinvented and turned into philosophy. German industrialisation had been abrupt and traumatic, and it had indeed given rise to nationalism according to the broad prescriptions of modernisation theory. However, the counter-shock against this rise, from the 'raw material' of a society still mainly rural and ethnically homogeneous, proved even more powerful than the originating shock itself. After the experience of national defeat in 1914–18, it was strong enough to overwhelm and carry modernised German society along a different and regressive trajectory: ethnic chauvinism transmuted into a global mission.³⁷

One can put what is really the same point in another way. There is a familiar litany of rather abstract terms employed in both the rhetoric of and speculation on nationalism, like 'inheritance', 'community', 'descent' or 'blood', 'common experience' and 'purity' or its many opposites ('pollution', 'the alien' and so on). But since most nations conform rather feebly to these categories in any sociological sense, it is often quite hard to discern just where their emotive authority comes from. A clue may be provided by historical situations where this was relatively easy: that is, situations where peasant rurality has been close, recent, still accessible to the people undergoing 'nationalisation', and (therefore) still capable of infusing violent personal or familial emotions

into its language and rhetoric. The resultant mixture is highly infectious: newly eloquent romantic intellectualism combined with the half-healed wounds of actual or recently transmitted recollection – from a rural life in which ‘inheritance’, ‘community’, ‘roots’ and the other standard nostrums all had a perfectly concrete meaning. The colourful mixture is also tailor-made for the burgeoning media of early literacy and urbanisation – like the Paris vaudeville, the London nineteenth-century music-hall (where ‘jingoism’ was forged) and the yellow or tabloid press. Gellner’s ironic rationality tended always to see traditions being falsified into ‘traditions’. But in certain important cases, ‘traditions’ could actually be infused with the blood – not always figurative – of (real) traditions. A reborn Germany or Cambodia found themselves engorged by the flailing life of a peasant social order which, although ‘dying out’ in the epochal sense, was still alive enough for a serious effort to ‘undo history’ (as Kiernan puts it). Ideologies of anti-modernism – from Nietzsche to ‘Unabomber’ Ted Kaszinski, via Martin Heidegger – have occasionally been able to pierce into a vein of ‘authentic’ rural despair and resentment, and assist the mobilisation of its violence. Not by chance was ‘authentic’ Heidegger’s favourite word.³⁸

Both the intense emotionality and the violence of ethnic nationalism acquire much more meaning when traced to this specific root. The sole alternative would seem to be a frankly psychological one: a story of ‘human nature’, in fact, where feelings of ‘belonging’ or extended kinship are read as the essential realities offended by the circumstances of modernity. One difficulty with Karl Popper’s early rendition of the theme in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* is of course its sheer familiarity: it is the tale recounted for the last two centuries by the intellectual protagonists of just what we are discussing here – ethnic nationalism. And the theoretical issue which Gellner’s modernisation thesis addressed arose only because that explained nothing. Nationalism is only a question because nationality politics and national identities are *not* all ‘ethnic’ in the imagined-kinship, fakelore, immemorialist sense. From Hans Kohn’s time onwards one of its key dilemmas has always been making sense of these vital differences: whether as ‘western’ versus ‘eastern’, ‘liberal’ versus ‘closed’, or (more recently) ‘civic’ versus ‘ethnic’ nationalism.³⁹

Beyond the mill-race

How long did this crucial and fertile chaos of waters endure? Unfortunately, the past tense remains inappropriate. The curse endures to this day. It still exists, notably, within the French state which gave birth to

'Nicolas Chauvin'; that is, in the society also considered by many theorists as archetypally modern, the very hearth of Enlightenment and *égalité* or even (since the 1980s) the crucial site of postmodernity. Not necessarily under his own name, 'Nicolas Chauvin' figures none the less in every Front National speech and pamphlet today. This is not to prophesy his return to earth via a second Pétain.⁴⁰ However, one might be a little more sanguine on this count, were not the wider European scene so ambiguous. Its institutional modernity remains deeply weighed down by the ball and chain of the Common Agricultural Policy. Though designed to lever the countries of the European Union out of Chauvin's world for good, by a 'phasing out' of peasant cultivation, it has unfortunately been bent by political pressure into an instrument for at least partially preserving it everywhere from Greece to Ireland. Hence the European Union, the principal white hope for 'civic nationalism', remains deeply compromised by the very ruralist inheritance which has in the past so often nourished ethnic nationalism.⁴¹

In a penetrating discussion of violence in nationalist movements, David Laitin has recently underlined this same dimension. 'Why are some nationalist movements peaceful in strategy and outcome while others create carnage?' is his leading question, and he searches for an answer less among 'the great forces of history' than in 'micro foundations based upon social organisation *in rural and small town life*', plus contributions from 'fortuitous events' (like assassinations or acts of state terrorism) and what he calls the 'tipping phenomena' of political recruitment (attainment of 'thresholds' beyond which violent tactics seem to be paying off).⁴² Thus, the salience of terrorism in the Basque national movement can be contrasted with its remarkably low profile in Catalonia. In the former we find a 'dense rural social structure' where considerations of honour are prominent; the Catalans, however, are more organised into economic-based groups and political parties operating at the national and all-Spanish levels (both city-centred). ETA's long dominance therefore depended upon its links to a specifically rural (or recently rural) society in which 'nationalist leaders could recruit in small villages and towns in which there are many social groups whose members are bound by codes of honour'. But such honourable bonding derives, surely, from a nexus of peasant custom and heritable tradition – that very 'raw material' referred to previously, and infused fairly directly into the idealised nationhood of Euzkadi.

The point is reinforced by the second comparative example Laitin goes on to provide: developments in post-Soviet Georgia and Ukraine. While in Georgia there have been a series of insurgencies and wars, Ukrainian reconstruction remains remarkably free from armed conflict.

In general terms it is certainly not obvious why the contrast should be so great. The Ukraine has a host of important minority problems and, in the Crimea, the site of a major three-way conflict among Russians, Tatars and Ukrainians which has constantly threatened escalation into warfare. Yet the new Ukrainian regime has largely avoided violence, whereas 'Georgia's rural social structure appears to have maintained the basis for terrorist organisation.' Nearly 70 per cent of Ukrainians will be living in large urban environments by the year 2000, and one result is that 'the populism that was the hallmark of Ukrainian ideologies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has faded. One can even argue that today the concept of the *narod* – in the traditional sense of the poor, oppressed peasant masses – no longer occupies a central place in the political thinking of Ukrainians.'⁴³

Post-1989 conditions in many parts of Eastern Europe have made them even more the victim of the inheritance which is fading away in Ukraine. In a recent study of the underlying causes of the Bosnian war, Sabrina Ramet points out that whereas Titoist Yugoslavia had attempted (however unsuccessfully) to 'impose the values of the city' on south Slav culture, Milošević's 1987 coup 'represented among other things the triumph of the countryside over the city in Serbia (and hence) the rising tide of Serbian nationalism, closely associated with rural perceptions and rural values, albeit often as synthesised and reflected by urban literary elites.'⁴⁴ She outlines the primarily rural character of the new Serb national movement and the extremes it attained in Bosnia, where a campaign for 'traditional values' (meaning in the first place a full-scale assault on any claims by women to equal treatment) – 'represents in the clearest possible way a cultural encroachment of the countryside on the city'. Linking this to the perspective of modernisation theory, she concludes that:

There is a world of difference between a national movement founded on urban mobilisation (even if it manipulates the symbols and mythologies of the countryside, in its own distorted mirror) and a national movement based, to a great extent, on rural mobilisation . . .⁴⁵

Outside Europe a similar general pattern is identifiable. Laitin distinguishes his analysis from what he feels to be the abstractness of 'the great forces of history'; but the analysis itself conducts the reader back to one of these forces, the latent power of a mobilised peasantry and its counter-attack upon the spreading tide of 'modernisation', the market economy and the norms of urban liberalism. Although Ben Kiernan's study does not deal with this, we know that the Khmer Rouge by no means lay down and died after the Vietnamese invasion. Presumably because it still enjoys some real support, it is notoriously still around,

and a political as well as a military player. Living partly off the timber and drug business in Cambodia's western forests, its guerrilla remnant has survived the Vietnamese occupation and successor regimes. On the day I finished reading Kiernan's book the London *Independent* ran a main news item titled 'Pol Pot's Top Man Quits Khmer Rouge' (13 August 1996) – quits, alas, not to spend more time with his family but to run for office in Phnom Penh. Sentenced to death years ago for his part in the atrocities, Ieng Sary is planning a new party to contest the next elections. He was a member of the founding Paris elite, and one of Pol Pot's closest buddies.

Nor is this the sole great rebuke to Gellnerian optimism produced by the 1990s. One paragraph in Kiernan's book gave me an almost physical shock the first time I read it. It is in his 'Introduction', and it is intended as no more than a simple outline of the Cambodian scene for the uninitiated:

At first glance, Cambodia seems a society resistant to transformation. It was geographically compact, demographically dispersed, linguistically unified, ethnically homogeneous, socially undifferentiated, culturally uniform, administratively unitary, politically undeveloped, economically undiversified, and educationally deprived. Cambodia was more isolated and landlocked than any other Southeast Asian country except Laos . . . [and] mummified by ninety years of a colonial protectorate which preserved, even enhanced the traditional monarchy and social structure . . . [and] 80 per cent peasant.⁴⁶

I have added the emphasis. What provokes the shock is the fact that, place-names aside, only one further change ('ethnically homogeneous') is needed to make this a perfect description of another country altogether, located in another continent: Rwanda.⁴⁷

A counter-example

Earlier, I mentioned the continuing conflict in Ireland as one of the pointers towards the general significance of rurality for nationalism. But this indicator makes its point still more forcefully when set in a slightly wider context. For Irish nationalism is also the exception within the larger archipelago to which it belongs. In Hans Kohn's old contrast of western (liberal) versus eastern (ethnic-authoritarian) nationalisms, Ireland was sometimes grouped with the latter: a violent ethnoreligious movement perplexingly located on the farthest geographic fringe of the European west. Physically contiguous and historically intertwined with England – the founding specimen of Kohn's liberal-institutional, state-formed identity – it none the less seemed much closer in both spirit and methods to the characteristic nineteenth-century formations of central

and eastern Europe. The paradox has been heightened by the remarkable post-independence relationship between old monarchy and new republic. Two generations after secession citizens of the latter are still formally treated (and for the most part, informally regarded) as quasi-subjects of the former when 'on British soil'. Yet simultaneously the IRA's campaign of irredentist violence has led to over 3,000 deaths over a period of almost 30 years, and in the 1990s produced episodes of city-centre devastation upon the same soil.

The enigma is intensified again by broad comparison to the fates of other United Kingdom nationalities. Both Wales and Scotland have generated twentieth-century national movements aiming at secession on Irish republican lines, and since the 1950s these have developed significantly over a generation of general British and imperial decline. Such movements have been frustrated by British counter-tactics (notably around the 1979 devolution referenda) and are now also dogged by a more distinct stirring of English resentment focused upon 'preserving the Union' (above all against European influence or encroachment). Yet they have also been almost wholly free from violence. The absence of terrorist 'persuasion' is particularly significant among the Scots. As well as representing about 10 per cent of the UK population (easily the largest archipelago minority) their institutions carry forward the traditions of a statehood alive until the eighteenth century, and largely built up in hostility to England. In 1745–6 a Highland-based army made the last attempt to overthrow the post-1688 British state, and the long subsequent experience of empire has generated strong popular traditions of militarism among both Highland and Lowland peoples. However, the fact is that these traditions have (so far at least) had only a marginal effect upon a national movement conducted *exclusively* in political terms – political, and indeed quite self-consciously civic and pacific terms.

But perhaps this puzzling difference between the two main parts of the 'British Isles' yields to analysis along the lines sketched out above.⁴⁸ The most striking underlying contrast is the one found between their respective agrarian histories. In England and Lowland Scotland, an early 'agrarian revolution' virtually destroyed peasant society, permanently replacing it with a landscape of large estate farms, 'county towns' and servant villages. In Ireland it did not. On the contrary, to some extent nineteenth-century land reform reconstructed small-scale agriculture after earlier disaster and depredations, thus laying the foundation for De Valera's rural Catholic state and – ultimately – for the prosecution of Sinn Féin's irredentist campaigns at the end of the twentieth century. It was from such radically divergent social trajectories

that equally diverse nationality movements arose: a Hibernian one liberating itself only with great difficulty from 'blood and soil', and British ones mainly configured within the category of an earlier 'civic nationalism', and by the absence (save in romantic fancy) of those elements most propitious for 'chauvinist' or blood-and-soil mobilisation. There is even a partial exception which can serve as confirmation: Wales. In that country, both ethnolinguistic motifs and violence have been somewhat more pronounced in the nationalist movements of the twentieth century; and they are rooted in areas where (in spite of early political and legal incorporation by the Tudor dynasty) the subsequent capitalist transformation of the countryside was much less dramatic.

English national identity itself, the original template of modernisation delineated in Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism*, finds itself in perhaps the strangest dilemma of any contemporary nationalism.⁴⁹ National movements usually arise from what she calls status *ressentiment*, articulated through a deployment of inherited differentiae – the 'peculiarities' of people and nation. For the English, however, for over two centuries the most important peculiarity has undoubtedly been 'Britain' – the grander personae of multinational state and empire, worn long enough to feel almost like the 'nature' evoked by nationalists. Redefinition upon much narrower ground needs alternative motifs: the rediscovery of another nature, as it were, whose mobilisation could restore the national fortune. But apart from the despairing one of 'race' (used by all current formations of the extreme Right in England) it has become difficult to see what such motifs could be. What appeared to Hans Kohn as an early and exemplary state-led liberalism now appears in a truer light: a thoroughly archaic version of civic nationalism, 1688s crude, early-modern apparatus of absolute parliamentary sovereignty. Hence the first principles of effective national identity – the 'way we do things', etc. – have themselves become major obstacles to the reform of that identity. But this is an historical context in which *ethnos* can offer no way out or forward. Everywhere in the archipelago it looks as if modern *civis* is the sole solution; but is that attainable only upon the broader terrain of Europe?⁵⁰

Conclusion: the fertile womb

By way of over-general conclusion, therefore: the modernisation theory stemming from Gellner's great chapter on 'Nationalism' in *Thought and Change* and more fully elaborated in *Nations and Nationalism* had the effect of foreshortening the future; yet part of its great vigour and explanatory power arose from this very effect – from the way it foreclosed so abruptly on the past. Placing too great an emphasis upon all

the cultural factors attendant upon industrialisation, it made theorists too confident that modernity had all but prevailed. In spite of his ironic scepticism and his attraction to social conservatism, Gellner was essentially an Enlightenment optimist. And the obverse of such confidence was a tendency to relegate or discount the enduring pressures of rurality itself – the formative weight of that preceding peasant world which, once the constraints of the Cold War were loosened, has shown itself very rapidly to be anything but mere ‘raw material’. Fifteen years ago Arno J. Mayer concluded his masterly synthesis *The Persistence of the Old Regime* with these words:

The old regime . . . was too vast, resilient, and resistant a target to be felled by a few terrorist bullets in Sarajevo. It would take the two World Wars and the Holocaust, or the Thirty Years War of the twentieth century, to finally dislodge and exorcise the feudal and aristocratic presumption from Europe’s civil and political societies.⁵¹

And even then (we should now add) the social inheritance that underlay such presumption was not really dislodged. It is, alas, still undergoing exorcism to this day, in Western as well as Eastern Europe, and in many other areas of the world. Two generations before 1914 modernisers like Marx and Mill had treated the demise of the old regime as practically a foregone conclusion. Their heir, Ernest Gellner, gave a picture of the modernisation process far deeper and wider than they could. Yet his picture remained in certain respects configured by the inheritance he shared with them – that is, by certain limitations of the original Enlightenment as well as by its intellectual and moral grandeur. Approaching the year 2000, and trying to peer beyond these frontiers, perhaps it should be conceded that we still do so from among the ruins of that ancient rural world which he understood, and yet also underestimated.

The thunder of its long collapse is still by far the loudest sound in all our ears. From McLuhan to Baudrillard theorists have sought to discern electronic postmodernity through the clouds of dust. But may not such efforts be only the latest style of rationalist foregone conclusion? Many intellectuals want to go on believing it is much later than most people and politicians think, and in spite of his sceptical, disbelieving temperament Gellner too could not help inclining in that direction. Without collapsing in the contrary direction, it may be time to reasonably doubt it. No apologia of atavism is required in order to doubt whether we are quite as modern as some people think. The point is a more cautious one: an alternative reading with puts nationalism nearer the centre of the theory-world will suggest contrary evidence, and make theorists look much more closely (and in a sense, respectfully) at the partly hidden mechanisms of transition from ‘traditional’ into contemporary society.⁵²

Yes, that womb *is* fertile still, in Brecht's famous phrase in *Arturo Ui*, but not necessarily or only with other versions of fascism or totalitarianism.

The departure of a great mind like Gellner ought therefore to be an occasion for reappraising not just 'modernisation', but also our own collective and intellectual location within its process. Neither 'tradition' (rurality) nor the vehicles and reformers of tradition ('intellectuals') are sufficiently understood, and advance in these areas is what the deepening study of nationalism demands. Gellner's was essentially an epochal theory. And in that epochal sense, the new *fin de siècle* may be a lot sooner than most politicians and social theorists want to believe.

NOTES

- 1 C. Tóibín, *Walking along the Border*, London, 1987.
- 2 E. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London, 1963.
- 3 B. Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*, New Haven, 1996, chs. 5 and 6.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 6 One of the most celebrated of post-1945 denunciations of Marxism, Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London, 1945, analysed its general appeal as based upon a nostalgia of this kind: longing for a 'closed society' unperturbed by the individualism, alienation and choice of modern times. But this analysis remained couched in general and psychological terms: it did not inquire what the effective models of closure were for most populations caught up in the modernisation process.
- 7 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, p. 10.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 437.
- 9 As quoted in K. D. Jackson, 'The Ideology of Total Revolution', in his *Cambodia 1975–1978: Rendezvous with Death*, Princeton, 1989, p. 73.
- 10 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, p. 460.
- 11 Jackson, *Cambodia 1975–1978*, pp. 74–5.
- 12 For details, see Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, ch. 2.
- 13 In one of the most fascinating accounts of postwar intellectual life in France, *Mémoires: le voleur dans la maison vide*, Paris, 1997, Jean-François Revel has described a meeting with the distinguished academic, Maurice Mouillaud, a subtle and imaginative mind who in the 1950s had embraced the most abject Stalinism. Mouillaud could account for his lapse only by: a sort of enchantment, comparable to that affecting members of a religious sect. He had the feeling of having been invaded, taken over by another personality having no relationship either to his previous self or his future self . . . [however] . . . it must be kept in mind that thoroughgoing communism meant the pursuit of total 'purification' and the formation of a 'new man' in the canonical sense, and this appeared to legitimate physical or lateral liquidation of the 'old man'. In this sense the most logical of communists had been Pol Pot rather than Stalin or Mao. 'At least he was willing to kill everyone.' (pp. 35–7)

Khmer Rouge ideology derived partly from the experience of postwar French communism, a source not unimportant both for its logical nature and its ideas of rural rootedness – on which see further remarks later in the argument.

- 14 Autarchy (or 'autarky') was the doctrine of absolute economic self-reliance, prominent between the world wars in both fascist states and the USSR. 'In the 1930s the drive to self-sufficiency or autarky was founded on the desire to achieve . . . power to control one's own destiny, generally by states which were despotic in their internal politics, and felt victimised internationally' (R. Skidelsky, *The World After Communism*, London, 1995, pp. 62–3). It represented only an ideal-type extrapolated from Friedrich List's theory of economic nationalism or protectionism: there are no examples of effectively autarkic states in modern times – with the dubious and transient exception of Pol Pot's Cambodia.
- 15 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, p. 26.
- 16 Ibid., p. 464.
- 17 Jackson, *Cambodia 1975–1978*, p. 242.
- 18 E. Wolf, *Peasants*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1966, pp. 106–9.
- 19 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, p. 16.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 22–3.
- 21 Ibid., p. 23.
- 22 Ibid., part III.
- 23 M. Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975–1982*, Boston, 1984.
- 24 K. Frieson, 'The Impact of Revolution on Cambodian Peasants, 1970–1975', Ph.D. Thesis, Monash University, Australia, 1991.
- 25 Frieson, 'The Impact of Revolution', pp. iii, ii.
- 26 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, p. 213.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 463–5.
- 28 By far the most persuasive analysis of this dimension is that given by Anthony Barnett in 'Cambodia Will Never Disappear', *New Left Review*, no. 180, 1990. He argues that what Pol Pot and the leadership clique absorbed from France was its chauvinism, as well as its variant of Stalinism. Prince Sihanouk 'was and remains the incarnation of the French myth of Cambodia', while the radical nationalism of his Khmer Rouge opponents was also 'expressed within the parameters of the French ideal'. The cult of Angkor Wat and the delusions about the ancient Khmer hydraulic system also find their place in Barnett's brilliant profile of Cambodian nationalism.
- 29 F. Ponchaud, *Cambodia: Year Zero*, London, 1978.
- 30 British television viewers with recollections of the 1960s and 1970s would recognise him instantly as something like 'Alf Garnett': comic, tear-jerking, randy, foreigner-despising, royalty-loving and irreversibly Tory. However, Garnett was a Chaplinesque and *urban* figure of fun, a pre-war Londoner risen (or half-risen) above proletarian origins.
- 31 G. de Puymège, *Chaurvin, le soldat-labourer: contribution à l'étude des nationalismes*, Paris, 1993.
- 32 On the theme of the relationship between nationalism and the intellectuals, see for the French case C. Charle, *Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, Paris, 1990. The same author has more recently carried his analysis on to a much wider

canvas with *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle: essai d'histoire comparée*, Paris, 1996. On the specific history of France, Tony Judt's *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals 1944–56*, Berkeley, 1992 gives a vigorous polemical account of what the author sees as the failure of political liberalism in France. A more recent overview is provided by Jeremy Jennings in 'Of Treason, Blindness and Silence: Dilemmas of the Intellectual in Modern France', in J. Jennings and A. Kemp-Welch, eds., *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie* (London, 1977). By far the most concrete view 'from inside' is that given by Revel, *Mémoires*.

- 33 One striking example of this is the nexus of myths and observances attached to French cuisine and gastronomy. This represents an 'earthy' (peasant) tradition which is now perfectly urbanised and strongly identified – indeed overidentified – with national distinctiveness. The peculiar salience of *la bouffe* in contemporary France may arise partly from its function as an uncontroversial cementing factor between two nations of the mind: the land of Chauvin (Pétain, Le Pen, etc.) on one hand and that of the neo-Jacobins and Radicals (Zola, Mendès-France, 1968, etc.) on the other.
- 34 I stand penitent in the front row of the accused here, having tried to expound a tidily quasi-Marxist theory in 'Modern Janus', an unpublished text of 1976, part of which appeared as the chapter 'Modern Janus' in my *The Break-up of Britain*, London, 1977.
- 35 P. Anderson, 'Science, Politics, Enchantment', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *Transition to Modernity: Essays on Power, Wealth and Belief*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 207. It is not irrelevant to the point to recall that, for all his irony about ethnic passion and misrepresentation, Gellner (who was an adept with the mouth-organ) loved playing Czech folk-tunes and would sometimes burst into tears after doing so. In a postcard to me he once wrote: 'I was brought up among Ruritaniens and Megalomanians and to this day can remember and play many folk-ditties (both real and invented) on the mouth-organ. For some reason which escapes me, these seem never to give pleasure to the listeners.'
- 36 Anderson, 'Science, Politics, Enchantment', p. 208.
- 37 A further analysis of the causes of Nazism's rise was attempted by the anthropologist Emmanuel Todd in his *Le Fou et le prolétaire*, Paris, 1979, where inherited family structure is added to the list of accusation – a theme subsequently elaborated by the author into a general explanation of modern societal variation in *L'invention de l'Europe*, Paris, 1989. But in the present context that argument may perhaps be left in parentheses: the familial patterns depicted were undoubtedly rural, whether or not they have been transmitted forward in the way Todd suggests.
- 38 In a 1934 speech to unemployed workers, Heidegger suggested that this was what urbanisation had brought them. The solution was a return 'to soil and land' which could renew German community. In a radio address of the same period, he even compared philosophical reflection to peasant labour: 'This philosophical work . . . belongs right here in the midst of the peasants' work . . . My work is intimately rooted in and related to the life of the peasants [and] comes from a centuries long and irreplaceable rootedness in Alemanian-Swabian soil.' On these matters, see M. E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's*

- Confrontation with Modernity*, Bloomington, IN, 1990, pp. 69–70. Another important discussion of the issue is R. Minder, 'Martin Heidegger et le conservatisme agraire', *Allemagne d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 6, 1967. P. Bourdieu, *L'Ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger*, Paris, 1988 gives the complete low-down on his 'louche' philosophical rendition of folkish nationalism.
- 39 See, *inter alia*: H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York, 1944; J. Plamenatz, 'Two Types of Nationalism', in E. Kamenka, ed., *Nationalism, the Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London, 1973; R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, MA, 1992; L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, MA, 1992.
- 40 Eugen Weber tries to estimate the limits of right-wing nationalism in contemporary France in 'Nationalism and the Politics of Resentment', *American Scholar*, vol. 63, 1994. But perhaps the most significant limit lies in the postwar transformation described in Henri Mendras, *La fin du paysan: suivi d'une réflexion sur la fin du paysan vingt ans après*, Le Paradou, Actes Sud, 1984.
- 41 Goran Therborn shows – in *European Modernity and Beyond*, New York, 1992 – that on the eve of World War II Europe was 'still a predominantly agrarian society', and that only in the 1950s to 1970s was 'the compressed end of immemorial agrarian society' witnessed – one generation ago, in fact (pp. 65–73). Except in the British Isles and one 'corridor from Switzerland to Sweden', industrialisation was rapid, one-way – and remarkably short lived. By the 1980s, *de-industrialisation* was already under way. In this context of ultra rapid transitions, perhaps what Therborn calls in his general conclusion 'the cunning survival capacity of historical traditions' (p. 359) deserves greater emphasis than it has usually received.
- 42 D. Laitin, 'National Revivals and Violence', *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 36, 1995.
- 43 Laitin, 'National Revivals and Violence', p. 35, where the author is quoting from O. Subtelny's *Ukraine, a History*, Toronto, 1988. Roman Szporluk has fortified the same line of argument more recently in 'Nationalism after Communism: Reflections on Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and Poland,' *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 4, 1998.
- 44 S. Ramet, 'Nationalism and the "Idiocy" of the Countryside: The Case of Serbia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 19, 1996, pp. 70–1. See also her *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, Boulder, 1995.
- 45 Ramet, 'Nationalism and the "Idiocy" of the Countryside', p. 85.
- 46 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, pp. 4–5.
- 47 On this topic the reader must turn first of all to Gerard Prunier's brilliant and corrosive study *The Rwandan Crisis 1959–1994: History of a Genocide*, London, 1995. The parallels to be drawn with Barnett's profile of Cambodian nationalism in 'Cambodia Will Never Die' are especially striking as regards both the ideological origins of the conflicts, and the potentially lethal authority of one-party rule within peasant societies.
- 48 It failed to yield much before this author's earlier effort, *The Break-up of Britain*, London, 1977, which entirely failed to register the socio-historical dimension emphasised here. Gellner wrote a typically amusing and acerbic

notice of this work, 'Nationalism, or the New Confessions of a Justified Edinburgh Sinner', in *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 49, 1978 (reprinted in his *Spectacles and Predicaments*, Cambridge, 1979).

49 Greenfeld, 'God's First-born: England', in her *Nationalism*, ch. 1.

50 Gellner was an enthusiastic pro-European, but always had difficulty fitting the British Isles into his grand schema of modernisation through nationalism. It seems to me that his most acute critique of his adopted nation's culture is contained in an early and famously abrasive study of its indwelling philosophical mystique, 'British Empiricism', *Words and Things*, London, 1959. Only an outsider could have dealt such a memorable blow to the native identity. On the other hand, he did become more of an insider, and later always gave the impression that there was much – indeed more and more – to be said in defence of God's first-born. It was as if a part of the Hapsburg mantle (which he was also quite fond of praising) had fallen upon Windsordom. It may also be worth observing here that the first-born is not really unique. Actually his second- and third-born are in similar sorts of trouble today, as the United States and France also labour towards long-overdue reform of their own almost equivalently gerontocratic versions of 'the western model'. It looks as if the general fate of revolutionary models is to become out-dated, and then discover what an impossible nuisance is further political revolution.

51 A. J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, London, 1981, p. 329.

52 One interesting new attempt at analysing social transmission mechanisms in their own right is provided by Régis Débray's new study, *Transmettre*, Paris, 1997. Connoisseurs of transmission effects may also observe an odd echo-effect between the lines here. In the 1960s, Perry Anderson and I evolved a theory of Britishness which proclaimed that everything in the United Kingdom was, in effect, far sooner than most opinion then wanted to believe. First published in the *New Left Review*, the so-called 'Nairn-Anderson theses' asserted, not without passion, that the great vanguard-state of European modernity was in truth a pitiable and quasi-feudal reliquary fit only for history's museum, or perhaps just its dustbin. There too it was asserted that history was more enmeshed in and compromised by the past than liberals and socialists thought. In retrospect, even this denunciation seems inadequate. It did not occur to either of us that the old bone cage would rattle on into the third millennium, or that forty years later a new Labour government might be in power, devoted to pathologically cautious re-arrangement of the relics – for example, phasing out the hereditary principle in the House of Lords while conserving lordship and monarchy themselves.

5 Nationalism and language: a post-Soviet perspective

David D. Laitin

The collapse of the Soviet Union meant for millions liberation from a regime that created the Gulag archipelago, in which their relatives, their friends and untold numbers whom they never met were incarcerated and/or murdered; for millions more it meant the possibility to associate and interact freely with people throughout the globe; for still millions more it meant a catastrophic disruption of working life, of social security and of status in a new society they could hardly understand; for millions again it meant a feeling of hope, of security, of future possibility, as a member of a 'nation' that would now have its own state. Hardly to be compared with these earth-shattering effects, it is none the less noteworthy that the Soviet collapse has drawn scores of social scientists back to the seminal work of Ernest Gellner, who gave us a framework for analysing how nationalism arises, when it is powerful and when it is weak.

The most important contribution of Gellner's work on nationalism has been its unrelenting insistence that the existence of a 'nation' is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of nationalism; rather nationalism is the result of the uneven diffusion of industrialisation. The theory is evocatively explicated in Gellner's 'just-so' story, related in *Thought and Change*, which has a robust plot. In it, there are two territories, A and B, which are parts of an overarching empire. Modernisation hits the world 'in a devastating but untidy flood', coming first through A, and only later to B. This means that as A finally ploughs through the misery and dislocation of early modernisation, B will still be mired in it. Impoverished and hopeless youth in B will consequently seek to better their lives by migrating to A. From this situation, different sorts of nationalism will arise. If Bs can blend into A without being noticed, and B's intellectuals get elite positions in A, then there will emerge a wider A-&-B society, on the road to becoming a nation. Nationalism will be the doctrine of the A-&-B elites seeking to naturalise state power inside the boundaries of A-&-B, through the standardisation of a national culture. However, if Bs cannot blend in – that is, when Bs are radically differentiated from As by race, skin colour, or religion,

what Gellner later calls 'entropy-resistant' classifications¹ – the discontent from Bs unable to achieve social mobility in A will express itself in a form of separatist nationalism, of an A *vs.* B type. In both the A-&-B and A *vs.* B cases, nationalism was impelled not by culture, but rather by the uneven development of modernisation.²

As for language, a cultural feature that is not entropy-resistant, Gellner's story has clear implications. Clerks are the drones of modern society; full citizenship in such a society therefore requires literacy; and practical necessity demands that all clerk/citizens can communicate efficiently with each other in a single language. Small communities with their own language cannot produce the range of specialists needed to run a modern society; therefore the nation-state is the minimal territorial unit in the modern world. And the nation-state will impose a standard dialect or language within its boundaries, more associated with scholastic high culture than the folk cultures of the peasants – demonstrating that the claim by nationalists that they represent the 'folk' is a sham – and this new standard language will become the distinguishing mark of the nation. This theory, however, does not predict a universal industrial culture, or a universal language of industrial society, mainly because uneven development will assure break-away nationalisms (from those places where assimilation is blocked by a jealous working class focusing on cultural difference in order to discriminate against migrants) whose leaders will consecrate some dialect or a language that differentiates it from its neighbour.³

The motivating factor in this model is the opportunity for bureaucratic and other literacy-demanding jobs that impels rural folk to learn the elite language of the cities to which they had migrated. If mobility prospects are blocked, these migrants will sense higher expected economic returns for having their own nation-state, where the elite dialect of their language would become the basis for white-collar jobs, and these frustrated job-seekers would then become recruits for a nationalist movement. To be sure, Gellner shied away from this bald economism, and claimed that his theory had been 'travestied' by others who held that nationalism was based upon calculations. 'This formulation', he protests, 'is a misrepresentation.'⁴ He points to the real experience of rural migrants into a city ruled by bureaucrats who speak a language absolutely foreign to them. 'This very concrete experience', Gellner imagines, helps them learn 'the difference between dealing with a conational, one understanding and sympathising with their culture, and someone hostile to it'. From this experience, a sort of 'love' can emerge for their culture, 'without any conscious calculation of advantages and prospects of social mobility'. None the less, Gellner admits, '*had* there

been such calculation (which there was not) it would, in quite a number of cases . . . have been a very sound one [to become nationalists]'.⁵ And so, even though his peasant-migrants never calculated, they more-or-less acted as if they had!

It is an intellectual treat to read Gellner's clear, acerbic and powerful prose, whether battling Kedourie, one-upping Hroch, or elaborating his alternative vision. Yet, Gellner's work, especially apparent today when modernisation theory has faced generations of critics, is deeply flawed. Its functionalism runs mad. Its reifications deny human agency. And when the theory does include agents, these agents are portrayed in caricature.⁶

In functionalist logic, the identification of a 'need' is used to explain an outcome, ignoring the historical reality that many needs go unfulfilled, to the detriment of organisations and individuals. The need itself, it should be apparent, can hardly explain its fulfilment, though Gellner often writes that it can. In *Nations and Nationalism*, for example, Gellner summarises his explanation of why centralised states monopolise culture within their boundaries. This kind of state, he tells us:

must be so. Its economy depends on mobility and communication between individuals, at a level which can only be achieved if those individuals have been socialised into a high culture, and indeed into the same high culture . . . Also, the economic tasks set these individuals do not allow them to be both soldiers and citizens of local petty communities . . . So the economy needs both the new type of central culture and the central state; the culture needs the state; and the state probably needs the homogeneous cultural branding of its flock . . . So the culture needs to be sustained *as* a culture, and not as the carrier or scarcely noticed accompaniment of a faith.⁷

The needs of high cultures, he earlier asserts, explain the modern reality of nation-states. 'In the industrial world high cultures prevail, but they need a state not a church, and they need a state *each*', we are told. 'That is one way of summing up the emergence of the nationalist age.'⁸

In his subtle and clever posthumous *Nationalism*, Gellner softens his functionalist view of social causation. 'In the second zone', Gellner writes with his focus on Germany and Italy, 'nationalism *could* be benign and liberal; it had no inherent *need* to go nasty (even if in the end it did)'.⁹ Here 'needs' could not explain fascism. But for Gellner, that is an anomaly. Usually, needs create fulfilling outcomes.

As in many functionalist accounts, Gellner relies on a technique of reification, giving human attributes to unspecified globs of humanity or territory. 'Mankind is irreversibly committed to industrial society', Gellner preaches.¹⁰ How precisely one can feel, or see, or measure this commitment, or find precisely where it resides, is left to the readers' imaginations. 'Cultural minorities', we are told, 'refrain from developing

an effective nationalism because they have no hope of success . . . '11 How do groups of people, most of whom don't know each other, we can ask, 'refrain' from doing anything? Elsewhere: 'advanced lands do not have any interest in sharing their prosperity with the ill-trained latest arrivals'.¹² How can we attribute 'interests' to lands?

Reifications come from all corners of his work. In his chapter on 'What is a Nation?' in *Nations and Nationalism*, he affirms that 'Politics then will to extend their boundaries to the limits of their cultures . . .'; that '[N]ationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures . . . and most often transforms them radically'; that 'The cultures [nationalism] claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions'; that '[S]ocieties worship themselves brazenly and openly . . . in a nationalist age'; that '[N]ationalism has its own amnesias . . . which . . . can be profoundly distorting'; and that 'Modern . . . society . . . believes itself to be perpetuating . . . a folk culture.'¹³ And in *Nationalism*, he writes that in his second zone, that of Prussia and Italy, 'A nation wanted its own state in addition to its own main poet . . .'¹⁴ In these snippets, politics, nationalism, and societies are humanised, and are given intentions and goals. His argument with Hroch is revealing. In it, Gellner points out that Hroch 'faces one of the most persistent and deep issues in this field: is it nations, or is it classes, which are the real and principal actors in history?'¹⁵ Gellner never even suggests that it may be 'people'.

To be sure, actors are not entirely absent from Gellner's writings. In *Nationalism*, Gellner introduces more fully the goals and aspirations of the 'nationalist', thereby overcoming some of his functionalism and reification. But his view of nationalists is quite caricatured. Nationalists are in fact aware, 'with great bitterness' that their nations did not always exist.¹⁶ Perhaps, though, some were aware with a sense of irony, or maybe were not aware due to self-imposed amnesia, that their nation did not always exist.¹⁷ And immediately following, Gellner writes, 'The nationalist squares the assumption of the universality of nationalism with its widespread absence . . . by claiming that it was there . . . but . . . asleep.'¹⁸ 'Reawakening' is indeed a common trope by nationalists; but the presentation of this line of nationalist thought hardly captures the complex set of reasons that motivates real nationalists. Caricatured visions of actors are an insufficiently powerful substitute for a functionalist logic without any actors at all.

Gellner's use of functionalism, reification and caricature, in my judgement, were for him a shorthand, to elide the issue of mechanisms, in order to get at the basic structure of nationalism. In that regard – where nationalism is firmly placed into a social calculus – I am thoroughly in

debt to Gellner's work. What I propose to do is to purge Gellner's theory of its excessive functionalism and reification in order to specify more precisely the mechanisms he chooses to ignore. Thus I want to construct a more plausible micro component as a complement to Gellner's macro theory.

One way to do this, as I have already suggested, is to assume that *people* are oftentimes the principal actors in history. Don't misunderstand; I'm not a radical methodological individualist. By no means am I opposed to macro-theorising, in analysing the structural effects of industrialisation, of state construction, and of interstate conflicts of interest. Rather, I believe that our macro stories must be made consistent with parallel stories told on a micro level. That is to say, the predictions of the macro and micro stories need to be calibrated. It may be the case, for example, from a macro perspective, that cultural minorities 'refrain' from nationalism due to low probability of success. None the less, a convincing theory would need to show that for all (or most) members of that set, there would be no *individual* interest in developing a nationalist programme, and insufficient resources to 'sell' it to the putative members of that nation. To be sure, Gellner often reconciles the micro and macro stories, especially when writing about the role of the intelligentsia in the forging of nationalism.¹⁹ But the typical story line has macro-historical forces (industrialisation and modernisation) impelling unspecified actors (minorities, states, lands, classes) – explained by the needs of those conglomerates – into nationalist movements. This requires revision.

What I am proposing is that we discharge some of the weight carried by the functionalist logic in Gellner's formulation; and replace it with a model that takes individual incentives more strongly into account. In light of this goal, I shall begin by summarising a micro-based story of national revival I have elaborated elsewhere;²⁰ relying on this model, and data I collected in four of the post-Soviet Union Republics (Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan), I then seek to account for nationalist sentiments and actions by the Russians now living in diaspora. The data, once examined on a micro level, allow me to complement Gellner's theory with a non-functionalist micro-calculus, a calculus that does not require a pure job-mobility motivation that Gellner knew to be inadequate.

National revivals and the tipping game

Under a variety of conditions – a rationalising state seeking to fashion a common standardised nation within the boundaries of rule; a rebellious

region within a state seeking economic, political and cultural autonomy; a wave of migrants moving from one cultural/linguistic zone to another – there will be pressures on people to alter their (or their children's) language repertoires. These pressures often (as with immigrants in the United States to English) seem inexorable; in other cases (for example, the Poles in Russia) they meet with strong resistance; and in still other cases the tides change (as in Catalonia, to Spanish and back to Catalan). As I have already suggested, Gellner has addressed the dynamics of language shift under these precise conditions, but he all too often explained individual shifts based on macro-sociological needs. The theory was at its weakest in translating macro forces into individual actions. Thomas Schelling, in his 'tipping game' models, has made great headway in addressing problems of this sort; in this section I shall put my 'language' version of Schelling's tipping game in a nutshell.²¹ Here the focus will be on the pressures faced by the Russian diaspora in the nationalising states of the former Soviet Union.

Consider Figure 5.1. The x axis represents the percentage of Russians who speak the titular language.²² (Alternatively, and as a much better indicator of assimilation, it could represent the percentage of Russian-speakers who send their children to titular medium of instruction schools). The numbers of Russian parents who have done so is so low as of this writing, that the model does not have much interest. Readers might assume that at a certain point along the x axis – say at around 50 per cent of Russians who speak the titular language – a second tipping game – that involving sending your children to a titular medium of instruction school – is triggered. Meanwhile, the y axis portrays the average pay-off (less learning costs) for a Russian-speaker in the population who acquires facility in the titular language (or who sends her child to a titular medium of instruction school). The utility function RR represents the pay-off for maintaining a monolingual Russian repertoire; and TT represents the pay-off for developing a Russian/titular bilingual repertoire (with the medium of instruction tipping game, RR would represent Russian-language dominance and TT would represent titular-language dominance).

The structure of this game makes for a powerful story about language shift. For one, there are only two stable equilibria, at 0 per cent speaking the titular language or 100 per cent. Anywhere to the left of ' k ', the tipping point, the average pay-off for learning the titular language is less than maintaining monolingualism in Russian. Those who speak the titular language will have little incentive to maintain facility in it, or to pass it on to their children. The long-term consequence of this situation is for the society to return to a 0 per cent equilibrium. Anywhere to the

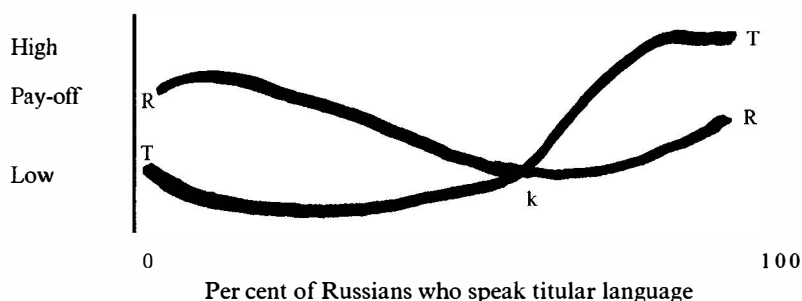


Figure 5.1 Tipping game: Russians into titular society

right of 'k', however, the incentives are reversed. And any Russian speaker who is monolingual will see that her likely pay-off will be higher if she acquires facility in the titular language. If all remaining Russian monolinguals make the same calculation (which would be rational for all those facing more-or-less average costs of learning and pay-offs for success), the trend would be towards 100 per cent facility in the titular language, the second stable equilibrium.

A second crucial element of the tipping game plot is that the difference between the average pay-off for R at 0 per cent and the average pay-off for T at 100 per cent plays almost no role in individual choice. Suppose the average individual pay-offs for Russian-speakers at 100 per cent along the x axis were much higher than the average individual pay-offs for Russian-speakers at 0 per cent along the x axis. Here, we might say that there were strong macro (economic, political or social) incentives for assimilation. But if the status quo were at 0 per cent, there would be no incentive for a particular individual to shift her language repertoire. In this case, the 'needs' of the society would not be met by the actions of its members. This portrays graphically the flaw in Gellner's functionalist formulations.

Each of the utility functions has an unusual shape, and this merits some comment about two assumptions hidden in those curves. My first assumption is that at 0 per cent along the x axis, there will be extremely high rewards for a few Russian-speaking individuals to serve as what Abram de Swaan calls 'monopoly mediators' between the elites of the nationalising state and the cultural minority.²³ These mediators serve as translators of the laws and regulations of the polity to their community; and serve also as interlocutors to the state apparatus on behalf of members of their community who need special services from the state. If there are virtually no bilinguals, and if bilingual titulars abjure playing

such a role (or are not trusted by the minority community) the returns on learning the titular language (for some Russians) would be great, raising the average pay-off, making it come close to the pay-off for RR at 0 per cent on the x axis. This is why TT drops at first before rising as more and more Russian-speakers become fluent in the titular language.

My second assumption is that as the society moves towards 100 per cent of Russian-speakers (and their children) who are fluent in the titular language, many people in that community will feel a sense of wistfulness that their culture is disappearing as a viable aspect of the society/polity in which they live. (This is especially the case amid the second game, in which the choice is whether to send your child to a Russian or titular medium of instruction school.) While people will yearn for the days of yore, when the culture of the immigrant community was intact, only a few individuals will have an incentive to maintain monolingualism in Russian. Those who do (when most other members of the Russian-speaking community have become either bilinguals or monolinguals in the titular language) will become cultural heroes. Elsewhere I have called them the 'lonely philologists and half-forgotten poets' who pine for the day when interests change, and the pay-offs favouring a Russian language revival increase.²⁴ These philologists would become the vanguard of the revival. But with no revival in sight, they will get honour and respect from members of the assimilated community who remember their roots, and perhaps receive professorships in Russian culture in the national university, and their pay-offs at RR will begin to rise as the society moves towards the right-hand equilibrium.

Economists (and Gellner, in some of his formulations) would have little trouble in calculating the pay-off functions RR and TT. They would be the expected economic returns for each language repertoire depending on how many other people of the Russian-speaking community had the same repertoire or a different one. If, for example, Russian-speakers project that as the society moves towards its tipping point, it would be impossible to get a job as a sales clerk, as a customs official, as a production manager, or as a teacher, unless one spoke the titular language, they would set their expected economic returns for speaking the titular language as significantly higher than if they maintained their monolingual repertoire.

Utility functions, at least when it comes to language issues, are not nearly so simple. People will be reluctant to reposition (or better, represent) themselves culturally – say by assimilating – if they know people who share their background will taunt or ostracise them or their children. They will be equally reluctant if they know that assimilation is

like being an Alice on the Queen's chessboard. The closer they get, the more the fashion leaders of the high culture change their styles in order to create a moving target. Gellner hinted at these factors, but never specified them in his Just-So stories.

In light of these considerations, and relying on Petersen, who addressed issues of assimilation in the realm of volunteering for military service, I postulate two other variables that help constitute the language utility function, both having more to do with status than income.²⁵ First, there is the value of in-group status. Suppose Russian-speakers who attempt to learn the titular language (through seeking social relations, or even relations of affection) suffer ridicule, ostracism or even bodily harm from members of their own community. To the extent that vigilantes within the migrant society can impose costs on potential assimilators into the titular culture, the pay-off for TT will be reduced. Secondly, there is the value of out-group acceptance. Suppose Russian-speakers who learn the titular language are easily identified by titulars, and are barred from enjoying the fruits of assimilation. Titular clubs, social groups and spouses remain off-territory for assimilators, or nouveaux-titulars. Under such conditions (even if they could get decent employment that requires knowing the titular language), the returns for TT, compared with RR, will be lowered.

A number of important questions relating to this model and its predictions in regard to assimilation versus a separating nationalism will remain unanswered. First is the question as to how the three elements of the language utility function get combined, and with what weighting. Secondly, there is the question of how to build into the model the opportunities and constraints set by the policies of the nationalising state. It makes a big difference if the state subsidises language instruction for its minorities, or whether the governments refuse even to sponsor the publication of textbooks oriented to teaching the outside group how to speak the national language. There may be precious little 'choice' involved if there are no opportunities to learn it. Thirdly, there are a range of other realms in which assimilation can take place – in dress, in surnames, in diet. The relationship of language assimilation to these other forms, and how they play into one another, awaits specification. Despite these theoretical lacunae, the data analyzed below demonstrate that expected economic returns cannot tell the whole story of assimilation, at least at the early stages of language rationalisation in the newly nationalising states of the former Soviet Union. And furthermore, I shall demonstrate that concerns of in-group and out-group status can be made part of a rational calculus in questions of assimilation and nationalism.

Russians in the post-Soviet diaspora

The 25 million Russians living in the now-independent states that were formerly Union Republics of the Soviet Union find themselves somewhat like 'Bs' in Gellner's just-so story of nationalism. In the course of Russian and then Soviet modernisation, Russians moved, or were forced to move, where there was land or jobs. Similarly, non-Russians moved in large numbers into Russia and into areas 'foreign' to them. In a variety of ways, often quite distinct from the standard stories of state-building, the leaders of Russia and the Soviet Union sought to create a wider national identity that would incorporate all Bs (Tatars, Georgians, Estonians, Ukrainians, etc.) into an A-&-B nation-state. With the collapse of the Union in 1991, however, the As have become Bs: Russians are the migrants living in 'nationalising states who seek social mobility within those states', but are also subject to discrimination there and are therefore potential recruits for a counter-nationalism as 'Russians', whether through secession, regional autonomy movements, or out-migration.²⁶ The question of the fate of these 25 million Russians, a sort of 'beached diaspora', remains unanswered.

An economic interpretation would have us look at the relative modernisation of the nationalising state and Russia. To the extent that the former is ahead of Russia (e.g. Estonia and Latvia), the diaspora would remain in the titular republic; to the extent that it is behind (e.g. in Kazakhstan), the diaspora would migrate back to Russia in search of the better things in life associated with advanced modernisation. In the former case, where the Russians remain, the theory would then demand that we look to social mobility prospects within the nationalising state for Russians. If they are more-or-less equal to that of the titulars (and this would happen where the working class could not easily distinguish titulars from Russians, for example in Ukraine), the theory would predict assimilation by Russian-speakers into the standard language of the titular republic. If the Russians face discrimination through easy detection (for example in Estonia or Latvia), the theory would predict a counter-nationalism, led by the Russian-speaking disaffected intelligentsia living in the titular republic.

To put these predictions to the test, but with more of a focus on individual incentives than Gellner's formulations would have demanded, I collected data on the adaptations of Russians to their diasporic condition in four former Union Republics – Estonia, Latvia, eastern Ukraine and northern Kazakhstan. In this chapter, I will report on only two elements in this organic chain of data. The first is a high-*n* random survey, comparably administered in each of these republics, where we

asked titulars and Russians about their knowledge of languages, their use of the titular and Russian language in a variety of domains, their social and demographic situation, and their attitudes and expectations about assimilation, out-migration, and mobilisation for nationalist goals.

The second research technique used in the project and to be reported on here is called the 'matched-guise' test, first administered in Montreal by Lambert, and revised by Woolard in her research in Catalonia.²⁷ My research team and I administered the test based on Woolard's standards in the four republics in which we had our high-*n* survey. The goal of this test is to ascertain the degree of status people receive for speaking a particular language, independent of knowledge about the speaker's economic achievements or failures. I used these data to get 'scores' for the in-group and out-group status variables that partly constitute the utility functions in the tipping game.

To administer the matched-guise test, you need to recruit two bilinguals (in Russian and the titular language). We chose one bilingual whose first language was Russian; and another whose first language was the titular language. We then translated a neutral passage (about a mathematical concept) into Russian and the titular language. Each bilingual read the passage into a tape recorder twice, once in each language. We alternated the four 'voices' on the tape so that the same person did not speak consecutively, and we played the tape in front of audiences of secondary school students. Never in our administration of the tests (nor in Lambert's or Woolard's) did any student pollute the research by noticing aloud that a single person was speaking in two different guises. After the test, students were generally surprised and delighted to hear about the 'trick'.

Students were asked to 'judge' each voice on a scale of 1 to 6, telling us what sort of person they imagined, just by hearing the voice. The students were given a variety of criteria in which to judge the voices, such as pleasant, attractive, spiritual, witty, cultured, open, magnanimous, intellectual, educated, self-confident, proud, having leadership qualities, diligent. Through confirmatory factor analysis, we differentiated the rankings into two primary factors, that of respect and friendship. Students were also asked to speculate about what sort of job they thought the speaker held, and these were coded by levels of status. From the answers to our questions, we were able to rank the degree of friendship and respect accorded to a single person, whether she was speaking in the titular language or Russian.

Relevant data from the surveys, from the matched-guise tests, and from a few other sources of published data, are presented in Table 5.1. The

dependent variable that is of consequence for a test of Gellner's theory is the reaction of the diasporic population to the nationalising projects of their new states in which they are now citizens/subjects. Consequently, I shall focus here upon the openness of Russian-speakers to assimilation into titular society. As Table 5.1 shows, five survey questions (rows 2–7) tapped different levels of openness in the four republics.

On the dependent variable, openness to assimilation, Latvia's Russians are by far the most open. Nearly half of the Russian respondents answered that assimilation represents the best future for Russians in their republic, more than twice as many as Russian nationals in Ukraine (row 2). The figures for Estonia and Kazakhstan are considerably lower. Similarly, on the question of whether all Russians in the titular republic should be fluent in the titular language, over 70 per cent of Latvia's Russians in our survey agreed. Here Estonia's Russians were in second place, followed by Ukraine and then Kazakhstan. On the question of whether Russians in the republic should abjure claims to territorial autonomy (row 5), over 70 per cent of Latvia's Russians agreed. Here Ukraine was second, Kazakhstan (surprisingly, given the reported sentiments in the Russian press of Russians in the north of the republic) third, and Estonia fourth, as Russians in the north-east of the country showed a strong desire for autonomy. On the question of whether the titular language should be a required subject in all schools in the republic (row 4), there was widespread agreement among Russian respondents in all four republics, with those in Latvia coming in a close second to the Russians in Estonia; those in Kazakhstan were most reluctant to be required to study Kazakh. Finally, there was a question of how the respondent would react if a state official addressed an inquiry to him or her in the titular language. In which language, we asked, would you respond? For respondents who speak the titular language with great difficulty (row 6), those in Latvia were most likely to respond in the titular language, accommodating to the state language. The answers get more interesting when we look at that sub-set of respondents who claim to speak the titular language well (row 7). Among Latvia's Russians, most would respond in the language of the questioner, and in the language they know well. But in the other three republics, there is strong resistance to this accommodation norm. Note well that 36 per cent of Ukrainian Russians who speak Ukrainian freely would none the less respond in Russian. The figures for Estonian and Kazakh Russians show similar resistance. Overall, on a single dimension of openness to assimilation, it appears that Latvia's Russians are most open, that Estonian and Ukrainian Russians are a far second, and Kazakh's Russians are least open to assimilation in Kazakh culture.

Table 5.1 *Explaining openness to assimilation: Russians in Four Republics*

	Estonia	Latvia	Kazakhstan	Ukraine
<i>Variable</i>				
1. Tipping Axis (% of Russians who speak titular language (1989 Census; those who think it or speak it freely, from survey)	13.8; 6.4	21; 20.1	0.86; 3.5	33.3; 26.4
<i>Dependent variable: Openness to assimilation</i>				
2. Best future for Russians in this Republic is to assimilate (survey, only Russian respondents)	7.9	48.4	7.7	23.1
3. All permanent residents should be fluent in the titular language, % of Russian respondents who agree (survey)	58.2	70.6	23.0	36.9
4. Titular language should be a required subject in school, % of Russian respondents who agree (survey)	95.8	95.2	64.4	84.7
5. Russians in this republic have no right to territorial autonomy, % of Russian respondents who agree (survey)	24.2	71.5	46	49
6. Of all Russian respondents in survey who speak titular language with difficulty; and with great difficulty, % who will answer the question of a government official in the titular language	45.3; 5.3	48; 14.9	16.5; 3.6	20.6; 8.0
7. Of all Russian respondents in survey who 'think in' the titular language; speak it freely, % who will answer the question of a government official, asked in the titular language, in Russian.	25; 11.8	16.7; 0	50; 33.3	16.7; 36
<i>Independent variable: expected economic returns</i>				
8. Regression analysis: job status explained based on knowing titular language (B; SE B), from survey	0.4313; 0.0826	-0.237; 0.0998	-0.0043; 0.0588	0.3456; 0.0539
9. Matched-guise: mean quality of job for Russian in Russian guise less quality of job for Russian in titular guise (positive number means higher prestige for Russian speaker, speaking Russian)	-0.349	0.268	0.225	0.949
10. Economically useful to learn titular language (from survey)	72.2	49.5	51.6	59.2
11. % of Russians in unskilled labour; ratio of % of Russians in unskilled labour to % of all respondents in survey	26.0; 1.42	10.1; 1.07	9.4; 1.54	5.2; 1.08

Table 5.1 (*contd*)

	Estonia	Latvia	Kazakhstan	Ukraine
<i>Independent variable: status returns</i>				
12. Loss of in-group status in friendship for speaking titular language (matched guise)	0.52	0.43	0.37	0.25
13. Loss of in-group status in respect for speaking titular language (matched guise)	0.41	0.34	0.49	0.35
14. Gain in out-group status in friendship for speaking titular language (matched guise)	-0.28	-0.26	-0.21	-0.33
15. Gain in out-group status in respect for speaking titular language (matched guise)	-0.34	-0.29	-0.45	-0.49
<i>Independent variable: titular accommodation</i>				
16. % of titular respondents in survey who fully accept internationality marriage of son; of daughter	14.5; 13.9	24.7 23.0	14.3; 12.4	52.8; 50.8
17. Citizen/job rights for Russian monolinguals (judgment of research team)	low/ restricted	pending/ restricted	high/ few limitations	high/ high
18. % of titular respondents in survey who agree strongly; agree, that titular language should be the sole state language of the Republic	65.2; 21	88.4; 6.7	39.1; 21	32; 10.7
<i>Intervening sociological variables</i>				
19. Linguistic difference of titular language from Russian	high	medium	high	low
20. Religious distance of titulars from orthodoxy	medium	medium	high	low
21. % of Russians in capital city (1897; 1970; 1989)	16; 35; 42	16; 43; 47	58; 70; 59	54; 23; 21
22. % of Russians in republic (1989 Soviet census)	30.3	34.0	37.8	22.1
<i>Intervening variable: options for exit</i>				
23. % of Russians who migrated 1991-93, based on 1991 population	8.26	5.95	5.80	3.14
24. Cost of out-migration: % who want to migrate less per cent that thinks it very likely they will migrate (from a 1990 survey)	23-12=11	16-3=13	20-2=18	26-16=10

Notes: Precise questions in the Survey, and all data from it, are available at the Data Archive at the IPSR, University of Michigan. The surveys were conducted from 1993-95. Except for Ukraine (where the survey was conducted only in Kiev and Donetsk), random

samples were interviewed from all regions of the country. Details on the matched-guise data will be published in a related article. It should be noted here, however, that the 'Russian' speaker in Kazakhstan was in actuality a Russified Kazakh who spoke fluent Russian and rudimentary Kazakh. The research team that made judgements for rows 17, 19, and 20 include the author (Estonia), Dominique Arel (Ukraine), Bhavna Dave (Kazakhstan) and Vello Pettai (Estonia and Latvia). Source for row 21: Chauncy D. Harris (1993) 'The New Russian Minorities: A Statistical Overview', *Post-Soviet Geography* 34:1, pp. 18–19. Source for row 23: Federal Migration Service numbers compiled from RFE/RL Research Institute. Slavic, Baltic, and Eurasian Archive. *Russia and CIS Today: Media News and Feature Digest*, 30 July, 1994, no. 518: pp. 39–40. Press Survey: *Integratsiya Respublik SNG: Protsess poshel*, 'Pereseleniye Narodov Prodolzhaetsya vse dorogi vedut v Rossiyu (po dannym FMS RF)'. Vek No. 28: 29/07–04/08/94, c.7), kindly compiled for me by Lee Schwartz, of the US Department of State, Office of the Geographer and Global Issues. Source for row 24: Survey performed by *Moscow News*, only of Russians, compiled by RFE/RL, 15 November 1991. Census data are from the 1989 Soviet census.

The tipping model, if presented as a monotonic process in which positive attitudes towards assimilation increase to the extent that other members of your group have already assimilated, would require some revision in light of these data. If the point on the x axis of the tipping model is coded based on the percentage of Russians who speak the titular language (row 1), one would expect Ukrainian Russians to be most open to assimilation, with Latvians in second, Estonians in third and Kazakhs in fourth place.

What then explains the point on the x axis for each republic at the time of the survey, shortly after the Soviet collapse? From the data on Table 5.1, the answer seems clear: social distance. The proximity of religious doctrine (row 20) and language group (row 19) accounts for Ukraine's Russians (with a Slavic language and Orthodox religion) who are on the point furthest towards assimilation, followed by Latvia (an Indo-European language and Christian in religion), then by Estonia (a non Indo-European language but Christian) and finally Kazakhstan (a non Indo-European language and Islamic). Furthermore, consider the 1989 figures for percentage of Russians in the capital city (row 21) and in the entire Republican population (row 22). The lower the number, a demographic perspective would assume, the higher probability of language assimilation, as the probability of interacting with a non-Russian would be higher. Again, these data are nearly consistent with each republic's point on the x axis (with Estonia and Latvia reversed).

Does this mean that a choice model is not useful for studying assimilation? If cultural distance and demographics can explain placement on the x axis, where do calculations about economic returns and social status come into play? The answer is that under Soviet rule, the

pay-offs in status and economic returns for speaking the titular language for Russians hovered around zero; those who learned it did so passively, and the closer you are to native speakers (in terms of cultural or geographic distance), the more likely you will pick up the language at virtually no cost.

In the post-Soviet period, due to the language policies of the nationalising states, where the expected returns for speaking the titular language are much higher, Russian-speakers need to calculate more consciously the potential pay-offs for learning the titular language. Therefore, while a choice model would have had very little value-added in an explanation for bilingual repertoires among Russians living in titular republics during the Soviet era (but much value-added as an explanation for titulars learning Russian!), such a model has greater importance in the present era. In fact, the ordering of the four republics in terms of where they stand on the x axis and where they stand regarding openness to assimilation in the survey suggest that the incentives to learn the titular language have changed in the post-Soviet era. For Russians in the Soviet successor states, as demonstrated by the different rankings on the x axis and on the openness to assimilation variable, there is a new prospective market in language learning; that is to say, it is now a long term human-capital investment worthy of consideration. Let us now examine the utility functions of Russians in their new states (based on survey data) to tease out criteria of their early decisions.

If the tipping model relied solely on expected economic returns and probabilities for occupational mobility, these data present an insurmountable challenge. The data show that the economic returns for speaking the titular language are highest in Estonia, second highest in Ukraine, neutral in Kazakhstan and negative in Latvia. Job prospects and occupational mobility cannot therefore be the principal motor for assimilation. In the four surveys, I regressed job status of respondent on his/her knowing of the titular language (row 8). In Estonia, for each level of increase in knowledge of Estonian, Russian respondents' job status category went up nearly a half; in Ukraine, it went up by about a third; in Kazakhstan it was neutral; but in Latvia, it went down by nearly a quarter level! This is reflected in respondent attitudes (row 10), as over 70 per cent of Russians in Estonia agreed that it was economically useful to learn Estonian; 59 per cent of Ukrainian Russians similarly agreed; and again Latvian Russians, of the four republics, agreed in lowest numbers.

The same results are partially confirmed in the matched-guise test (row 9). To be sure, only in Estonia was the job attributed to the Russian-speaker in her titular guise higher in status than in her Russian guise. In the other three republics, the job status of the Russian-speaker

in her titular guise was lower than in her Russian guise. But the relative standing is what is of interest. Here respondents in Ukraine had the highest bias in favour of the Russian in her Russian guise. Students in Ukraine envisioned the Russian voice speaking the titular language as having a far worse job than that same person speaking Russian. Latvia and Kazakhstan stand in the middle, where the Russian-speaker in her Russian guise is clearly seen to have a better job, but not overwhelmingly so. Finally, an examination of respondents' actual jobs (row 11) – with the notion that a high percentage in unskilled labour would give the greatest incentive to assimilate, as clerk jobs are the next step up for the children of unskilled labour – suggests that opportunities for social mobility through learning the titular language should be highest in Estonia, which comes in a far third in openness to assimilation. Openness to assimilation, *pace* the predictions of a pure job-mobility theory, cannot be explained by jobs associated with speaking the titular language and the opportunities in the titular republics for occupational mobility.

The status variables, however, can help account for variations in openness to assimilation that are missed by models that rely primarily on expected economic returns. To be sure, Gellner's writings do not ignore status. In his *Encounters with Nationalism*, he writes:

Modern man enjoys, or suffers from, no . . . rigid and reinforced ascribed status. He *makes* his own position, not by a single contract, but by a vast multiplicity of minor contracts with his fellows. In order to negotiate and articulate these contracts, he must speak in the same idiom as his numerous partners. A large, anonymous and mobile mass of individuals, negotiating countless contracts with each other, is obliged to share a culture. They must learn to follow the same rules in articulating their terms. Cultural nuance no longer symbolises status, for the status is no longer given: but a shared, standardised culture indicates the eligibility and ability of participants to take part in this open market of negotiable, specific statuses, to be effective members of the same collectivity.²⁸

But for Gellner, in modern society there is no value in sharing, for its own sake, outside of the requirements of the macro-economy, a set of customs or a language. In contrast to this view, the status variables that I elucidated in the discussion of the tipping game, which are captured by the matched-guise test, stand independently from economic rewards or occupational standing. And they play some role in individual decisions about whether assimilation is desirable.

In-group status – the degree to which respondents of the minority group accept as friends those conationals who are seeking to assimilate – is measured here by the relative scores on friendship and respect

measures given to the Russian-speaker in her Russian and her titular guises. The higher the former score in relationship to the latter, the lower is the value of in-group respect for potential assimilators. In all four republics, the mean score (for both Russian and titular respondents) for the Russian-speaker in her Russian guise was more positive (on both friendship and respect dimensions) than for the Russian-speaker in her titular guise. None of the speakers gained points for speaking the titular language for the Russian students making their evaluations. Yet the relative status loss was different in each republic. As Table 5.1 shows (row 12), the Russian-speaker in Ukraine lost least on the friendship dimension in her Ukrainian guise; the Russian-speaker in Estonia lost most. On the respect dimension (row 13), the Russian-speaker in Latvia lost least in her titular guise while again, the Russian-speaker in Kazakhstan lost most. The Russian-speaker in Ukraine had the lowest cumulative loss, followed by the Russian-speaker in Latvia. The Russian speaker in Kazakhstan had the third lowest cumulative loss, and in Estonia the fourth.

As for out-group status – measured here by the degree to which respondents in the titular group accept in friendship and respect members of the Russian-speaking community who seek to assimilate – I have measured that based on the differential score for titular respondents between the Russian-speaker in her Russian guise and in her titular guise. It is curious – but this point will need to be developed elsewhere – that in all four republics, Russian-speakers suffered a status *loss* among titulars for speaking in their titular guise! The question here, as with in-group status, is that of relative losses between republics. On the friendship dimension (row 14), the Russian-speaker in Kazakhstan lost least in her titular guise; the Russian-speaker in Ukraine lost most. On the respect dimension (row 15), the Russian-speaker in Latvia lost least and the Russian-speaker in Ukraine lost most. On the cumulative score, the Russian-speaker in Latvia lost least, the one in Estonia second least, the one in Kazakhstan third least and the one in Ukraine lost most.

Two other measures of out-group acceptance add to the data from the matched-guise test. From material in the survey, but also in actual political life, I sought data on whether Russians were accepted as potentially equal to titulars in the social and political domains. The more accepted, the higher the 'out-group status' score, and the greater the likelihood of assimilation. First, in the survey, we asked respondents what they thought of a marriage of their son (and then their daughter) to a person of another nationality. Of the titular group who responded to this question (row 16), Ukrainian respondents were most willing to accept non-Ukrainians as members of their family, while Kazakh

respondents were least willing to do so, with the Estonian respondents quite close to the Kazakhs. Secondly, in an examination of citizenship and language laws (row 17), I sought to rank the four republics based on the degree to which Russians were accepted immediately and without question as citizens, and eligible for sensitive government jobs (these jobs I consider measures of status, and not so much for expected income). These would be tests of the degree to which there were restrictions put upon Russian-speaking permanent residents of the republics in the immediate post-Soviet period. The greater the restrictions, the lower the out-group status. As Table 5.1 indicates, Ukraine was the most accommodating of the four republics; Latvia second (it is far in front of Kazakhstan on the first and weakly behind in the second), Kazakhstan third and Estonia fourth. In an average of the four indicators of out-group acceptance, Ukrainians are most accommodating, Latvians a close second, Kazakhs third and Estonians last.

How best to understand the lay-out of the dependent variable, openness to assimilation? The high assimilationist attitudes of Russians in Latvia (despite low economic returns) and the low assimilationist attitudes of Russians in Estonia (despite high economic returns) are worthy of special comment. Russians in Latvia, based on calculations of economic returns for learning Latvian, should all remain monolingual and have little interest in assimilating. Yet in our survey they show a greater willingness than respondents in the other four republics to do so. An examination of status returns – that Russians in Latvia do not abandon fellow Russians who are seen to be speaking Latvian as much as Russians in two of the other republics; and that Latvians do not scorn assimilationist efforts by Russian-speakers as much as the titulars in all three other republics, coming quite close to Ukraine's score – may well be part of the answer. Concern for friendship and respect of one's own in-group, and a sense of acceptance of assimilationist moves by members of the out-group, irrespective of occupational returns, play an important role in calculations about assimilation. Similarly, Estonia's high score for economic returns for assimilating is counteracted by the low (in-group and out-group) status scores received by Russians who speak Estonian.²⁹ This helps explain the relatively low scores in Estonia on the dependent variable. Further research, applying the model to cases that were not used to fine tune the theory, is obviously necessary to work out the precise weighing of the components of the tipping model. But it should be clear already that status concerns, by both in-group and out-group, motivate orientations to assimilate or to sustain cultural difference. And while a simple occupational mobility calculus is clearly inadequate, a theory of nationalism based on calculations of economic and status

concerns does not do injustice to social reality. In fact, in ethnographic fieldwork that complemented the data collection for this project, my colleagues and I found it quite normal for Russian-speakers in these republics to calculate the expected value of linguistic assimilation.³⁰

Consistent with the tipping model, but ignored in my earlier formulations of actor utility functions, are calculations concerning the possibility of return to one's homeland through emigration. Here the data help make sense of why Ukrainian Russians are far less open to assimilation than the position on the x axis would have predicted.³¹ It also helps make sense of why Estonian Russians, who are closer to Kazakhstan's Russians on the x axis, and rebuffed strongly by Estonian policies, are as open to assimilation as are Ukrainians. As can be seen in rows 23 and 24 in Table 5.1, in the 1991–3 period, a lower percentage of Russians from Ukraine migrated to Russia than any of the other three republics included in this study. Yet of the four republics, more Russians in Ukraine claim they want to migrate, and more claim they think it likely they will migrate. What this suggests is that Russians in Ukraine in the Soviet period were passively picking up Ukrainian, without giving it much political or economic significance. Once Ukraine became independent, they feared that assimilation would be at the expense of their Russianness, and developed anti-assimilationist attitudes. Few have left because there has been little pressure on them to Ukrainise; but they know it will be easy (compared with other republics) to do so if necessary. The high expectation along with the low realisation of migration suggests a community that will resist assimilation, if forced upon them, through out-migration.

Estonia, on the other hand, has had relatively the highest out-migration of Russian-speakers, along with the second highest score for Russians wanting to out-migrate. This suggests that the Russians who remained were those most accepting of Estonian society. Even though in the 1989 census less than a quarter as many Russians in Estonia than Russians in Ukraine claimed to speak the titular language – in the survey the figure was less than half as many, suggesting that most of those who left were those who knew no Estonian – Russian respondents in Estonia on the dependent variable of this study were about equal to those in Ukraine. Not only did the economic returns help explain the closing of the incentive gap, but the possibilities and actualities of exit also played an important role.

More work needs to be done in conceptualising the role of exit for assimilation. On the one hand, high levels of exit might lower incentives for assimilation. Because foreign residents can say that if things get tough, they can always leave, the possibility of exit should lower the

incentive to assimilate. On the other hand, high levels of exit might indicate that the anti-titulars are all leaving, with only those willing to assimilate remaining. With a lower percentage of Russians in the republic, due to high exit, it might also make the chances for a binational republic (the Belgian model) seem more remote, thus adding incentives to assimilate. This is why I have not yet included out-migration figures, or the cost of out-migration, into the tipping calculus at this time. But the three variables – economic returns, in-group status and out-group acceptance – have given us an excellent first cut into the issue of the possibilities for A-&B national states in the liberated Union Republics of the former Soviet Union.

The true test of the tipping model, at least in its former Soviet republics domain, will not be available for many years. The model predicts that in cases where the expected returns for assimilation begin to appear positive for a few social or demographic groups of Russians in the post-Soviet republics, this will alter the pay-offs for closely related social or demographic groups. There should then be a slow but steady growth of potential assimilators. But at some point in this process, there should be a rapid acceleration, as all Russians come to believe that assimilation is inevitable. As we near the tipping point, the incentives for Russian political entrepreneurs, whose status is based on representing the Russian-speaking population as Russians, would be strong to coercively induce fellow Russians to resist assimilation, and to return to 'their' culture. In republics where growth is slow, with few Russians having positive expected returns for assimilation, the model predicts stagnation or negative growth intergenerationally in assimilators. In this case, Russian political entrepreneurs will maintain their representative monopolies to speak for the Russian-speaking population, and they will likely bargain for regional autonomy, as have the Flemish population in Belgium. Obviously, the data in the early moments of nationality politics in the Soviet successor states, which produce only a snapshot, cannot pick up these trends. But future research can and should. Ernest Gellner's work opened the gates to the study of social and economic sources of nationalism and assimilation; the possibility for long-term comparative study to refine Gellner's models – thanks to the Soviet collapse – is too inviting to disregard.

NOTES

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- 1 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, ch. 6.
- 2 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, 1965, pp. 166–8.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 158–63. In *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner writes about ‘assimilation’ without providing a formal definition. Because many citizens throughout the globe are fully incorporated into political life without having assimilated, it seems unduly provocative, as Alfred Stepan pointed out at the Prague presentation of this paper, to hold this to be the criterion of ultimate loyalty of a nation-state. None the less any theory of the nation needs to have a criterion of culture shift in line with a national standard, for which the term assimilation is perfectly appropriate. In ‘Marginality: A Microperspective’, *Rationality and Society*, vol. 7, 1995, I defined assimilation as ‘the process of adoption of the ever changing cultural practices of dominant society with the goal of crossing a fluid cultural boundary separating marginal groups from dominant society’. I believe this definition to be consistent with Gellner’s use of the term.
- 4 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 61.
- 5 Ibid., p. 61.
- 6 Gellner’s core argument, in what he refers to as the LSE debate on nationalism (*Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994, p. 61), is that the motivating factor in inducing nationalism is industrial society. In my judgement, especially when he considers sub-Saharan Africa, he uses fancy footwork to ignore disconfirming evidence. African nationalism clearly was not motivated by industrialisation. So Gellner substitutes (*Nations and Nationalism*, p. 82) the dubious fact that nationalism developed in Africa because Europeans were intent on setting up an ‘eventually industrial type of society’. Intentions (such as they were) to set up an industrial society are quite a different matter from industrialisation itself. This chapter is not concerned with the causes of nationalism, and it will not enter the LSE debate. Rather, this chapter is concerned mainly with the elaboration of the mechanisms which translate the macro forces (whether they are from industrialisation, modernity or ideas) into micro incentives for people to assimilate into a cosmopolitan culture or to seek fulfilment as a member of a separate nation, built on cultural materials recognisable from their rural roots.
- 7 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 140–2.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 72–3.
- 9 E. Gellner, *Nationalism*, London, 1997, p. 54.
- 10 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 39.
- 11 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 174.

- 12 Ibid., p. 167.
- 13 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 55, 56, 58.
- 14 Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 53.
- 15 Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 194.
- 16 Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 8.
- 17 See, for example, J. Díez-Medrano's discussion of Sabino de Arana in *Divided Nations: Class, Politics and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia*, Ithaca, 1995.
- 18 Gellner, *Nationalism*, p. 8.
- 19 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, pp. 169–70.
- 20 D. Laitin, *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa*, Cambridge, 1992.
- 21 T. Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehaviour*, New York, 1978, ch. 7.
- 22 Because the now-independent former Union Republics each had a major language group after which it was named, they are commonly referred to as 'titular' nationalities, who are now, as leaders of nationalising states, promoting the titular language of their republic.
- 23 A. de Swaan, *In Care of the State*, Oxford, 1988, ch. 3.
- 24 D. Laitin, 'Language Games', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 20, 1988.
- 25 R. Petersen, 'Rationality, Ethnicity, and Military Enlistment', *Social Science Information*, vol. 28, 1989.
- 26 R. Brubaker, 'National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands', *Daedalus*, vol. 124, 1995.
- 27 W. Lambert, *Language, Psychology and Culture*, Stanford, 1972; K. Woolard, *Double Talk*, Stanford, 1989.
- 28 Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, pp. vii–viii.
- 29 As suggested to me by Terry Martin, the long periods of cooperation between Russians and Latvians, for example in their mutual participation in the prerevolutionary Social Democratic Movement, may help explain the feelings of mutual respect shown in the matched guise. Russians and Estonians have not had similar types of mutual cooperation. Furthermore, the greater neighbourhood mixing of Russians in Riga, as compared to Russians in Tallinn, due mostly to relative size of groups, may also play a role. Whatever the deep causes of difference, this chapter is emphasising the mechanisms – having to do with status concerns that show up differently in the two Baltic Republics – that drive everyday behaviour.
- 30 This theme is elaborated in my *Identity in Formation: The Russian Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca, 1998.
- 31 Perhaps it is not the perceived ease of exit, but rather the quasi-utopian belief by Russians in Ukraine that one day there will be an *Anschluss*, that weakens incentives for them to learn Ukrainian. This possibility was drawn to my attention by Valeri Khmelko, whose data show the strength of desire for re-Union with Russia among Russians in eastern Ukraine.

6 Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism: some definitional and methodological issues

Nicos Mouzelis

Nationalism and industrialisation

A standard criticism of Gellner's theory of nationalism is that he tries to establish too contiguous a link between industrialisation and nationalism, whereas in fact the two phenomena are not always very closely linked. It is quite possible to have industrialisation without nationalism (for example, the proto-industrialisation of several regions in western Europe), or nationalism without industrialisation (as in the nationalist movements of the Balkans and Latin America in the nineteenth century).

Gellner has replied to this criticism in two ways. First, he has stressed that he uses the term industrialisation in a broad sense:

which includes the earlier commercialisation of society, which only becomes 'industrial' in a narrower sense (power machinery, large scale production) later, thereby however allowing the social changes already initiated by commercialisation to be preserved, extended, and to become entrenched.¹

Secondly, he has pointed out that his theory focuses on the emergence rather than the subsequent diffusion of nationalism. Once nationalism is seen as rooted in the industrialised west, its adoption in several non-industrial parts of the globe does not create any special problems for his theory.²

Both these points of defence present certain difficulties. The problem with the first is that the motor force that brought about a special type of social structure which, according to Gellner, 'requires' a nationalist ideology might have to do less with industry or the market than with the development of the state. As Michael Mann, Anthony Giddens and others have pointed out, it was geopolitical competition between European states that – via the development of military technology, the building up of national armies eventually based on conscription, the spectacular increase of taxes through the centralisation and rationalisation of tax-gathering techniques, and so on – finally destroyed political, economic and cultural localism.³ This break-up generated unprece-

mented processes of social mobilisation, in the course of which a large number of people, whose lives had previously been embedded within the rigid structures of traditional local communities, were brought into the politico-administrative centre. This in turn resulted in a marked shift in orientations and loyalties from the local periphery to the 'imagined community' of the nation-state.

One might well say that this politico-military 'bringing in' was greatly facilitated by market developments. But even if this is conceded, as well as the close and dialectical relation between state and market developments, it is still perfectly plausible to argue that, in the eighteenth century, it is military rather than economic technologies that primarily explain the spectacular development of state bureaucracies and their unprecedented penetration of the societal periphery. This 'infrastructural' development of the state, to use Mann's terminology,⁴ eventually led to the transformation of absolutist states into nation-states, and of 'subjects' into 'citizens'. In other words, the vast evolution of state infrastructures cannot be viewed as a merely ancillary, derivative process; it was at the very centre of the development that brought about the type of transformation of orientation and identity that is at the centre of Gellner's work.

Gellner's defensive argument about the diffusion of nationalism to non-industrialised parts of the world also faces serious difficulties. It is easy to explain why nineteenth-century Greek merchants became nationalists:

Greek navigators and traders on, say, the island of Hydra, when they supported and financed the Greek nationalist revolution, must have been fully aware that traders in, say, Marseilles, were safer, freer and richer than they, and the idea that they would share these advantages in a Greek, non-Ottoman state, if they succeeded in creating it, could hardly have been long in coming.⁵

All this is perfectly true. However, it is rather less easy to explain without reference to internal social structures how these nationalist sentiments spread to the lower echelons of the social pyramid, at a time when both commercial and industrial capitalism was very weak.⁶ In other words, if the processes of diffusion and imitation explain quite well the development of elite nationalism, it does not help to explain the shift from elite to mass nationalism in the nineteenth-century Balkans. For this shift to become understandable requires taking into account the partial destruction of localism in these societies by the enormous development of state bureaucracies and national armies.⁷ In the Balkans, therefore, more dramatically than in western Europe, the 'bringing-in' process was primarily initiated and sustained by a politico-military rather than economic-industrial logic and dynamic.

Although all cases of nation-building involve the destruction of localism, the shift of orientations from the periphery to the centre and the creation of broader 'national' arenas, the major force bringing about this huge and unprecedented change was not always or predominantly industry- or market-related. This becomes still more obvious if we consider nation-building in post-1945 African societies. In these cases, the creation of national armies, public bureaucracies and wide mass media networks had more to do with nation-building and national ideologies than with the development of industrial or commercial capitalism.

These criticisms do not, of course, invalidate Gellner's theory: they simply suggest that it should be modified in specific ways. Once one accepts, as I do, an elective affinity between nationalist ideology and the type of centralised non-segmental broad arenas brought about by inter-related state and market expansion, then Gellner's thesis is still relevant if the term 'industrialisation' is replaced by the more inclusive 'modernisation'. If modernity is taken to mean the kind of social arrangements that were institutionalised after the English industrial and French political revolutions, that is, if the term describes the destruction of localism and the creation via unprecedented social mobilisation, of broad social areas in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres, then we can argue that the elective affinity that Gellner tries to establish is not between nationalism and industrialisation, but between nationalism and modernity. In some cases modernity came about via predominantly market means, in others via predominantly politico-military means.

If this is accepted, then Gellner's tripartite neo-episodic typology of history (that is, his division between pre-agrarian, agrarian and industrial eras)⁸ is less useful for understanding the emergence and development of nationalism than a political coercion based typology of say, stateless societies, societies with traditional state structures, and societies with highly 'penetrative' and 'infrastructurally' effective strong states.

Gellner's functionalism

A second, and by now standard, critique of Gellner's theory of nationalism focuses on the functionalist character of his basic idea that a certain type of society (marked by social mobility, fluid relative egalitarianism, anonymity, semantic/communicative rather than physical work, and so on) *requires* a context-free medium of communication – i.e., a nationalist ideology based on mass literacy/education. This immediately conveys the impression that the needs of 'Industria' are illegitimately

transformed into causes which more or less automatically create nationalism.

Gellner has defended his position by arguing, as have Merton and others,⁹ that functionalist analysis is not necessarily teleological. He posits that one can avoid the illegitimate transformation of needs into causes by spelling out the *mechanisms* that link Industria's functional requirements with the emergence and consolidation of a literacy-linked, context-free nationalist idiom. These mechanisms are related to the fact that people who fail or refuse to acquire such a nationalist idiom feel frustrated, disadvantaged, second-class citizens. More precisely:

Political and economic forces, the aspiration of governments for greater power and of individuals for greater wealth, have in certain circumstances produced a world in which the division of labour is very advanced, the occupational structure highly unstable, and most work is semantic and communicative rather than physical. This situation in turn leads to the adoption of a standard and codified, literacy-linked ('High') idiom, requires business of all kinds to be conducted in its terms, and reduces persons who are not masters of that idiom (or not acceptable to its practitioners) to the status of humiliated, second-class members.¹⁰

All of this can be usefully be represented schematically:

- (A) the advanced division of labour, unstable occupational structure, and so on;

is linked to
- (B) adoption of a literacy-linked idiom:

is linked to
- (C) the refusal to accept or adopt the idiom being so 'dysfunctional' for the individual that attempts at resistance are peripheralised or peter out.

I find the linkages between (A), (B) and (C) convincing if they are conceptualised not causally, but in terms of compatibility and non-compatibility – that is, in terms of elective affinity. Any move from elective affinity to causality proper – or, to use Sahlins and Service's terminology,¹¹ any move from general to 'specific evolutionary' analysis – requires much greater context specificity in respect to history and agency, and particularly to questions of collective agency.

So in order to establish linkages between (A), (B) and (C) in one or several countries or cases, it is necessary to bring into the analysis not only vague 'meanings' but *real* actors, playing *specific* games. For instance, what kind of groups or individuals created the literacy-linked idiom, and were there struggles for the construction of competing idioms? Which groups or categories of actors were against all literacy-

linked idioms, and which were in favour of a nationalist solution? To what degree was the idiom that prevailed consciously constructed, and to what degree was it an unintended consequence of different struggles or games? Which groups or categories of people were unwilling/willing to learn the nationalist idiom, and what form did their peripheralisation take?

Brendan O'Leary makes a point similar to mine when he argues that a way out of Gellner's difficulties is to replace a functionalist explanation by what Elster calls a 'filter' explanation.¹² This is an explanation that shows how the intentions of actors operate as filters linking favourable conditions with the construction of nationalism:

Modernising elites believe that nationalism is essential for modernisation, precisely because it breaks down barriers to modernising success. National-building nationalists *recognise* the beneficial consequences of nationalism, and this fact helps explain its political diffusion.¹³

O'Leary is only partly right here. There is no doubt that 'recognition' and/or the adoption of conscious strategies is an important mechanism linking functional requirements – or, to use a more fashionable terminology, favourable conditions of existence – with nationalism. But the importance of this mechanism varies from one case to another. Sometimes recognition and conscious strategies do play a central role, at other times they are less prominent. In the latter case, unintended consequences such as those Gellner mentions (for example, the petering out of anti-idiom reactions due to their greater dysfunctionality) are much more crucial.

This leads us to the conclusion that the passage from elective affinity to causality proper requires contextual specification via the more serious introduction of actors as not only products but also producers of their social world. This is to say that the shift from functional to causal analysis requires both O'Leary's 'recognition/conscious strategy' and Gellner's 'peripheralisation/petering-out' mechanism. The latter is more closely linked to the notion of unintended consequences, in the sense that it considers the emergence of nationalism in effect with reference to the method of elimination: it explains why alternative solutions to the adoption of a nationalist idiom failed.¹⁴ Needless to say, it is an empirical question whether the former or the latter mechanism is the more important, given that their respective weight varies from one case to the next. For instance, for obvious reasons conscious strategies of nation-building are more prominent in late modernisers, such as the Greek traders mentioned by Gellner himself.

Is a general theory of nationalism possible?

The discussion about the linkages between functional and causal explanations brings me to my third and final point. This is that Gellner's theory is less a *substantive* theory (Generalities III in Althusserian terminology) than a very useful conceptual framework (Generalities II in the same framework), with the help of which one can raise interesting questions and investigate in more historically and culturally specific ways and in a more finite, context-bound but still comparative manner, nationalist developments in various parts of the globe.¹⁵

Another way of saying this is to argue that, despite what Gellner himself says, his industrialisation/nationalism thesis is less of a theory than an *ideal type* suggesting an *elective affinity* between industrialism (or, better, modernity) and the literacy-linked idiom we call nationalist or nationalist ideology. From this point of view, the methodological similarity with Weber's Protestant ethic thesis is quite striking. In the same way that Weber's famous thesis establishes an elective affinity between Protestantism and 'bourgeois rational capitalism in the West', so Gellner, following the same procedure, establishes compatibilities between Industria and nationalism. In neither case has adequate causality been achieved, though this is claimed by the authors. It was not achieved for the very simple reason that one cannot provide adequate causal linkages by the sweeping, 'armchair' manner in which both these theorists attempted to establish this connection. The only difference between them in this context is that Weber was more cautious, or more aware of the ideal-typical nature of his theory, than was Gellner. The latter has great faith in the ability of the social sciences to produce very general, *substantive* theories (Generalities III, in Althusserian terminology) about such global phenomena as nationalism, industrialism and revolution.

As for myself, I am more in accord with Weber than with Gellner in this regard. I do not think that a theory of nationalism both *general* (that is, applying to all types of nationalism) and *substantive* (that is, telling us non-trivial things) is possible. Or, to put it more cautiously, I believe that a general *as well as* substantive theory about the linkages between industrialisation and nationalism is bound to be either true but trivial, or wrong – in the sense that its statements will apply in only certain conditions which, given the theory's generality, will have to remain unspecified. This point of view does not necessarily imply that generalisations are impossible in the social sciences. It rather leads to the idea, which is quite explicit in Weber's methodology, that interesting generalisations in the social sciences take one of two forms:

- (i) that of a finite, context-sensitive substantive generalisation based on a historically and culturally sensitive comparative methodology (generalisations such as are found, for instance, in the works of Barrington Moore and Michael Mann);
- (ii) that of ideal types constituting conceptual tools useful for investigating interesting problems, and for preparing the ground for the construction of more substantive, that is, more context-sensitive, theories.

In other words, I accept Ken Minogue's objection that Gellner's theory cannot greatly help to explain the specific course taken by the linkage between industrialism and nationalism in France, Germany or India.¹⁶ But if we consider, as I do, his theory to be a conceptual framework, an ideal-type, then I think it is a highly useful instrument for raising interesting questions and producing a myriad of suggestive points that a more historically-oriented sociologist can take up to construct more substantive, context-bound theories of nationalism.

Conclusion

In contrast to Gellner, I see his theory of nationalism not as a substantive theory but as an ideal-type – an ideal type which, in its conceptual ingenuity and heuristic utility, compares quite favourably with Weber's equally ideal typical theory about the connection between Protestantism and capitalism. I also think that, contrary to the standard claim of his critics, Gellner's functionalist reasoning, being non-teleological, is perfectly legitimate and highly useful. One simply has to be aware that it establishes linkages between *Industria* and nationalism on the level of elective affinity, rather than on the level of historical causality; to move from the former to the latter requires a greater recognition of collective actors and their games than is present in Gellner's work – and indeed in functionalism more generally.

NOTES

- 1 E. Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 638.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 632ff.
- 3 M. Mann, *Sources of Social Power. Volume One: A History of Power from the Beginning to 1760 AD*, Cambridge, 1986 and 'The Emergence of Modern European Nationalism', in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *Power, Wealth and Belief*, Cambridge, 1991; A. Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Oxford, 1985.

- 4 M. Mann, 'The Autonomous Power of the State: its Origins, Mechanisms and Results', *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 25, 1984.
- 5 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', p. 632.
- 6 N. Mouzelis, *Modern Greece*, London, 1978 and *Post-Marxist Alternatives*, London, 1990, pp. 103–10.
- 7 For the marked discrepancy between the politico-military growth of bureaucracies and the persistent backwardness of Balkan economies in the nineteenth century, see L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, New York, 1968.
- 8 E. Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book*, London, 1988.
- 9 R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, IL, 1963, ch. 1.
- 10 Gellner, 'Reply to Critics', pp. 629–30.
- 11 M. D. Sahlin and E. R. Service, eds., *Evolution and Culture*, Ann Arbor, 1960.
- 12 J. Elster, *Ulysses and the Sirens*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 30.
- 13 B. O'Leary, 'Ernest Gellner's Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview, or, What is Living and What is Dead in Ernest Gellner's Philosophy of Nationalism?', this volume, p. 52.
- 14 For an early discussion of these mechanisms as the only legitimate means to move from functional to causal analysis, see R. Dore, 'Function and Cause', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 26, 1961.
- 15 On levels of theory, see N. Mouzelis, *Sociological Theory: What Went Wrong?*, London, 1995.
- 16 K. Minogue, 'Ernest Gellner and the Dangers of Theorising Nationalism', in Hall and Jarvie, *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*.

Part III

Bringing politics back in

7 Nationalisms that bark and nationalisms that bite: Ernest Gellner and the substantiation of nations

Mark Beissinger

Anyone familiar with Ernest Gellner's work cannot help but be struck by the tension that runs throughout it over the inevitability and the contingency of nationalism. On the one hand, Gellner identified the rise of nationalism with the global, secular transition from *Agraria* to *Industria*. Challenging liberal and Marxist claims that nationalism was in fundamental conflict with the requirements of modern society, Gellner maintained that nationalism rather was rooted in industrialism – and specifically, its generalisation of a 'high culture' as a means for effecting a complex and constantly shifting division of labour. As Gellner wrote, 'Although those who participate in it generally, indeed almost without exception, fail to understand what it is that they do, the movement is none the less the external manifestation of a deep adjustment in the relationship between polity and culture which is quite unavoidable.'¹

At the same time, Gellner consistently maintained that nationalism in its specific manifestations was 'a contingency, not a universal necessity'. For Gellner, it was the dog that failed to bark that provided the vital clue to understanding nationalism and, specifically, the arbitrariness of its particular incarnation, in sharp contrast to the primordial and inevitabilist claims of nationalists themselves; as he argued, 'most potential nationalisms must either fail, or, more commonly, will refrain from even trying to find political expression'.² 'Nationalism as such is fated to prevail', he wrote, 'but not any one particular nationalism.'³ While nationalism may be inevitable, the concrete materialisation of nationalism – the outcomes of its struggles and the forms it assumes – are a matter of circumstance.

The argument is at once brilliant and problematic. Nationalism no longer belonged to the history of ideas, nor could it be represented as a mere reawakening of suppressed identities. In the modern world we are fated to invent a universe of contending nationalisms, and if one

nationalism were to disappear, another, Gellner tells us, would quickly fill the void. In a world of the universalisation of high culture the nonnational escapes the imaginable, as nations become the vessels within which the modern state and economy must operate. '[N]ationalism', Gellner wrote, 'is like gravity, an important and pervasive force, but not, at *most* times, strong enough to be violently disruptive.'⁴

But Gellner's argument takes nationalism out of the realm of the accidental only to deposit it there once again. How is it possible that the processes that produce the phenomenon in general have nothing to do with the processes that produce the phenomenon in its specifics? If most nationalisms are fated to fail, why do any succeed? Is a theory of nationalism which is utterly indifferent to explaining the great variety of forms which nationalism has assumed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – from genocide to the multicultural state – an adequate accounting of the phenomenon? Are all of these divergent acts in the name of the nation caused by the same civilisational shift from Agraria to Industria and its accompanying adjustment between polity and culture, and, if so, in what sense?

Like a Marxism without a theory of revolution, Gellner's theory provides no coherent vision of how nationalism works its way into the realm of substantive human action. Certainly, Gellner identified the agents of this nationalist world of our making: the modern state and the nationalist movement. But he stopped short of placing these agents in motion or connecting their acts with the larger social forces which he argued were central to their emergence. At most he pointed to stages through which nationalism naturally developed or 'time zones' in which particular types of nationalist struggles predominated. As he noted on the eve of his death, his theory largely sought to explain 'why nationalism, relatively inconspicuous in the past, is so very salient in our age'. But it 'does not explain why, for instance, German nationalism should have become quite so virulent during the Nazi period. Or again, it fails to explain the firm commitment of anglophone Canadians to the existing Canadian political unit, notwithstanding the fact that anglophone Canadians at any rate have not the slightest difficulty operating within the polity of the USA.'⁵ Without a mechanism tying broad social forces to concrete human action, Gellner's ideas can never really be subjected to a rigorous empirical test. 'It may seem convenient for a theory that it should lack specific consequences in a certain area which could help to test its truth', Gellner wrote in *Thought and Change*. 'Still, the arbitrariness of nationalism was not invented in order to make the theory harder to refute . . .'⁶

It is not difficult to deduce that by arbitrariness and contingency what

Gellner really had in mind was politics – a subject which, as John Breuilly reminds us,⁷ is central to nationalism, and one which is naturally full of arbitrariness and contingency. By directing our attention to the contingent character of nationalisms, Gellner was actually pointing us towards thinking about nationalism and its manifestations as the outcomes of political processes. Gellner provided us with a clear answer (albeit a debatable one) to the question of why the human agents of these processes should care about (and indeed, are often obsessed with) national outcomes: in a civilisational context in which culture matters, the rationalisation of language and education, the determination of the limits of state membership, and the definition of the physical boundaries of the state are central not only to a state's ability to foster societal wealth on its territory and to state capacity and legitimation, but also affect tremendously the life chances of individuals (or at least are expected to affect them). But Gellner failed to provide us with a coherent answer to the questions of how populations come to care about these things and why actors who care about these things should behave so differently from one another. By relegating the politics of nationalism to the residual category of 'arbitrary', Gellner left us without a theory of what might be called the substantiation of nations – i.e. the process by which categories of nationhood take on meaning for large numbers of people and become potent frames for political action. The blackboxing of nationalist politics was hardly unique to Gellner; it is rather typical of genetic and developmental approaches to the subject.⁸ But as much as we are interested in knowing why we are national, we are naturally even more interested in knowing why we are national in the ways that we are.

These two questions are hardly separable, for obviously there can be no nationalism without assertions of nationhood, without categories of nationhood becoming a basis for political action. Nationalism achieves political potency only in the form of collective discourse, mass mobilisation or state practice, although it manifests itself in other areas of social behaviour as well. In this sense, a nation must be understood as both a claim and a condition. It is a claim that is inherently ambiguous and contestable, as well as a condition of the generalisation of such claims, their spread beyond a narrow circle of claimants and their translation into human action. As Seton-Watson observed, 'a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one'.⁹ But it is not because people 'think the nation'¹⁰ that we believe that nations exist, but rather because people 'behave the nation'. They engage in collective behaviours and actions which signal to us that the nation is a category of substance. In spite of the tendency of much scholarship on nationalism

to focus on the role of leaderships and ideas in this process, the substantiation of nations is ultimately a mass behavioural phenomenon, not merely an elite or attitudinal affair.

The spread of nationalist behaviours may take place gradually over a protracted period of time (as was true, for instance, in the crystallisation of Russian national identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) or be concentrated in a few defining historical moments (as among Eastern Ukrainians in the fall of 1990 and early 1991). It may be a state-led process (as was true for the French in the late nineteenth century) or a process accomplished by activists and intellectuals (as was true of the French in the late eighteenth century). It may manifest itself in acts of extreme loyalty to the state (as in Japan in the first half of the twentieth century) or in open revolt against the state (as among Tamils in Sri Lanka in the late twentieth century). But if we take politics as the central aspect of the substantiation of nations, then we must reject the notion that the forms assumed by each nationalism are embedded somehow in its cultural code, predetermining its character for all time. The contingency towards which Gellner pointed us means that nationalisms take shape out of interactive processes, not out of essences.

Taking contingency seriously also means introducing path dependency into our understanding of nationalism. Indeed, the variety of behavioural paths which nationalisms may follow is quite substantial. Nationalisms may, in Gellner's phrase, bark or fail to bark. And even when they do bark, it is far from certain that they will bite. It is also hardly apparent whether, where, and how their bites will find their intended target. States may attempt to shape the identities of their populations, normalise boundaries, and alter patterns of language use. But recent history is littered with failures as well as successes, including cases in which apparent success subsequently developed into spectacular failure (witness Gellner's Czechoslovakia). Likewise, intellectuals who propagate nationalist ideas may indeed be in place; they may even attempt to mobilise populations in pursuit of nationalist aims. But whether their messages resonate within populations is very much a matter of context. Nationalists may be forced, for example, to bark behind fences – to operate under severe political constraints which render it impossible for their messages to find resonance in mass behaviour. According to Uzbek nationalists, for example, in spite of a strong sense of Uzbek identity *vis-à-vis* Russian domination, the high degree of repression carried out against nationalists in 1989 by local authorities and the successful attempts by the state to divide the nationalist movement undermined the efforts of nationalists to mobilise the Uzbek population against Soviet rule.¹¹ It is natural for us to read

history backwards and to project an aura of inevitability, in *Candide*-like fashion, around those nationalisms which succeed and those which fail. Gellner warned precisely against this tendency. But it is ultimately human agency which shapes how nationalism manifests itself in politics, so that a theory of nationalism without a theory of agency presents serious problems.

Here, we also face the abiding problem of how we know whether categories of nationhood have obtained substance. Anyone can declare a nation into existence. Contrary to Renan, nations are not daily plebiscites; rather, they are punctuated and irregular plebiscites whose timing is largely determined by the rhythms of political authority. The nation may be the largest community to which we pay allegiance when the chips are down. However, in politics the chips are usually not on the table, and it is only in uncommon circumstances that the choice between competing allegiances must be made. Certainly, the resonance of nationalist claims and identities within populations varies considerably over time and is always subject to evolution and change. But in most contexts it is rare when a plebiscite is actually conducted – when categories of nationhood are actually put to the test. The nation usually exists as a form of state or elite discourse, while nationalist frames gain resonance within larger segments of the population only at critical junctures in time. As Merab Kostava, the Georgian nationalist leader, told hundreds of thousands of Georgians massed outside of the House of Government in Tbilisi in April 1989, ‘Every nation has several moments which may be called great.’¹²

A nation whose tangibility is never affirmed through its behaviours – through unimpeded and inclusive public discourse, voluntary support for state action, or autonomous mass mobilisation – can hardly be said to exist other than in name only. Elites may believe such a nation exists, and may even act in its name. But unless the nation extends into the beliefs and behaviours of society, such a farce runs a great risk of eventually being punctured. For states and elites to sit on top of society and declare that they represent the nation is without doubt a powerful influence on social behaviour, but it does not in itself make a nation. The barking of nationalism is only one dimension (and perhaps not the most critical dimension) of the substantiation of nations. More important to those of us who actually encounter this animal is whether it bites: whether the noise that we hear is merely a cowardly deception by a weak and harmless creature, the greeting of a loyal friend, or the signal for an impending and savage leap for the jugular.

This chapter takes Gellner’s insight about the contingency of nationalism seriously in order to probe the substantiation of nations as political

process. My intention is neither to take contingency out of nationalism nor to turn nations into accidents (both of which, Gellner rightly tells us, are impossible in any case). Rather, the goal here is to place the contingencies of nationalism into a larger understanding of the politics involved in the substantiation of nations in order to help us focus more clearly on what needs to be explained and how we might go about explaining it. I see this as a pre-condition for any empirically based attempt to connect nationalism to the broader social forces of which Gellner wrote, for we cannot answer why we are fated to be national without also answering why we are national in the ways that we are.

Nationalist contention and the state

I begin by reframing nationalism as a contentious politics in which states vie with societal actors or with other states for control over a certain set of political objects: over the crystallisation of the state's physical, human or cultural boundaries. As a form of contentious politics, nationalism is a politics of normalisation and contestation, not a teleology of time zones and stages. The outcomes of this interactive process – the resonance or lack of resonance of nationalist frames, the forms of nationalist action which these frames evince and the consequences that these actions leave on the ground – are, as Gellner asserted, unpredictable *a priori*. The politics of the substantiation of nations always involves significant indetermination, precisely because it involves human agency. But like any path-dependent process, it is neither so opaque nor so erratic as to lack structure altogether. The factors which give shape to outcomes are connected in part with how actors provoke, weather and use to advantage the larger social transformations that have brought nationalism into being. But these connections must be demonstrated rather than assumed. At the same time, outcomes are also influenced by how actors are affected by and utilise to their own advantage the behaviours of others. For nationalism in its concrete manifestations is not an isolated contingent event, but rather a chain of connected contingent events which assume a larger pattern and meaning, especially to those who effect them. In this regard, even a series of connected contingencies that produce an outcome contains a certain structure and regularity which, when subjected to systematic analysis, tell us much about why the beast behaves as it does.

Unlike Gellner, I do not view nationalism merely as a principle or claim, nor do I view it as necessarily an industrial phenomenon *per se*. It is rather a set of political behaviours oriented towards certain objects in politics: the enclosure of the polity – the drawing of its physical, human

and cultural boundaries.¹³ These objects are intrinsic qualities of the modern state, and elements which distinguish it from earlier forms of political organisation, such as empires, city-states and kingships. Few premodern polities contained what we would call today a mass membership, elevated mass culture to a central aspect of rule or recognised fixed boundaries (as opposed to frontiers) to their authority. Nationalism emerged concomitantly with the rise of the modern state and the notions of popular sovereignty that materialized in opposition to the modern state's growing appetite and ambitions. These were arguably part of the civilisational transformation which Gellner lumped under the rubric of 'industrialism', and which others have described as 'modernity'. I focus specifically on the modern state rather than industrialism, for it acts as both the central object and subject of nationalist politics and as the principal provocateur of the contingencies of which Gellner wrote. War, repression, mass revolt and popular resistance obviously predate the rise of nationalism. But the nature of these activities was irrevocably transformed by the rise of the modern state and the emergence of mass politics.

The enclosure of the modern state is part of its mode of legitimation and operation. But the physical, human and cultural boundaries of the state are also objects that are inherently ambiguous and controversial. Interests are closely bound up with any given crystallisation of state boundaries, and there is no objective answer to the question of what the proper bounds of the state should be. As Gellner recognised, nationalism attempts to convert the intrinsically ambiguous and controversial into the conventional and seemingly natural.¹⁴ In this sense, nationalism is not simply about imagined communities; it is much more fundamentally a struggle for control over defining communities – and particularly a struggle for control over the imagination about community. In an age of mass politics, when states claim to represent rather than rule over populations, state institutions seek to promote a hardening of boundaries within popular consciousness and among potential challengers by establishing a frame of discourse aimed at moulding attitudes to the 'reality' which these institutions project, turning boundaries, in Ian Lustick's words, into 'unquestioned features of . . . public life' and 'part of the natural order of things for the overwhelming majority of the population'.¹⁵ Nationalist movements, by contrast, seek to undermine such claims; as Elie Kedourie declared, they 'make use of the past in order to subvert the present'.¹⁶

The boundedness of a particular state may be challenged both from above (through war, diplomacy and irredentist activity) or from below (through mobilisation and resistance). As a Janus-faced institution, the

state confronts challenges to its boundedness both domestically and internationally. In an age of mass politics all interstate wars are nationalist wars, conducted in the name of nations and purportedly in their interests. As states have increasingly turned to international norms as a way of shoring up boundaries, inter-state war has become an exceptional outcome in the politics of nationalism. Nationalism has become a contest fought primarily within rather than between states, although the battlefields on which these intrastate contests are fought are global and transnational as well. Within this world of bounded but inter-related polities that claim to represent the interests of their memberships, the struggle for control over imaginations defines the possibilities for contestation; as Murray Edelman has put it, 'government affects behaviour chiefly by shaping the cognitions of large numbers of people in ambiguous situations'.¹⁷

Necessarily looming large in this struggle for control over imaginations is what Gellner called the 'cultural equipment' of the state: its coercive, material and normative power. To paraphrase Gellner, states normalise and contest boundaries through the gun, the dollar and the book. In wielding their coercive power, states not only shape their boundaries and memberships and enforce their rules of cultural interaction. They also attempt to make challenge impossible through the normalising influence of the seemingly immutable reality which state institutions project. There is a strong tendency for individuals to adjust their beliefs to the limits of the possible, accepting a given institutional arrangement as unalterable, natural and even necessary precisely because it cannot be changed. Over time under such conditions, dissonant collective memories are disrupted, undermined and at times supplanted. Gellner, of course, placed great emphasis on the role of states in advancing cultural homogeneity in their efforts to promote wealth. Economic interaction also exercises a powerful normalising effect on the modern state. Within a functioning capitalist (and less so, socialist) context there are powerful material incentives for individuals (even members of ethnic or racial underclasses) to accept dominant conceptions of nationhood and to work within the given parameters of the state. Upward mobility and maintenance of livelihood usually require, at a minimum, acquiescence to boundary rules and tend to promote identification with and internalisation of such rules.¹⁸ Moreover, the linkage of national economies into a global economy further constrains boundary change, since transnational economic actors function through the receptacle of the state and have always demonstrated a penchant for the stability of state units. As Gellner asserted, 'The interdependence of society's diverse parts seems to make it susceptible

to conformity'.¹⁹ States also shape imaginations about boundaries directly through their ability to inculcate ideas and shape expectations. Here, it is not only the roles played by education and the universalisation of high culture in the consolidation of conceptions of nationhood that is important. States also naturalise their preferred conceptions of nationhood through their ability to dominate public discourse. They establish and enforce international norms (such as the norm of state sovereignty) that are intended to shape expectations and fend off challenges to boundary regimes. And they establish and manipulate symbols in an attempt to generate identification with them.

But nationalism would not be the troublesome force that it is, nor would states have to wield this equipment, were it not for the fact that the efforts of states to define their physical, human and cultural boundedness engender controversy and evoke opposition. As a political activity nationalism always involves two types of interacting participants – those who defend a given order, and those who challenge it or are viewed as challenging it. Indeed, contestation was embedded in the state's rationale for inventing national communities in the first place. Historically, nationalism emerged concomitantly with the appearance of both the national state and the nationalist movement, the latter pitting challengers 'against the people who run national states'.²⁰ Like the modern state, the social movement also is a product of modern civilisation. The notions of boundedness and the revolutions in technology, economy and communications which gave rise to the national state also gave rise to the national movement as a vehicle for opposing the claims of the state. States sought to pre-empt these oppositions through the creation of national communities, but also evoked these oppositions through the cultural interests embedded in them.

Nationalist movements contest prevailing conceptualisations of the physical, human and cultural boundedness of states through various forms of disruption, resistance and mobilisation. The aim of such contestation is to seize control of the state in order to remake its boundaries and rules or to cause sufficient disturbance so that those who control the state accede to such claims. Those who challenge a given crystallisation of state boundedness must convince populations that such shifts are not only desirable, but also possible. The role of hegemony and compliance in the constitution of belief is precisely why opportunities are critical in the politics of identity. By attempting to disrupt the boundaries of the permissible and the possible, nationalist movements not only seek to convince target populations and opposing forces of the correctness and desirability of change. They also seek to embolden people to express ideas which activists believe lie repressed

beneath the surface of outward behaviour. In Soviet Latvia on the eve of perestroika, for instance, most Latvians 'appeared to take Soviet institutions for granted' and viewed Soviet control as 'a permanent state of affairs', even though there was an implicit awareness among a large number of Latvians that they lived in an occupied country. But in the summer and fall of 1988, as nationalist movements 'tested the limits of the permissible', public opinion shifted towards support for Latvian independence. Even so, as one astute observer notes, 'not all were prepared to say that their lot would be improved by totally separating from the larger system'.²¹ Public opinion surveys conducted in June 1989 revealed that only 55 per cent of Latvians favoured independence for Latvia. One year later the proportion of Latvians that supported independence had risen to 85 per cent.²² Only over a two-year period of protracted challenge and mobilisation and after nationalists had gained control over segments of the state did a generalised desire for independence crystallise among Latvians.

In linking the politics of the possible and the thinkable, the contingencies of which Gellner wrote begin to loom in front of us more sharply. Nationalism is not a constant, but a variable over time. Nationalist politics is punctuated by broader cycles of contention – parabolas of mobilisation and disruption which rise and fall largely as the possibilities for challenge shift. These opportunities are primarily shaped by what takes place within and to state institutions.²³ Splits within ruling coalitions, an opening or liberalisation of the parameters of permissible discourse, severe stresses on the capabilities of states caused by war or other external factors, fundamental realignments of forces within a ruling coalition, and the example of analogous challenges elsewhere to the state – all these are widely known to evoke nationalist eruptions. The crises of the state and its institutional order provide the circumstances for the conduct of plebiscites of nationhood. Opportunities do not in themselves create challenge. Rather, they transform the ways in which challenges manifest themselves in politics, and they become occasions by which the hitherto inconceivable, impossible and ambiguous can come to be viewed by large numbers of people as thinkable, necessary and transparent. In this regard, cycles of nationalist contention are central to the process of identity-change, for they provide the context in which a massive reimagining of the nation becomes possible. For groups challenging the state, these 'moments of madness', when the social world turns upside-down and that which was formerly anathema comes to be embraced as convention, are critical elements in the substantiation of nations and the rise and institutionalisation of identities.²⁴

For most individuals the nation as behavioural form exists as a mere

moment in time, receding in the aftermath of the consolidation of state authority to the back corridors of consciousness and relinquishing its place to more mundane and everyday concerns. In the aftermath of mobilisation the nation may become institutionalised as a ubiquitous and implicit assumption of social life, or it may remain the object of continued contention by states and nationalist movements in anticipation of another plebiscite looming on the horizon. It may be an object of guilt rather than glorification for acts committed in the emotional fever of contention, or an artificial and senseless category embraced at a peculiar political juncture in response to problems which no longer exist. No matter which of these outcomes emerges, nationalism needs to be understood as a protracted, iterative and connected series of efforts to contest and normalise the boundedness of states, albeit a process which clusters in time and across space.

Contingency and the substantiation of nations

Of course, not all acts of nationalist contention build into cycles; some are cut short through repression or cooptation, while in other cases the frames put forward by nationalist movements fail to resonate significantly within populations. A significant amount of nationalist contention occurs outside of mobilisational cycles, both in the actions taken by states to eliminate potential sources of contention and by challengers who refuse to accept state authority and behave dissonantly. A great deal of focus in the study of nationalism has been on this 'quiet' politics of nationalism outside of mobilisational cycles – and in particular, on the cultural equipment wielded by the state and the challenges posed by nationalist intellectuals.²⁵ In phases of quiescence states attempt to institutionalise behaviours and identities to prevent challenges to official conceptions of nationhood, while nationalist challengers seek to counter these efforts through disruption and to prepare populations for moments when direct contestation becomes possible. This they do by strengthening and implanting supportive attitudes and behaviours that can act as resources when opportunities for challenge materialise. The persistence of nationalist beliefs and practices under conditions of severe state repression (and even their transmission intergenerationally) is accomplished by embedding them in diffuse social networks that are relatively less susceptible to state influence.²⁶ Social psychologists have noted the persuasive influence that can at times be exerted by disruptive minorities – in particular from consistent disruptive behaviour over time that indicates conviction and commitment – especially among those who are minimally committed to a pre-existing position. Persistent

conflict 'transforms the worth of the substance of what the minority asserts' and exercises an independent influence over the beliefs of majorities.²⁷

The myriad nationalisms which Gellner calculated never emerged are largely a function of this 'quiet' politics of nationalism and the failure of some categories of cultural difference to produce a web of activists (a failure to bark). Gellner saw the paradox of nationalisms which failed to develop as the key to the arbitrary (i.e. political) character of nationalism's specific manifestations. But he did not adequately represent the politics that informs this outcome. For one thing, state practices and the meanings which they have for individuals establish the basis for constituting otherness within populations, causing some divisions rather than others to take on meaning in social life. Those who contest the enclosure of states may, for instance, emphasise commonalities with those with whom they are similar linguistically in common opposition against particular centres of power, while a short time later, when sharing the same political space, they enter into competition with one another, emphasising the differences among them – as occurred among the South Slavs in the first half of the twentieth century. The drawing of administrative boundaries (as in the colonial partitions of Africa, South Asia and Latin America) reinforces or undermines already existing cultural identities simply by constituting centres of authority around which identities coalesce and oppositions crystallise. The failure of some nationalisms to materialise (in the example given by Gellner, why a Scottish nationalism should emerge but not a Highland nationalism) has in part to do with ways in which state authority inspired and consolidated oppositions to itself – at times in spite of cultural markers that could have constituted a basis for difference among those challenging the state.

The politics of the possible also exercises an independent effect on whether nationalisms bark – particularly with regard to group size and geographic dispersal. The reservation of the right to self-determination in the form of independent statehood in international norms to groups with large populations and the difficulties involved in attempting to mobilise small or dispersed populations have in some cases prevented nationalisms from ever emerging, although the rise of global communications networks has helped to overcome these obstacles to some extent.

Gellner focused in particular on the 'cultural equipment' of the state in the consolidation of nations and the assimilation of groups. To be sure, the state remains the most powerful force shaping conceptions of nationhood. Its very existence and the aura of authority that surrounds its actions exercise a pervasive normalising effect over its conceptions of

boundedness. Indeed, in the wake of the collapse of state authority (as, for instance, occurred after World War I and with the disintegration of the USSR in 1991) numerous nation-building projects emerge with almost limitless imagination,²⁸ demonstrating that the institutional constraints imposed by the functioning state confine the ways in which we think about nationhood. There are other goals and trade-offs in how states wield their cultural equipment, and the capacity of states to wield it has differed dramatically from one case to another. The ability of the French state to marginalise nationalist challenges so that they rarely exceed the bounds of quiescence contrasts markedly with the incapacity of the Ethiopian state, in spite of heavy coercion, to penetrate its society and to exercise effectual control over its territories. In cases of permanent state breakdown (as in quasi-states) a 'quiet' politics of nationalism may never materialise, with nationalist contestation marked by perennial mobilisation punctuated by phases of exhaustion.

There is a sense today that it is much more difficult for states to wield their cultural equipment than in the past. While it still may be widely practised, the forceful resolution of nation-building is no longer an acceptable solution from the point of view of international norms – an advantage which the English and the French enjoyed over the Kazakhs and the Ukrainians. International norms of human rights and self-determination constrain state actions and provide resources to challenging groups, while integration into the global economy renders states all the more vulnerable to disruption and external influence for violation of these norms. The global communications revolution also creates opportunities and resources for those who would contest states by easing barriers to the creation and functioning of networks and movements. Of course, these very same factors – international norms, the global economy and the communications revolution – also constitute powerful tools in the hands of states for nationalising their societies, suppressing minorities, and defining boundaries. Thus, both states and those who challenge states have greater resources available to them today to contest nationalist issues than was the case a century ago. Today, more nationalisms that challenge states from within may bark than in the past. They may even attempt to bite more frequently, making nationalism a more prevalent disruptive force than previously (although not necessarily a more intense disruption). But in general it is more difficult today to break-up a state than it was a century ago. In spite of the disruptive effects of nationalism globally, the outcomes of nationalist struggles are still considerably weighted in favour of states.

In periods of quiescence, state ideologies and institutional practices carve out differential spaces by which groups can engage in quiet

challenges to dominant conceptions of nationhood. Indigenous peoples in the United States have contested their sovereignty over natural resources through the legal system of the American state and by appealing to the federal government for intervention *vis-à-vis* local government. Indigenous peoples in Siberia, by contrast, have sought instead to obtain a foothold within the ethnofederal system of Russia, which they seek to use to consolidate their control over the extraction of wealth from their territories. Ethnofederalism is a good example of an institutional practice established by states in order to co-opt challenging groups, usually as a last resort against widespread claims to secession, but a practice which, contrary to the intentions of its creators, tends to consolidate cultural groups and to provide them with an institutional base for conducting a 'quiet' politics of nationalism. But in essence challengers seek to use whatever institutional forms with which they are presented to achieve these same ends. In periods of quiescence challengers attempt to 'metamorphise the dominant order', to make it 'function in another register',²⁹ either by assimilating it or undermining its integrity. Different institutional configurations present different opportunities for challenging the state, so that state ideologies and organising principles play a large role in shaping the ways in which nationalism takes form.

The ambiguity of goals among challengers – to reform or subvert a given order – ensures that the boundary between within-system and extra-system politics remains fuzzy and imparts a degree of uncertainty and anticipation into the interactions between states and nationalist oppositions. Can states trust nationalist oppositions to act 'responsibly' within the confines of a given system of authority? Or are the espoused aims of these movements merely Trojan horses for a more radical agenda? Can nationalist oppositions trust the openings which states provide to them to pursue their goals within the framework of the system? And how should they frame their demands and tactics so as to achieve their longer-range goals?

The transformation of the 'quiet' politics of nationalism into a 'noisy' politics of nationalism is replete with uncertainties such as these. In the former Soviet Union in the early glasnost period, for instance, nationalist challenges could have been shut down through repressive means, and indeed most nationalist activists expected that this would occur. But Gorbachev viewed these challenges as part of his larger efforts to reform the state, believed that they could be contained, and even encouraged them to some extent. Systems of compliance create their own expectations within populations, and understandings embedded in periods of quiet struggle define how challengers frame opportunities and open-

ings.³⁰ 'Our cadres consider non-coercive methods a sign of weakness', Gorbachev once observed.³¹ Given embedded expectations such as these, it is hardly surprising that the switch from coercion to consensus-building that glasnost initiated gave rise to an explosion of nationalist challenges.

The 'quiet' politics of nationalism shapes many of the resources that challengers and states can deploy and the expectations that they bring with them in periods of 'noisy' contention. Still, the 'noisy' politics of nationalism, occurring as it does in a transitional context, contains a great deal of indeterminacy. Nationalist violence, for instance, grows in part out of embedded mistrust produced from prior contestation. But a relatively small number of conflict situations actually produce violence, and an even smaller number result in prolonged violent conflict. The strategic interaction between state and society is key in determining whether mistrust builds into violence or takes other forms. Waves of nationalist violence almost always emerge in the wake of significant non-violent contestation, and chains of precipitating events usually escalate gradually into violence, with small acts of contention creating reactions that move towards a larger violent outcome. The roles played by state institutions in providing channels for non-violent resolution of conflict and in signalling acquiescence and even support for violent actions are critical to the emergence and sustainment of nationalist violence. In many cases state institutions themselves initiate violence directly as a way of consolidating authority against nationalist challengers. The forms assumed by nationalism are shaped in the context of interaction, as embedded assumptions about contenders interact with the constraints and opportunities afforded by political authority.

Within the context of a mobilisational cycle, specific state actions can crystallise opinion around new cultural norms, altering fundamentally the landscape of politics and identities. These significant events exercise a 'transformative power that goes beyond such obvious political effects as redistribution of power or reshaping of political strategies'. They change 'the cultural meanings or significations [of] political and social categories' and 'fundamentally shap[ing] people's collective loyalties and actions'.³² The backlash effects of repression, the outrage that erupts from intergroup violence, the anger that materialises out of specific governmental decisions – all these transform the opinion climate of politics, affecting the prisms through which individuals relate to authority and understand their identities.³³ These actions do not take place in a cultural vacuum; basic categories of conflict are well established by prior contestation. But the manifest assertion of the implicit and the rejection of the overt are themselves bold acts that transform

consciousness. Such situations are often characterised by those who live through them as an 'awakening', 'rebirth' or 'spiritual revolution'. Gellner was correct to reject the 'sleeping beauty' images implied by such discourse. Nevertheless, transformative events often bear a cathartic and even euphoric character – as Anatol Lieven put it, 'the songs, the tears, the sense of relief as people were able to say in public things which for fifty years they had been scared even to whisper in private'.³⁴ In this sense, nationalist behaviour must be seen as both a dependent and an independent variable. 'On the one hand, the social construction of meaning precedes collective action and determines its direction; on the other, collective action in its turn determines the process of meaning construction.'³⁵

Understanding the power of the significant event to undermine authority and to transform opinion, nationalist movements consciously attempt to precipitate such events so as to bring about a discursive shift within target populations. In Soviet Georgia in late 1988 and early 1989, for instance, the population's commitment to independence remained equivocal, to the chagrin of radical nationalists. As one reliable source notes, 'the majority of people were still not prepared to give them [the nationalists] their active support . . . The nation still slept, and it was necessary to awaken it.'³⁶ In early April 1989 nationalist movements utilised public outrage over Abkhaz demands to separate from Georgia as a lever for shifting the frame of public discourse towards support for Georgian independence. But after the Georgian government took steps to defuse the Abkhaz challenge, Georgian demonstrators 'had begun to grow tired. It was decided to continue for a couple of days, and then to disperse, in order to gather strength for the next attack, since now . . . the sharpness of the issue with which everything had begun had fallen.'³⁷ Instead, the violent dispersal of a crowd encamped outside the House of Government by Soviet army troops in the early hours of 9 April forever altered the nature of Georgian politics. If, on the eve of the Tbilisi crackdown, the degree of support for independence was confined to a sizeable minority, after the Tbilisi massacres public opinion polls showed that 89 per cent of Georgians believed that Georgia should be an independent country.³⁸

As a politics of the possible, cycles of nationalist contention contain many of the characteristics of 'tipping' games, in which expectations of success or failure have great influence over whether nationalisms resonate within populations. In Estonia 'for the majority independence seemed either a pipe dream in 1987, or something one could think about only after meaningful autonomy was attained'.³⁹ But from June through September 1988 an extraordinary wave of mobilisation in

response to openings afforded by glasnost brought about a remarkable transformation in national consciousness. Still, by April 1989 public opinion polls showed that only 56 per cent of Estonians supported complete independence, while another 39 per cent preferred a confederal arrangement within the USSR.⁴⁰ By September 1989, as revolt spread to the Transcaucasus, Ukraine and Moldova, the proportion of Estonians favouring independence had climbed to 64 per cent. The East European revolutions of autumn 1989 and the republican elections of January 1990 transformed a large block of Estonian opinion, so that by January 1990 81 per cent of Estonians favoured independence, while only 15 per cent preferred a confederal arrangement within the USSR. By March 1990, when Lithuania declared independence from the USSR, the proportion of Estonians favouring independence had risen to 94 per cent.⁴¹ Nothing breeds identity so strongly as the prospect of success.

But as the above example also illustrates, nationalism takes place within a transnational context in which the behaviours of other populations strongly influence the ways in which a given population thinks and acts. Analogy and example are critical elements in the spread of nationalism, and nationalisms need to be understood as transnational and inter-related phenomena, not merely a collection of individual and isolated national stories. The transnational context of nationalisms overflows the boundaries of any given state, in part because of the ways by which states reinforce their existence through the example of like units.⁴² States share common personas – an interconnectedness produced by common institutional characteristics, ideologies or modes of domination which are mutually reinforcing. It is precisely this interconnectedness which becomes a powerful force for spreading nationalism across state boundaries. Families of states sharing similar state personas (and often connected through alliance) are the most directly affected by transnational tides of nationalist contention. Successful nationalist contestation in one state through its example weakens the political order in others and raises expectations among challengers that the boundaries of the state can be contested. Political opportunities are linked transnationally through the linkages of polities themselves. Moreover, those who challenge authority frequently attempt to spread their challenge so as to afford it legitimacy, much like states seek safety through their own reproduction. By demonstrating their power through numbers, both movements and states seek to generate bandwagoning processes, lowering the social esteem of those who fail to identify with them. For precisely these reasons, nationalist challenges tend to strike multiple states simultaneously, encompassing particular regions of the world or

families of polities.⁴³ The barking of one nationalism attracts and incites noise from other animals, and when nationalisms do attack, they tend to do so not as strays, but in packs.

Reflections on contingency, conformity, and social change

Gellner was quite right in focusing our attention on the arbitrariness and contingencies involved in the manifestation of individual nationalisms. As is evident from the above discussion, there are numerous turning points that any potential nationalism must traverse before it can bark or bite, and whether, where, and how these bites find their targets are also highly conditional. But if the limits of the possible, the interactions between state and society, the role of analogy and transnational influence, bandwagoning processes and transformative events play such conspicuous roles in the substantiation of nations, what then is left of the larger social forces which Gellner identified as the determining factors in the emergence of nations? Does not the politics that Gellner recognised as lying at the centre of nationalism undermine the necessity which his theory prescribed?

Perhaps. Unlike the deterministic relationship between modernity and nationalism advanced by Karl Deutsch or the randomness and accidental character of nationalism posited by Elie Kedourie, Gellner occupied a middle ground between necessity and contingency in the manifestation of nationalism. He confined the influence of both by assuming a world in which human action was profoundly conditioned by larger social forces, but not necessarily determined by them. As he wrote in *Thought and Change*:

The human situation is most conspicuously *unlike* that of the condemned man. Characteristically, the condemned man is in a situation of most unusual clarity . . . and some physical comfort. He knows exactly what his end will be, and when it will come . . . Human life is totally unlike this. The end may be certain, but not its date or manner. In the meantime, there is constant opportunity, indeed necessity, for seeking postponement of the verdict and for improving one's condition.⁴⁴

Gellner's theory of nationalism attempts to explain the ends for which nationalist politics strives, not the means, manner or context in which that politics must play itself out. But if we are to accept Gellner's explanation as to why the end is ultimately inescapable, the factors which cause it to be inevitable should be leaving their traces on the human actions which effect that outcome. For Gellner's theory to prove true, the contingencies which give shape to specific nationalist outcomes

must be connected to the ways in which actors utilise and survive the larger civilisational transformation that, he argues, produces its inexorable result.

To the degree that these contingencies represent autonomous and insular social processes isolated from the broad social transformations that Gellner describes, they present serious problems for the theory. Some of the evidence presented above supports at least the notion of the limited autonomy of these processes, although the boundaries of this autonomy were not interrogated. If nationalist behaviour is determined in large part by the limits of the possible, indeterminant interaction, the example of like behaviour by others, bandwagoning and the influence of singular events irrespective of how the large-scale social forces portrayed by Gellner have played themselves out, the theory at a minimum requires qualification, and possibly revision or rejection. If conformity is responsible for the national behaviour of most individuals, what role then does the transition to industrialism play in making nationalism inevitable and universal?

Gellner of course focused on nationalism in general, not nationalism in its specificity. He eschewed the kind of empirical research that would be necessary to demonstrate the linkages between his theory and substantive nationalist behaviour. As he argued, those who make history may not be cognisant of their connection to any larger force or rationale, but their actions may nevertheless be conditioned by these forces. But Gellner did not prove this to be so. A robust theory of nationalism must provide a connection between what Charles Tilly has called the 'two rhythms' of history – the larger social forces that condition social action, and the specific contexts in which social action occurs.⁴⁵ One can attempt this either by starting from a theory of social change and exploring how the broad social forces that appear to evoke nationalism into being in the first place come to take form as concrete nationalist action; or one can start from the empirical study of nationalist action, searching for the larger social forces which seem to inform it. Gellner chose the first of these approaches, although he never succeeded in linking his theory of social change with a coherent theory of agency. His blackboxing of nationalist politics was an astute recognition of the ways in which interactive behaviour informs the emergence of specific nationalisms, but is troublesome for the larger theory of social change. In this chapter I have approached the subject from its opposite end – as a theory of agency – without elaborating an adequate theory of social change.

It may be, as Gellner's theory would seem to assume, that specific aspects of the transition to industrial society condition acts of enclosure

by states and the emergence of notions of nationhood, that the punctuated plebiscites that characterise the substantiation of nations are really part of larger crises of transition to industrialism, and that repertoires of nationalist behaviour and the processes that influence the outcomes of nationalist struggles are connected with the transition to industrialism in subtle ways. Alternatively, industrialism *per se* may have little to do with these phenomena, whose roots rather inhere in the institutions of the modern state itself, as this chapter has conjectured. As appealing as a theory that cannot be proved or disproved undoubtedly is, Gellner's theory, with its bracketing of the politics of nationalism, cannot be accepted on the basis of faith in the power of industrialism as a force of social change alone. Until we explore systematically and empirically concrete nationalist behaviour and the traces left on it by larger social forces, our explanations for why we are fated to be national and why we are national in the ways that we are will likely remain detached.

NOTES

- 1 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, p. 35.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 43, 47.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 6, 47.
- 4 E. Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994, p. xi.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 44–5.
- 6 E. Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, 1965, p. 174.
- 7 J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, Chicago, 1982.
- 8 Liah Greenfeld, for instance, in her recent study of nationalism, argues that the effects of nationalism in the political realm can be attributed to the original definition of nationalism by nationalist intellectuals: 'Its effects, in the political, social, and cultural constitution of the respective nations, as well as their historical record, are attributable to this original definition which set the goals for mobilisation, not to the nationalisation of the masses.' (L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, MA, 1992, pp. 22–3).
- 9 H. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Boulder, 1977, p. 5.
- 10 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn, London, Verso, 1991.
- 11 *Umid/Hope*, vol. 1, 1992, p. 39.
- 12 *Ekspress khronika*, no. 15, 10 April 1990.
- 13 On nationalism as the enclosure of polities, see R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, MA, 1992, pp. 21–34.
- 14 As Gellner pointed out (*Thought and Change*, pp. 150–1), 'The central mistake committed both by the friends and the enemies of nationalism is the supposition that it is somehow *natural* . . . These assumptions are so much part of the air we breathe that they are generally taken for granted quite

uncritically . . . The theoretical problem is to separate the quite spurious "national" and "natural" justifications and explanations of nationalism, from the genuine, time- and context-bound roots of it.'

- 15 I. S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, Ithaca, 1993, pp. 41 and 44.
- 16 E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4th edn, London, 1985, p. 70.
- 17 M. Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*, Chicago, 1971, p. 7.
- 18 A. L. Epstein, for instance, distinguished, in his *Ethos and Identity: Three Studies in Ethnicity* (London, 1978, pp. 102–3), between what he called positive identities, resting on 'self-esteem, a sense of the worthiness of one's own group's ways and values', and negative identities, based on 'the internalized evaluations of others', with 'much of one's behaviour . . . prompted by the desire to avoid their anticipated slights or censure'. As Epstein argued, 'elements of negative identity are nearly always present where ethnic groups occupy a position of inferiority or marginality within a dominance hierarchy'. Rejection of a subordinate identity and the adoption of an identity associated with dominance is a widespread social strategy connected with attempts to achieve upward social mobility.
- 19 E. Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History*, Chicago, 1988, p. 234.
- 20 C. Tilly, 'Social Movements and National Politics', in C. Bright and S. Harding, eds., *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*, Ann Arbor, 1984, p. 304.
- 21 A. Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History*, Stanford, 1995, pp. 162, 172.
- 22 R. Karklins, *Ethnopolitics and Transition to Democracy: The Collapse of the USSR and Latvia*, Washington, 1994, p. 50.
- 23 S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, Cambridge, 1994.
- 24 For an elaboration, see M. R. Beissinger, 'How Nationalisms Spread: Eastern Europe Adrift the Tides and Cycles of Nationalist Contention', *Social Research*, vol. 20, 1996, pp. 97–146.
- 25 M. Hroch, for instance, focuses his attention on what he terms Phase B in the development of nationalism (the period of patriotic agitation), which he calls 'the most important phase', largely ignoring how and why the emergence of nationalist counter-elites leads to the rise of mass national movements (Phase C), although he notes that 'Phase B was not necessarily destined to pass over into Phase C.' On this, see M. Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 22–4.
- 26 See H. Johnston, 'Religion and Nationalist Subcultures in the Baltics', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 23, 1992, pp. 133–48.
- 27 S. Moscovici, 'Innovation and Minority Influence', in S. Moscovici, G. Mugny and E. Van Avermaet, eds., *Perspectives on Minority Influence*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 30.
- 28 See, for instance, M. R. Beissinger, 'Demise of an Empire-State: Identity, Legitimacy, and the Deconstruction of Soviet Politics', in C. Young, ed., *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?*, Madison, 1993, pp. 109–10.

- 29 M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, 1984, p. 32.
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8 Nationalism and modernity

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I

Nationalism is much talked about these days. I suppose it's obvious why. The postcommunist massacres in the ex-Soviet Union and ex-Yugoslavia are reason enough. And suddenly this kind of frightening outburst seems in danger of becoming more the rule than the exception. For some people all this is the more shocking in that it seems like a throw-back. We thought we had got past this. The Bosnian savagery comes across to these people as an atavistic return, as though primeval identities, and ageless mutual hatreds were being resurrected at the end of the twentieth century. But this can't be quite the right take on things, because so much in nationalism is quintessentially modern. The Serb-Croat wars disconcert us because they mix an unquestionably modern discourse – self-determination, rule by the people, etc. – with other elements which seem to us alien to (what we understand as) modernity.

Can we hope to understand this? Is there even a 'this' to understand here? I mean: is there a single phenomenon? Maybe we're making things even harder for ourselves by assuming that there is something called 'nationalism' which is the same wherever people make demands in the name of ethnic/cultural self-determination, so that Bosnian Serbs and Québécois are put in the same category.¹ The differences are explained by the first being more 'extreme' than the second; rather on the analogy of: neat whisky knocks you out, but taken diluted makes you mellow.

I want to argue that there are big differences here, but also some links. Sorting this out will require thinking in more than one register. One-line theories of nationalism are as bad as such theories invariably are in social science. I am going to try to explore the ways in which various nationalisms are linked to modernity, both to central features of its political culture, and to the stresses and malaises to which it gives rise.

There are explanations which take it up from this latter perspective. Nationalism is an outbreak of emotion which is understandable when people are under strain, because of, say, a disorienting social and

economic transition, especially if this is accompanied by hard times. So we understand why lots of Russians voted for Zhirinovsky, even though we deplore it; just as we understand why Algerians voted for the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in their last election. Now if things had been going better, if people had felt more secure, or if there hadn't been so much unemployment and hardship, these extreme and dangerous parties would not have made the headway they did.

There is very often a lot of truth in this last counterfactual proposition. But it does not tell us what is really interesting to know: why nationalism, or Islamic 'fundamentalism' are the candidates which are waiting to take up the angry, disoriented protest vote. And this has a lot to do with the progress of what I am calling 'modernity', even, perhaps especially, where it seems to take 'anti-modern' forms.

II

So I want first to trace the ways in which nationalism arises out of modern society and the modern state form. Gellner's interesting theory is of just this kind.² His is in a sense a functional account. It concentrates on modern societies as economies which by their very nature need to be serviced and (to some degree) managed by the state.

A modern economy is by definition one undergoing growth and change. As such it requires a mobile population, both occupationally and geographically. People no longer will necessarily stay in the same *métier* throughout their whole careers; and certainly there cannot be the hereditary handing down of *métier* from parent to child which characterised many premodern societies. This flexibility can be attained only by a high level of general education, literacy and numeracy, one unmatched by any previous society in history. The modern division of labour is multiform but shallow. That is, it is taken for granted that people can be retrained, or at least that their children can. Vocations are no longer linked with the standing status divisions which marked many earlier societies, of which the extreme case is the traditional Indian caste system.

Moreover, this generalised and high level of culture has to be homogeneous. We need people who can communicate with each other, and generally understand each other without having to rely heavily on familiarity with particular contexts of family, clan, locality, provenance, etc. To 'do business' with each other, operate a system of courts, run a bureaucratic state apparatus and the like, we need millions who can communicate without difficulty in a context-free fashion. There has to be a standard language, replacing all the local and class dialects which abounded earlier.

Society needs in a sense a homogeneous culture, in which people have to be inducted to be able to do business with each other across all the particularities of context and background. But how can they be inducted into this culture? Here is where the modern state takes on a specially important role.

In earlier 'agro-literate' societies, the high culture was confined to a class, literati and perhaps other top strata. The job of handing on this culture could be assumed by families in some cases, or by special institutions which might take some distance from the state (e.g. the church in premodern Europe). But in the modern context, the task of educating everybody up to scratch is too imposing and too vital to be left to the private sector. Both the scale of the educative enterprise and its essential uniformity dictate that it be assumed by the state. Modern societies/economies are all serviced, inescapably, by a state system of education.

A homogeneous language and culture is fostered and diffused, and hence also to some degree defined by the state. Modern societies necessarily have official languages, almost official cultures. This is a functional imperative. Gellner takes issue with Kedourie: it is not so much that nationalism as a sentiment, as a political aspiration, has imposed homogeneity. Rather homogeneity is a requirement of the modern state, and it is this 'inescapable imperative [which] eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism'.³

Now up to this last quote, I think Gellner is basically right. There can be differences in the detailed account, but it seems to me an undeniable feature of modern market, growth-oriented, industrial economies, embedded as they are in bureaucratic polities, that they force a kind of homogeneity of language and culture, both designedly, as through the education system, and by the very way they operate, as through their media. And it seems that this could not very well be otherwise. The demands of this kind of society in trained personnel, above all in *retrainable* personnel, capable of taking on ever new technologies and operating by ever new methods, the needs for intercommunication across vaster and vaster networks, pushes inevitably to the diffusion of standardised, context-free languages, embedding within themselves a multiplicity of expert 'language games'.⁴ As a consequence of this, earlier 'network' identities, linked to family, clan, locality, provenance, tend to decline, and new 'categorical' identities, which link us to a multitude of others nationally or even globally – on the basis of confession, profession, citizenship – take on more and more importance.⁵

Compared to earlier societies, which tended to be divided between a 'high' culture, the apanage of a restricted class, and a set of partly

overlapping 'folk' cultures, this modern form tends to universalise a species of 'high' (literate) culture, putting a larger and larger proportion of its population through tertiary education, inculcating into many of them a 'canon', as 'high' cultures have always tended to do to their initiates. As Gellner puts it, 'a high culture pervades the whole of society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by that polity. *That* is the secret of nationalism.'⁶

All this seems true, but how does it account for nationalism? This seems evident enough to Gellner. If a modern society has an 'official' language, in the fullest sense of the term, that is, a state-sponsored, state-inculcated, and state-defined language and culture, in which both economy and state function, then it is obviously an immense advantage to anyone if this language and culture is theirs. Speakers of other languages are at a distinct disadvantage. They either must go on functioning in what to them is a second language, or they get on an equal footing with speakers of the official language by assimilating. Or else, faced with this second distasteful prospect, they demand to redraw the boundaries of the state, and set up shop in a new polity/economy where their own language will become official. The nationalist imperative is born.

People have raised objections to Gellner's theory on a number of grounds, most notably that it seems to have trouble explaining the rise of nationalism in preindustrial contexts, such as nineteenth-century eastern Europe, and twentieth-century Africa. But I don't want to dwell on these difficulties, for which there are probably answers anyway. What concerns me is the incompleteness of the explanation.

Some peoples assimilate; they go without much protest into the mix-master of school and army, and lose their regional dialects. They enter as peasants, and emerge as Frenchmen.⁷ Why do some put up a fight and create nationalist movements, while others do not? Or again, if there are two languages widely spoken in a given state, why is it so difficult to come to some arrangement around a form of bilingualism. This does happen, of course, but alas, much more rarely than it should; and it is often fraught with strife and difficulty even where it has been adopted. Why should this be so?

Some people might think that the problematicity of bilingualism needed no explanation. It is so much easier to operate in a single language. The answer is: easier than what? If everyone were willing to agree happily to operate in a single language, we'd be crazy to insist on two. But if the alternative is strife, resentment, separatist movements, perhaps even the dissolution of the state, well, bilingualism isn't really *that* complicated. In my (admittedly jaundiced) experience of living in a

bilingual state, pleas about the trouble and expense of bilingualism are generally technological pretexts for a chauvinism which dare not declare itself openly.

But if that is so, then the crucial explanatory bit is missing from Gellner's account. The reason why some minorities assimilate and others fight back has to be referred to the nationalism of these latter. The reason bilingual solutions are hard is not because they are so complicated and expensive, but because they are resisted (i.e. under the bad faith pretext that they are complicated and expensive) on fundamentally nationalist grounds. That is, nationalism is still figuring in the account as an *explanans*, not as a successfully accounted for *explanandum*.

What Gellner has done, which is very valuable, is define some of the very important stakes of nationalist struggle. Just because the modern state does sustain an official language/culture, it becomes of ultimate significance to those with a strong national identity to get some kind of control of a state. The state focus of so much modern national sentiment and national identity, which Gellner makes a matter of definition, is thereby partly explained, and this is no small matter. But the original energy fuelling these struggles remains to be understood. Unless one takes the cynical view (espoused, for instance, by Pierre Trudeau in relation to Quebec independentism) that the whole thing is powered by the ambition of social elites to establish a monopoly of prestigious and remunerative jobs. The refusal of bilingualism is then easily explained: under this regime, our gang get 50 per cent of the jobs, under unilingualism, we get 100 per cent.

Once again, this certainly explains something, but far from everything. It can not explain, for instance, why non-elites are so easily recruited into the nationalist enterprise. Nor does it explain the solidarity of the elites themselves. If you are one of those holding down a top job within the 50 per cent allocated to your language group, why should you upset everything so that some as yet unfavoured compatriots can take over the other 50 per cent? Why side with compatriots against fellow top-job-holders? Of course, not everybody does, but it is one of the remarkable things about the moral pressures of nationalism that many feel they should, and lots do. Where does nationalism get its moral thrust? Totally cynical explanations are powerless to illuminate this.

Lastly, I wonder if we should make the state focus definitional for modern nationalism as Gellner does. Granted, it overwhelmingly takes this form, but not invariably. Thus French-Canadian nationalism, from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, had two forms, of which the dominant one was turned away from the state, and promoted non-state

institutions, especially the church. The more familiar, state-centred mode was also there, at least since the rebellion of 1837, but it remained the less powerful strand; that is, until the turn-over of 1960, after which it has taken over the whole field, with the resultant rise of independentism, and the identity switch from 'Canadien-français' to 'Québécois'. Nevertheless, during those many decades before 1960, there were people whom everybody, including themselves, referred to as *nationalistes* who lacked the state focus. The emotional and moral sources on which they drew were different, but not totally distinct from Quebec nationalists today. We gain nothing by excluding this phenomenon from our purview by definitional fiat.

So the ultimate sources of modern nationalism still escape us. (Perhaps they always will.) But at least we understand better some of the things at stake in modern nationalist struggles, and hence their focus, thanks to Gellner's account. Before I try my hand at defining the sources, I would like to supplement Gellner's picture of what is at stake, by bringing to the fore other functional requirements of the modern state.

III

Modern nation-states are 'imagined communities' in Benedict Anderson's celebrated phrase.⁸ We might say that they have a particular kind of social imaginary, that is, socially shared ways in which social spaces are imagined. There are two important features of the modern imaginary, which I can best bring out by contrasting them in each case with what went before in European history.

First, there is the shift from hierarchical, mediated-access societies to horizontal, direct-access societies. In the earlier form, hierarchy and what I am calling mediacy of access went together. A society of ranks – 'society of orders', to use Tocqueville's phrase – like seventeenth-century France, for instance, was hierarchical in an obvious sense. But this also meant that one belonged to this society via belonging to some component of it. As a peasant one was linked to a lord who in turn held from the king. One was a member of a municipal corporation which had a standing in the kingdom, or exercised some function in a *Parlement* with its recognised status, and so on. By contrast, the modern notion of citizenship is direct. In whatever many ways I am related to the rest of society through intermediary organisations, I think of my citizenship as separate from all these. My fundamental way of belonging to the state is not dependent on, or mediated by any of these other belongings. I stand, alongside all my fellow citizens, in direct relationship to the state which is the object of our common allegiance.

Of course, this does not necessarily change the way things get done. I know someone whose brother-in-law is a judge, or an MP, and so I phone her up when I am in a jam. We might say that what has changed is the normative picture. But underlying this, without which the new norm could not exist for us, is a change in the way people imagine belonging. There were certainly people in seventeenth-century France, and before, for whom the very idea of direct access would have been foreign, impossible to clearly grasp. The educated had the model of the ancient republic. But for many others, the only way they could understand belonging to a larger whole, like a kingdom, or a universal church, was through the imbrication of more immediate, understandable units of belonging (parish, lord) into the greater entity. Modernity has involved, among other things, a revolution in our social imaginary, the relegation of these forms of mediacy to the margins, and the diffusions of images of direct access.

This has come about in a number of forms: the rise of a public sphere, in which people conceive of themselves as participating directly in a nation-wide (sometimes even international) discussion; the development of market economies, in which all economic agents are seen as entering into contractual relations with others on an equal footing; and, of course, the rise of the modern citizenship state. But we can think of other ways as well in which immediacy of access takes hold of our imaginations. We see ourselves as in spaces of fashion, for instance, taking up and handing on styles. We see ourselves as part of the world-wide audience of media stars. And while these spaces are in their own sense hierarchical – they centre on quasi-legendary figures – they offer all participants an access unmediated by any of their other allegiances or belongings. Something of the same kind, along with a more substantial mode of participation, is available in the various movements, social, political, religious, which are a crucial feature of modern life, and which link people translocally and internationally into a single collective agency.

These modes of imagined direct access are linked to, indeed are just different facets of, modern equality and individualism. Directness of access abolishes the heterogeneity of hierarchical belonging. It makes us uniform, and that is one way of becoming equal. (Whether it is the only way is the fateful issue at stake in many of today's struggles over multiculturalism.) At the same time, the relegation of various mediations reduces their importance in our lives; the individual stands more and more free of them, and hence has a growing self-consciousness as an individual. Modern individualism, as a moral idea, does not mean ceasing to belong at all – that is the individualism of anomie and break-

down – but imagining oneself as belonging to ever wider and more impersonal entities: the state, the movement, the community of humankind. This is the same change – seen from another angle – that I described above in terms borrowed from Craig Calhoun: the shift from ‘network’ or ‘relational’ identities to ‘categorical’ ones.

The second important feature of the modern social imaginary is that it no longer sees the greater trans-local entities as grounded in something other, something higher, than common action in secular time. This was not true of the premodern state. The hierarchical order of the kingdom was seen as based in the Great Chain of Being. The tribal unit was seen as constituted as such by its law, which went back ‘since time out of mind’, or perhaps to some founding moment which had the status of a ‘time of origins’ in Mircea Eliade’s sense. The importance in premodern revolutions, up to and including the English civil war, of the backward look, of establishing an original law, comes from this sense that the political entity is in this sense action-transcendent. It cannot simply create itself by its own action. On the contrary, it can act as an entity because it is already constituted as such; and that is why such legitimacy attaches to returning to the original constitution.

Seventeenth-century social contract theory, which sees a people as coming together out of a state of nature, obviously belongs to another order of thought. But it was not until the late eighteenth century that this new way of conceiving things entered the social imaginary. The American Revolution is in a sense the watershed. It was undertaken in a backward-looking spirit, in the sense that the colonists were fighting for their established rights as Englishmen. Moreover they were fighting under their established colonial legislatures, associated in a Congress. But out of the whole process emerges the crucial fiction of ‘we, the people’, into whose mouth the declaration of the new constitution is placed.

Here the idea is invoked that a people, or as it was also called at the time, a ‘nation’, can exist prior to and independently of its political constitution. So that this people can give itself its own constitution by its own free action in secular time. Of course the epoch-making action comes rapidly to be invested with images drawn from older notions of higher time. The ‘*Novo Ordo saeculorum*’, just like the new French revolutionary calendar, draws heavily on Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic. The constitution-founding comes to be invested with something of the force of a ‘time of origins’, a higher time, filled with agents of a superior kind, which we should ceaselessly try to reapproach. But, nevertheless, a new way of conceiving of things is abroad. Nations, people, can have a personality, can act together outside of any prior political ordering. One

of the key premises of modern nationalism is in place, because without this the demand for self-determination of nations would make no sense. This just is the right for peoples to make their own constitution, unfettered by their historical political organisation.

What is immensely suggestive about Anderson's account is that it links these two features. It shows how the rise of direct-access societies was linked to changing understandings of time, and consequently of the possible ways of imaging social wholes. Anderson stresses how the new sense of belonging to a nation was prepared by a new way of grasping society under the category of simultaneity: society as the whole consisting of the simultaneous happening of all the myriad events which mark the lives of its members at that moment.⁹ These events are the fillers of this segment of a kind of homogeneous time. This very clear, unambiguous concept of simultaneity belongs to an understanding of time as exclusively secular. As long as secular time is interwoven with various kinds of higher time, there is no guarantee that all events can be placed in unambiguous relations of simultaneity and succession. The high feast is in one way contemporaneous with my life and that of my fellow pilgrims, but in another way it is close to eternity, or the time of origins, or the events it prefigures.

A purely secular time-understanding allows us to imagine society 'horizontally', unrelated to any 'high points', where the ordinary sequence of events touches higher time, and therefore without recognising any privileged persons or agencies – such as kings or priests – who stand and mediate at such alleged points. This radical horizontality is precisely what is implied in the direct access society, where each member is 'immediate to the whole'. Anderson is undoubtedly right to argue that this new understanding could not have arisen without social developments, like that of print capitalism, but he does not want to imply by this that the transformations of the social imaginary are sufficiently explained by these developments. Modern society also required transformations in the way we figure ourselves as societies. Crucial among these has been this ability to grasp society from a decentred view which is no-one's. That is, the search for a truer and more authoritative perspective than my own does not lead me to centre society on a king or sacred assembly, or whatever, but allows for this lateral, horizontal view, which an unsituated observer might have – society as it might be laid out in a tableau without privileged nodal points. There is a close inner link between modern direct-access societies, their self-understandings, their refraction in categorical identities, and modern synoptic modes of representation in 'the Age of the World Picture'.¹⁰ society as simultaneous happenings, social interchange as impersonal 'system', the social

terrain as what is mapped, historical culture as what shows up in museums, etc.¹¹

IV

What light can these considerations about the social imaginary throw on modern nationalism? It can help illuminate what is at stake in nationalist struggles, just as Gellner's account did, an account which these considerations in a sense complement. Gellner showed the phenomenon of a state-fostered official language as a functional requirement of a modern state and economy. And in an analogous way there are functional requirements which attend the modern social imaginary.

The horizontal, direct-access society, given political form by an act of the people – this forms the background to the contemporary source of legitimate government in the will of the people. This principle is getting harder and harder to gainsay in the modern world. It comes close to being the only acceptable basis for any regime which does not declare itself as merely temporary or transitional, with the partial exception of so-called 'Islamic' regimes – although this does not prevent it from being used to justify the most terrible tyrannies. Communist regimes were also supposedly based on popular sovereignty, and fascism was supposed to emanate from the united will of a conquering people.

Now this has certain functional requirements. Let us first of all take the case where the attempt is made to live out the principle of popular sovereignty through a representative democracy. Now the nature of this kind of society, as with any other free society, is that it requires a certain degree of commitment on the part of its citizens. Traditional despotisms could ask of people only that they remain passive and obey the laws. A democracy, ancient or modern, has to ask more. It requires that its members be motivated to make the necessary contributions: of treasure (in taxes), sometimes blood (in war) and always of some degree of participation in the process of governance. A free society has to substitute for despotic enforcement with a certain degree of self-enforcement. Where this fails, the system is in danger. For instance, democratic societies where the level of participation falls below a certain threshold cease to be legitimate in the eyes of their members. A government elected in a turn-out of 20 per cent can not claim to have the mandate of the people. It can only claim to have got there by the rules, which is much weaker defence if ever it affronts a crisis.

So democracies require a relatively strong commitment on the part of their citizens. In terms of identity, being citizens has to rate as an important component of who they are. I am speaking in general, of

course; in any society, there will be a wide gamut of cases, stretching from the most gung-ho and motivated to the most turned-off internal exiles. But the median point of this gamut has to fall closer to the upper than the lower limit. This membership has got to be one that matters. In particular, it has to matter more than the things that can divide the citizens.

In other words, the modern democratic state needs a healthy degree of what used to be called patriotism, a strong sense of identification with the polity, and a willingness to give of oneself for its sake. That is why these states try to inculcate patriotism, and to create a strong sense of common identity even where it did not previously exist. And that is why one thrust of modern democracy has been to try to shift the balance within the identity of the modern citizen, so that being a citizen will take precedence over a host of other poles of identity, such as family, class, gender and even (perhaps especially) religion. This may be promoted in a deliberate way, on the basis of an express ideology, as in the case of French Republicanism. Or it may be fostered in more indirect ways, as a consequence of the injunction to render other modes of description – gender, race, religion, etc. – irrelevant in the operation of public life.¹²

But the effect is the same, and we can see that it complements the factors Gellner highlights. Parallel to the homogeneity of language and culture that the modern state-economy can not help fostering, is this homogenisation of identity and allegiance that it must nourish for its survival. In both cases, the features which divide us, which distinguish us into sub-groups and partial publics, fade, either altogether, or at least in their importance and relevance.

How does this connect with nationalism? Well, one obvious link is that nationalism can provide the fuel for patriotism. So much so that we can have trouble distinguishing them. But it is important to keep them distinct, if we want to understand our history. If we think of patriotism as a strong citizen identification, then nationalism is one basis for patriotism, but not the only one. We can speak of nationalism when the ground of the common political allegiance is some ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious identity which exists independently of the polity. If I am a nationalist, I owe allegiance to this state because it is the state of the Xs, where X is my national identity, one I bear whether or not we are lucky enough or strong enough or virtuous enough to have a state. The whole nationalist idea supposes this pre-political identity, as I said above.

But patriotism can also have the meaning it had for the ancients. I love my fatherland, and what makes it essentially mine is its laws. Outside of these, it is denatured, and no longer really mine. There is no reference to

a pre-political identity here; on the contrary, the *patria* is politically defined. Now this is important, because this was the form that patriotism took initially, in the two great inaugural revolutions of the liberal age, the American and the French. Neither was initially nationalist. In both cases, the nation was taken as given out of previous history (or constructed, in the American case, out of an alliance based on an obvious commonality of historical predicament), and the patriot was one who sought its freedom. It was later, when (the elites of) other peoples began to feel that they could not attain real freedom by simply revolutionising the existing (often imperial) political structures, or find their place within a liberal empire (of Napoleon), that nationalism raises its head.

But subsequently, so much does nationalism become the rule, as a basis for patriotism, that the original prenationalist societies themselves begin to understand their own patriotism in something like nationalist terms. Instead of seeing liberal institutions as uncomplicatedly universal, the prevalence of nationalism accredits the idea that in each society they must be tailored to the particular genius of the people. But then even in their original countries of origin where they were at first understood universalistically, they now come to be seen as coloured by particular circumstances and history.

Be that as it may, nationalism has become the most readily available motor of patriotism. So that when leaders want to unite a country, and lift people out of their warring partial allegiances, they appeal to a broader national identity, telling a story which makes this central to the history of their society, rather than the partial identities they are trying to supersede. Thus Nehru in his *Discovery of India* tells a narrative of Indian identity, the basis of a pan-Indian secular nationalism which would take precedence over the potentially warring communal allegiances, Hindu and Muslim.¹³

There is thus a sort of dialectic of state and nation. It is not just that nations strive to become states; it is also that modern states in order to survive strive to create national allegiances to their own measure. This is a point parallel to Gellner's correction of Kedourie above. Nationalism is not only the motor behind the homogenisation of modern societies; it can also sometimes be the upshot. In order to see this, we have to keep in mind the functional requirement of patriotism.

But this still does not 'explain' modern nationalism because (a) lots of nationalisms arise outside of this state-building process,¹⁴ and (b) we still have to explain why some state-sponsored enterprises of patriotism succeed, and others founder on unconquerable existent identities. (Is the Nehruvian secular Indian nationalism among the casualties?) The ultimate insight still eludes us.

It does however further define the form of the struggles that nationalism gives rise to, clarifies what is at stake in them, in a way parallel and complementary to Gellner's account. This showed how the modern economy and bureaucratic state push towards a state-fostered common language and culture, and thus showed that *if* a given minority group did not want to assimilate, and *if* the majority was unwilling to give them a place through some regime of bilingualism, then they face the unenviable lot of being forever disadvantaged, and feeling the assimilative pressure on their members inseparable from this lot, and hence ultimately risking the feared outcome of assimilation. So that trouble and strife is built into such a situation.

Analogously here, we see that the modern state must push for a strong common identity. And thus, *if* a group feels that this identity does not reflect it, and *if* the majority will not accommodate by modifying the definition of common identity to include this group, then its members feel like second-class citizens, and consequently experience an assimilative pressure. Trouble of some sort must follow.

What this does not tell us is what makes these 'if' clauses true when they are. What it does help us to see is that once they are true, then the distressing scenarios of nationalist struggles: separatist movements, assimilation policies, tense compromises, and the like, are not just the result of gratuitous bloody-mindedness, even less of some regression to premodern tribal identities, but are very much the product of a situation of rivalry which is quintessentially modern in its structure and stakes.

A further word here might be helpful about how this latter kind of struggle plays itself out, based on further reflections on the functional requirements of democratic rule. The model of democratic legitimacy requires that the laws we live under in some sense result from our collective decisions. The people for these purposes is thought to form a collective unit of decision. But we do more than decide on issues which are already clear-cut. If that were the case, the best way to do things would be to put everything to a referendum. We also have to deliberate, clarify things and make up our minds. So that the people also has to be conceived of as a collective unit of deliberation.

Now in the meaning of the act, the people is also seen as made up of equal and autonomous members. Because to the extent that this is not the case, and that some are dependent on others, the decision would be held to emanate from the influential part, and not from the whole people.

If we put these two together, we have the idea of a process of deliberation and decision in which everybody can be heard. Of course, if we were very exigent, this would always turn out to be utopian. In fact,

democratic societies are usually satisfied with some approximation in principle to this norm. But if it appears that in some systematic way, there are obstacles to certain sections of the population being heard, then the legitimacy of democratic rule in that society is under challenge.

Now there are a number of ways a case can be made out that a certain segment of the population is being systematically unheard. A case of this kind was made on behalf of the working class in earlier times, could be made today with great plausibility on behalf of the non-working, marginalised poor and is often vigorously made on behalf of women. What concerns me here is the way that a case of this kind can be made in relation to an ethnic or linguistic group.

A minority group can come to feel that (a) their way of seeing things is different from the majority and (b) that this is generally not understood or recognised by the majority, that consequently (c) the majority is not willing to alter the terms of the debate to accommodate this difference, and therefore that the minority is being systematically unheard. Their voice cannot really penetrate the public debate. They are not really part of the deliberative unit.

How this feeling could arise must emerge from our ever-deferred search for the sources of nationalism. But we can see from here how destabilising this type of challenge is in a modern democratic society; and that is because it strikes at the very basis of legitimacy in this kind of society. Part of understanding modern nationalism is seeing how vulnerable our societies are to it.

V

That being said, can we now come to the sources of nationalism? If I could listen to the voice of prudence, I would now plead lack of space, and leave this to some other occasion. But I am going to ignore the trembling of angels, and rush in anyway. Nationalism, I have wanted to say, can not be understood as an atavistic reaction. It is a quintessentially modern phenomenon. It might be thought that the above discussion clears the way for a picture of it as both. What is modern would be the context of nationalist struggles, the stakes and predispositions to struggle, given national sentiment, as these have been outlined by Gellner, supplemented by my remarks (in turn, inspired by Anderson). What is primeval would be the sentiment itself; and so the two can be neatly combined.

But I think that even the sentiment is one which could only arise in modernity, and that is what I now want to explain. Why does nationalism arise? Why could not the Germans just be happy to be part of

Napoleon's liberalising empire, as Hegel would have liked? Why did not the Algerians demand the full French citizenship to which they would have been entitled according to the logic of 'l'Algérie, c'est la France', instead of going for independence? And so on, through an immense range of similar questions.

First, it is important to see that in very many situations, the initial refusal is that of certain elites, generally the ones who are most acquainted with the culture of the metropolis they are refusing. Later, in a successful nationalist movement, the mass of the people is somehow induced to come on board. This indicates that an account of the sources of such a movement ought to distinguish two stages.

So let me try to tackle the first phase: why do the elites refuse metropolitan incorporation, even, perhaps especially when they have accepted many of the values of the metropolis? Here we have to look at another facet of the unfolding process of modernity.

From one point of view, modernity is like a wave, flowing over and engulfing one traditional culture after another. If we understand by modernity, *inter alia*, the developments discussed above: the emergence of a market-industrial economy, of a bureaucratically organised state, of modes of popular rule, then its progress is, indeed, wave-like. The first two changes, if not the third, are in a sense irresistible. Whoever fails to take them on, or some good functional equivalent, will fall so far behind in the power stakes as to be taken over, and forced to undergo these changes anyway. There are good reasons in the relations of force for the onward march of modernity so defined.

But modernity as lived from the inside, as it were, is something different. The institutional changes just described always shake up and alter traditional culture. They did this in the original development in the west, and they have done this elsewhere. But outside of those cases where the original culture is quite destroyed, and the people either die or are forcibly assimilated – and European colonialism has a number of such cases to its discredit – a successful transition involves a people finding resources in their traditional culture to take on the new practices. In this sense, modernity is not a single wave. It would be better to speak of alternative modernities, as the cultures which emerge in the world to carry the institutional changes turn out to differ in important ways from each other. Thus a Japanese modernity, an Indian modernity and various modulations of Islamic modernity will probably enter alongside the gamut of western societies, which are also far from being totally uniform.

Seen in this perspective, we can see that modernity – the wave – can be felt as a threat to a traditional culture. It will remain an external threat to those deeply committed against change. But there is another

reaction, among those who want to take on some version of the institutional changes. Unlike the conservatives, they do not want to refuse the changes. They want of course to avoid the fate of those aboriginal people who have just been engulfed and made over by the changes. What they are looking for is a creative adaptation, drawing on the cultural resources of their tradition which would enable them to take on the new practices successfully. In short they want to do what has already been done in the west. But they see, or sense, that that cannot consist in just copying the west's adaptations. The creative adaptation using traditional resources has by definition to be different from culture to culture. Just taking over western modernity could not be the answer. Or otherwise put, this answer comes too close to engulfment. They have to invent their own.

There is thus a 'call to difference' felt by 'modernising' elites which corresponds to something objective in their situation. This is part of the background to nationalism. But there is more. The call to difference could be felt by anyone concerned for the well-being of the people concerned. But the challenge is lived by the elites concerned overwhelmingly in a certain register, that of dignity.

Western modernity has been a conquering culture, because the changes described above confer tremendous power on the societies adopting them. In the relation of conquest, there grow presumptions of superiority and inferiority which the conqueror blithely accepts, and the conquered resist. This is the challenge to dignity. To the extent that traditional elites can remain insulated from the relationship, they feel the challenge less. But those involved in modernisation, whether it be in a colony, or a country overshadowed and threatened, have before them constantly what they also see as a state of backwardness which they are concerned to make up. The issue is whether they can.

Thus the urge on the part of elites to find their own path is more than a matter of concern for their compatriots. It is also a matter of their own dignity. Until they can find their own creative adaptation, and take on the institutional changes while remaining themselves, the imputation of inferiority against the culture they identify with remains unrefuted. And of course, the imputation is liberally made by members of the dominant societies. Their word tends (irrationally but understandably) to have weight, just because of their success and power. They become in a sense important interlocutors, whose recognition would count for a lot if they gave it. In the face of non-recognition, this importance will frequently be denied, but sometimes with a vehemence which makes it suspect.

I am trying to identify the source of the modern nationalist turn, the

refusal – at first among elites – of incorporation by the metropolitan culture, as a recognition of the need for difference, but felt existentially as a challenge not just as a matter of valuable common good to be created, but also viscerally as a matter of dignity, in which one's self-worth is engaged. This is what gives nationalism its emotive power. This is what places it so frequently in the register of pride and humiliation. So nationalism can be said to be modern, because it is a response to a modern predicament. But the link is also more intimate. I said above that nationalism usually arises among 'modernising' elites. The link can be understood as more than accidental. One facet of nationalism, I have been arguing, is a response to a threat to dignity. But modernity has also transformed the conditions of dignity.

These in effect could not but change in the move from hierarchical, 'mediated' societies to 'horizontal', direct-access ones. The concept of honour, which was in place in the earlier forms, was intrinsically hierarchical. It supposed 'preferences', in Montesquieu's terms.¹⁵ For me to have honour, I had to have a status that not everyone shares, as is still the case with an 'honours list' of awards today. Equal direct-access societies have developed the modern notion of 'dignity'. This is based on the opposite supposition, that all humans enjoy this equally. For instance, the term as used by Kant designates what is supposed to be the apurage of all rational agents.¹⁶ Philosophically, we may want to attribute this status to all; but politically, the sense of equal dignity is really shared by people who belong to a functioning direct-access society together.¹⁷ In this typically modern predicament, their dignity passes through their common categorical identity. My sense of my own worth can no longer be based mainly on my lineage, my clan. A goodly part of it will usually be invested in some other categorical identity.

But categorical identities can also be threatened, even humiliated. The more we are inducted into modern society, the more this is the form in which the question of dignity will pose itself for us. Nationalism is modern, because it is a typically modern way of responding to the threat represented by the advancing wave of modernisation. Elites have always been able to experience a dramatic loss of dignity in the face of conquering power. One way of responding is to fight back or come to terms with the conquerors out of the same traditional identity and sense of honour. Another is to force a new categorical identity to be the bearer of the sought-for dignity. It is (a sub-species of) this second reaction that we call nationalist; but it is essentially modern. The 1857 Mutiny in India was in part an attempt to expunge this perennially available loss of dignity in a premodern context. In this sense, it was not a nationalist movement, as Congress later was.

The modern context of nationalism is also what turns its search for dignity outward. No human identity is purely inwardly formed. The other always plays some role. But it can be just as a foil, a contrast, a way of defining what we were not, for better or for worse. So the aboriginals of the newly 'discovered' world figured for post-Colombian Europeans. The 'savage', the other of civilisation, was a way Europeans defined themselves, both favourably (applying 'civilised' to themselves in self-congratulation), and sometimes unfavourably (Europeans as corrupted in contrast to the 'noble savage'). This kind of other reference requires no interaction. Indeed, the less interaction the better, else the stereotype may be unable to resist.

But the other can also play a role directly, where I need his/her recognition to be confident of my identity. This has been standard for our relation to our intimates, but it was not that important in relation to outsiders in the premodern period. Identities were defined by reference to the other, but not out of the other's reactions. Where this latter becomes so, of course, the way we interact is crucial – or perhaps we should say: the way the interaction is seen by the parties, because of the big part played by illusion here. But the crucial point is that the interaction is understood to be crucial by the identity-bearers themselves.

I would like to argue that identities in the modern world are more and more formed in this direct relation to others, in a space of recognition. I can not argue the general case here,¹⁸ but I hope that this is evident for modern nationalism. Modern nationalist politics is a species of identity politics. Indeed, the original species: national struggles are the site from which the model comes to be applied to feminism, to the struggles of cultural minorities, to the gay movement, etc. The work of someone like Frantz Fanon, written in the context of the anti-colonial struggle, but whose themes have been re-played in other contexts, illustrates the connections.¹⁹ Strong national sentiment among elites usually arises in the first phase because an identity is threatened in its worth.

This identity is vulnerable to non-recognition, at first on the part of the members of the dominant societies; but later, there has developed a world public scene, on which peoples see themselves as standing, on which they see themselves as rated, which rating matters to them. This world scene is dominated by a vocabulary of relative advance, even to the point of having to discover periodic neologisms in order to euphemise the distinctions. Hence what used to be called the 'backward' societies began to be called 'underdeveloped' after the war; and then even this came to be seen as indelicate, and so we have the present partition: developed/developing. The backdrop of modern nationalism, that there is something to be caught up with, each society in its own way,

is inscribed in this common language, which in turn animates the world public sphere.

Modern nationalism thus taps into something perennial. Conquest, or the threat of conquest, has never been good for one's sense of worth. But the whole context in which this nationalism arises, that of successive waves of (institutional) modernisation, and the resultant challenge to difference, that of the growth of categorical identities, as well as the creation of a world public sphere as a space of recognition, this is quintessentially modern. We are very far from atavistic reactions and primal identities.

VI

Hence the first phase of modern nationalism, the refusal of incorporation, arises from the felt need for difference in the context of modernisation, but lived in the register of dignity, of an identity potentially threatened in its worth, and in a growing space of recognition.

Let us suppose this is all true (a proposition with a very low antecedent probability); it still only accounts for the first phase. How does nationalism become generalised, galvanise whole populations? How does it break beyond the elites?

The answer to this question will be even more unsatisfactory than that to the previous one. There does not seem to be a single mechanism. Sometimes, a charismatic leadership, with great imaginative power, linking the national aspiration to a host of existing complaints, can make nationalism a mass movement. This is the case of Gandhi and the Salt March, for instance. Often, the movement spreads slowly down, from the original elites, to those who strive to emulate them, accede to them, take them as their model. And when we take account of the fact that modernity itself, as we saw above, tends to generalise a transformation of the original high culture, we can understand how more and more strata of the population may come to experience their situation in the terms originally espoused by elites.

These are ways in which the mass of the people can come to share in the original nationalist aspiration, and sense of vulnerable identity. But there are other ways in which nationalism can become a mass movement, where ordinary people are recruited into it without necessarily sharing the original outlook. Sometimes active minorities, themselves actuated by nationalist fears and aspirations, can contrive to sow discord, distrust and hatred between populations which hitherto had lived in some amity side by side. Terrorist killings can accomplish this, or atrocities committed by armed gangs, identified as from one group,

against the members of the other community. Then uninvolved people can begin to mistrust their neighbours, even though these may be uninvolved as well. Each community draws together among their own members, in fear and for protection. But the result is that they begin to condone, or at least not protest at the actions of their self-appointed 'self-defence' squads, as these perhaps begin to clear out the now untrustworthy neighbours. The scenario is all too depressingly familiar from recent developments in Croatia and Bosnia.

At the end of the day, each community is ranged against the other, perhaps even geographically separated into 'ethnically cleansed' pockets, full of a hatred and fear fed on atrocity stories, and often feeling betrayed and bewildered. Each community is now in the grip of a powerful nationalism, hell-bent on their own form of ethnically pure 'self-determination', but for the masses the motivation may have little to do with a call to difference, and a sense of threatened identity. It is a nationalism born of a sense of physical threat, of the fear of displacement, even extermination, by a hostile other. Each community has the sense that the other united first against its unsuspecting members, and that its own mobilisation is secondary and defensive in nature. The tragedy is that often neither is right; the split was in a sense engineered by determined and violent minorities, playing a game of provocation and counter-provocation, objectively allied in gradually unravelling ties of conviviality, even intermarriage, which may be of centuries' standing.²⁰

Many of today's mass nationalisms are of this secondary and defensive variety, a response to the perceived threat of expulsion or genocide. The infernal circle of killings between Armenians and Azeris, between Georgians and Abkhazi, and so on, are of this kind. But this is not to say that such nationalisms are of an entirely different kind. Because somewhere in the causal story is usually the action of minority elites, who were actuated by the classic motivation to difference that I described above. What does distinguish them, however, is that the diffusion of the nationalist movement does not come through more and more strata coming to share the original aspiration, through a conversion to the nationalist vision, as with Gandhi and the Salt March, but rather through the (often manipulated) politics of division and mutual threat. Not an identity threat in this case, but a physical threat, of exile or annihilation. I want to call this kind of mass nationalism defensive; but we have to remember that usually at its origin is a minority nationalism of aspiration. And of course, it may also happen that over time, in a third phase, a mass nationalism of defence can be gradually won over to some version of the original aspiration.

The rise of communal 'nationalisms' in India illustrates these mechanisms. Before the mass agitations of the twentieth century, Hindus and Muslims often enjoyed a degree of conviviality difficult to imagine today. Both communities participated in a form of syncretism. In certain parts of the sub-continent,²¹ Hindus would attend the celebration of Moharram, and Muslims would attend Dussehra feasts. Protests, around the turn of the century, begin to come from elites in both communities, who were concerned to create and propagate a purer, more consistent version of their respective religious identities.

The motivations for religious reform and purification are, of course, always plural and complex. But I would maintain that part of the motivation is the one I described above. Hindu reform, for instance, from Rammohan Roy on, was partly stimulated by the fact of domination, by admiration for the powers of discipline and organisation of the dominators, and by the desire to find Hindu sources for an identity which could sustain the same reformed practices. It was an unavoidable by-product of this that popular syncretism, along with many other practices of popular Hinduism, was judged unacceptable. In Arya Samaj terms, it was 'idolatry'.

A similar reproach, couched in the same terms, comes from the side of Muslim reform. These reform movements, turning to a purer, often more Sharia-oriented Islam, and condemning various popular practices, sometimes including various aspects of Sufism, have been a feature of the last century or so. Indeed, they begin somewhat earlier, if we include the Wahhabi. Again, it would be wildly over-simple to explain them entirely as the response to a 'call to difference'. But the need to respond to a conquering west, and the wounds to Islam's self-esteem as itself an erstwhile conquering civilisation, have almost certainly given a stimulus to these movements.

The move to sever syncretic conviviality, then, comes from elites concerned, at least in some important part, with the call to difference and the threat to identity. And indeed, the Arya Samaj did so call for Hindus to cease participating in Moharram;²² and to complete the connection, members of the Arya Samaj formed part of the nucleus out of which emerged the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and later the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), standard bearers of contemporary Hindu communalism.

But between pure-minded calls to renounce syncretism and the present communal violence and mistrust lies the second phase. My argument is that, unlike the pan-Indian nationalism of Gandhi, followed by Nehru, which was popularised by diffusion of the aspiration concerned, communalism made inroads into syncretic conviviality mainly

through clashes and conflicts which raised ever stronger reactions of defence. For Jinnah and those around him, the impulse to Pakistan had a lot to do with the preservation of a modernised (and in Jinnah's case, rather secularised) Muslim identity against the danger of being overwhelmed in a Hindu state. Their own 'call to difference' risked being drowned out, they feared, in India's answer to her call. But when the Muslim League swept the Muslim areas of India in the elections of 1941, the popular slogan was 'Islam in danger!' What was being conjured up here was a threat of a more direct and aggressive kind. The ideology of Pakistan propagated itself as a defensive nationalism.

Of course, since then, in a third phase, the original positive aspiration may have propagated itself downward in Pakistani society. How much, it is not easy to judge, because defensiveness and threat still seem an important mainstay of Pakistani unity.

VII

I have been trying to fill in the explanatory hole that I saw in Gellner's account, and my Anderson-inspired complement to it. These told us something about the context of modern nationalist struggles, even about what can make them virtually inevitable. But the sources of nationalist aspirations escaped us. They offered us Hamlet without the Prince. I have tried to explain the missing bit by invoking the context of expanding modernity, and the call to difference which it raises in peoples in the path of that expansion. This call, lived by elites in the register of dignity, can become the basis of a mass movement in a number of ways, including some rather sinister and destructive ones which have little to do with the call itself.

What does this tell us about the kinds of nationalism? Can we think of it as something homogeneous? Here there are lots of difficulties, and I can see my theory already in danger of unravelling. Because it is plain that my account places phenomena like the various modes of Islamic 'fundamentalism' in the third world (Iran, Algeria) in the same category as nationalism. Indeed, in so far as I am trying to account for nationalism as a call to difference in face of the wave of 'modernisation', lived in the register of threatened dignity, and constructing a new, categorical identity as the bearer of that dignity, I could also be talking of the rise of Marxist parties in certain Third World contexts.

This does not by itself worry me. As Liah Greenfeld argues (and I feel my account has a lot in common with hers),²³ this may even be a plus for the account. We should not make a fetish of our preliminary vocabulary of distinctions. So what if the categories which emerge from

the explanation include more than what we antecedently called 'nationalism'? If some common element is really illuminated, then we have gained.

Now with the very important reservation that I do not want to reduce Islamic integrism to a single mode of explanation and that we are dealing with a complex, many-sided, over-determined, reality, I nevertheless would like to argue that its various manifestations have some features of the profile I have just outlined. The sense of operating on a world scene, in the register of threatened dignity, is very much present; as is the over-vehement rejection of the west (or its quintessence, America, the 'great Satan'), and the tremendous sensitivity to criticism from this quarter, for all the protestations of hostility and indifference. Islamic societies are perhaps if anything more vulnerable to a threat to their self-esteem from the impact of superior power, in that Islam's self-image, as indicated above, was of the definitive revelation, destined to spread outward without check. The Islamic sense of Providence, if I may use this Christian expression, can cope with the status of conquerors, but tends to be bewildered by the experience of powerlessness and conquest.

Again, for all their protestations of faithfulness to the origins, this integrism is in some respects very modern. It mobilises people in a modern fashion, in horizontal, direct-access movements; it thus has no problem using the 'modern' institutional apparatus of elected legislatures, bureaucratic states and armies. While it would reject the doctrine of popular sovereignty in favour of a species of theocracy, it has also delegitimated all the traditional ruling strata. The Iranian revolution was carried out against the Shah. Those enjoying special authority are exclusively those who 'rationally' merit this, granted the nature and goals of the state, viz., the experts in God's law; not to speak of the Ayatollah Khomeini's media-oriented abuse of the Islamic judicial forms in issuing his fatwa against Salman Rushdie.

Indeed, this seems true of all fundamentalisms, that they paradoxically are most modern where they think they are most faithful to tradition. Starting with the original home of the term, in the Protestant sectarian doctrines of Biblical inerrancy; this is in fact a doctrine only defended in recent centuries. But more important, one can doubt that the issue would even have been clearly understood by Christians in earlier centuries. It supposes a modern conception of the literal truth in secular time, one which owes something to our social imaginary and our science. Earlier Christian centuries lived in a world in which secular time was interwoven with various orders of higher time, various dimensions of eternity. From within this time sense, it may be hard to explain

just what is at stake in the issue of whether 'day' in Genesis means 'literally' the twenty-four hours between sunset and sunset, let alone get the people to see why they should be concerned about it.

Moreover, seeing nationalism, proletarian internationalism and religious fundamentalisms in the same register may help us to understand their interaction, that they are so often, in fact, fighting for the same space. Arab nationalism gives way to Islamic integristism,²⁴ just as the demise of Soviet Marxism opens the way for virulent nationalisms. The search for a categorical identity, to answer the call to difference, and be the bearer of the sought-for dignity, can take many forms. It is understandable that the discrediting of some must strengthen the appeal of others.

Moreover, this kind of diversity and rivalry shades into that between different definitions of nationalism. In many countries, less and more inclusive national identities have vied for people's allegiance: Québécois and Canadian, Slovak and Czechoslovak, Scots and British. Indeed, one could class the struggle between Nehruvian and 'Hindutva' nationalism in India as another such rivalry, rather than as a struggle between a national and a religious identity. In all the struggles invoked in this and the preceding paragraph, it is as though there were a space waiting to be filled. I am not unduly worried that my account may lead us to bring things together that we now class under different headings. Understanding nationalism in terms of a 'call to difference' allows for a great variety of different responses. The aspiration to take on certain forms of modernity, but on the basis of one's own cultural resources, can obviously be played out in many different ways, depending on what you want to take over, and what the cultural resources are you hope to sustain it with. The considerations Gellner adduces, as well as others, certainly explain why one thing that people will generally want to take over is state power; hence the near universal validity of his definition of nationalism. But we can also see why in special circumstances, a phenomenon like pre-1960 Quebec 'nationalism' can arise.

But there is one difference which is worth commenting on here, that between liberal nationalism, like, for example, contemporary Quebec 'independentism', on one hand, and what we now see raging in Bosnia on the other. There are some common roots, as captured in my scheme, but there are also clear qualitative differences. The idea that these are both manifestations of the same force, but just differing in virulence, is a serious mistake. It is not just that the second phase in Bosnia was a purely 'defensive' one, in my sense. More fundamentally, nationalisms differ, as I have just said, in regard to what they want to take over.

Now there are some nationalisms where part of what is defined as the

desirable modernity is the liberal regime of rights and equal citizenship, attributed to all members of the political unit, regardless of differences, even of ethnicity. These nationalisms have taken over, one might better say have never lost, the aspirations to patriotism of the founding revolutions anterior to nationalism. The original 'nations' which these revolutions sought to liberate were held to consist of all free men living in the historically defined societies. The fact that 'free men' excluded, in one way women, and in another, more grievous way, Afro-American slaves, did not totally blunt the force of this principle. On the contrary, this force was part of the complex of factors which eventually led to the lifting of these exclusions.

The first wave of nationalisms in Europe, those which grew up in opposition to the Holy Alliance, were of this liberal sort. They retained the original *Verfassungspatriotismus* of the Revolutions; their sense of nation incorporated the constitutional principles of liberalism. Contemporary Quebec nationalism is of this kind.

Of course, liberal nationalism suffers strains. All are citizens without distinction, and yet the state has its *raison d'être* in a cultural nation to which not all citizens belong. There are tensions here to be managed.²⁵ But there is no question of sacrificing universality on the altar of the nation. For this would be a betrayal of identity.

Quite different are the modes of nationalism where what is to be taken over does not include this liberal patriotism; even in some cases, as in proto-Nazi German movements, where this patriotism is rejected as an alien element, a bit of *Zivilisation* which is contrary to the *Kultur* of the nation. Or where liberal politics has never had a toe-hold, as in the Balkans. There one can have forms where the aspiration includes state power, economic development, even something like an abolition of traditional hierarchies in the name of popular sovereignty. But nothing stands in the way of defining the nation purely ethnically, even racially. Where this is so, the elements of modern politics which are taken up are no help. Rather, they aggravate things. At least traditional societies recognised some moral limits, however frequently transgressed, in the treatment of outsiders. But in the face of the sovereign national will, source of all right, nothing else can stand.

Premodern societies often incorporated different groups in a sort of hierarchy of complementarity, where each one had its niche – as Greeks, for instance, were frequently merchants in the Ottoman empire. This was a far cry from equal rights, but it did confer a semi-secure status. But the outsider has no place in a regime of popular sovereignty, where the people is ethnically defined. Moreover, under the rules of self-determination, outsiders in sufficiently large numbers can contest one's

right to the territory. Add to this the sense of threat in defensive nationalism, and the scene is set for ethnic cleansing.

It is clear that this type of nationalism, while having partly similar roots to the liberal one, and like this growing and operating within the context of modernity, is nevertheless a wholly different animal, obeying a different dynamic. The account I am offering should lead us not only to see other phenomena (e.g. some 'fundamentalisms') as very similar to nationalism, it should also help us to distinguish rather different modes within the category.

There are all sorts of further objections which I have not begun to meet. But enough is enough. I have tried to present an account of nationalism on two levels, as it were: one a description of the social and state context in which national struggles are played out, and by which the stakes of these struggles are defined; and a second level, which it was more foolhardy to venture on, where I have tried to say what gives rise to nationalist aspirations and national movements. Whatever the inaccuracy of my remarks on this second level (or indeed, on the first), I am convinced that nationalism needs to be tackled in this two-pronged way, and I hope to have helped clarify some of the thorny issues which impede our vision of this absorbing, and disturbing, but seemingly inescapable feature of our modern world.

NOTES

An earlier version of this chapter appeared in R. McKim and J. McMahon, eds., *The Morality of Nationalism*, New York, 1997.

- 1 We might follow Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, p. 1) in defining nationalism as the 'political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent'. The basic idea is that a people defined antecedently by unity of culture, or language or religion, should be allowed to give itself its own political forms. This certainly picks out a class of movements, sentiments, political ideas – forces in the contemporary world, viz., those related to that principle. The question I am raising is whether they all have the same causes and are moved by the same dynamic.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid., p. 39.
- 4 There is an interesting discussion of modern languages as context-free in something like this sense in A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Notre Dame, 1988.
- 5 I am borrowing this term from Craig Calhoun. See for instance his 'Nationalism and Ethnicity', *American Review of Sociology*, no. 19, 1993, p. 230. I draw heavily on Calhoun's work later in my characterisation of 'direct-access' societies.
- 6 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 18. I have dealt at length here on only one facet of Gellner's theory, that which stresses the homogenisation which

is functionally necessary to a modern economy. But the move to a modern, homogenised society was driven by other forces besides. The modern European bureaucratic state has been growing for a number of centuries, increasing its outreach, invading the lives of its citizens and administering its territories, far and near, by uniform principles. Not all this was powered by economic motives (though much undoubtedly was). But the upshot proves essentially the basis from which Gellner's account takes off: this historical development has landed us with the homogeneous state with its uniform language and cultures, indispensable as well to our kind of economy as to our type of polity and our administrative procedures. And it is this which accounts for nationalism.

- 7 E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, London, 1979.
- 8 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn, London, 1991.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 10 M. Heidegger, 'Die Zeit des Weltbildes', in his *Holzwege*, Frankfurt, 1977.
- 11 Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity', pp. 234–5. I want to reiterate how much the discussion in this section owes to Calhoun's recent work.
- 12 I have not discussed the case of non-democratic regimes based on popular will, but these plainly push in the same direction, indeed, even farther and faster. Just because emanating from the common will is essential to their legitimacy, they cannot leave their citizens alone in a condition of obedient passivity, as earlier despotic regimes were content to do. They must always mobilise them into repeated expressions of unshakeable, unanimous will: phoney elections, demonstrations, May Day parades and the like. This is the essence of modern 'totalitarianism' in its distinction from earlier despotism.
- Calhoun stresses, however, how easily the search for national identity, even in democratic contexts, leads to an attempt to induce people to suppress their other (gender, religious, minority-cultural) identities in favour of a 'national' one. The modern quest for patriotism is full of dangers.
- 13 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Delhi, 1989.
- 14 Although many are 'produced' at an earlier phase where a movement begins to unite disparate populations under the same banner, in the name of a supposed common history. Thus a great many official languages today result from the imposition of one dialect as the 'true' language on a whole people who earlier spoke a scatter of similar dialects. National vernaculars have almost always had to be 'invented' in this sense.
- Too much has perhaps been made of this point in a spirit of debunking nationalist claims. A lot of nationalist history hovers between myth and lies. But as Calhoun cogently argues, this does not by itself invalidate the claims that contemporaries may make in terms of their shared sense of national identity. 'Ethnicity or cultural traditions are bases for nationalism when they effectively constitute historical memory, when they inculcate it as habitus . . . not when (or because) the historical origins of the claims are accurate' ('Nationalism and Ethnicity', p. 222).
- 15 C. L. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Cambridge, 1989, book 3, chapter 7.
- 16 I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, New York, 1964.

- 17 This does not have to be a political society. It can be a dispersed common agency, like a religious confession of an ethnic group.
- 18 But see my 'The Politics of Recognition', in A. Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism and 'the Politics of Recognition'*, Princeton, 1992.
- 19 F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, 1966.
- 20 Fortunately, this tactic does not always succeed. There are signs that ties between Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab were in many cases strong enough to withstand the atrocities perpetrated by the murderous bands of Khalistan supporters, though a self-feeding process of distrust and division was clearly the aim of those terrible acts. Again, after the massacres of Partition in 1947, the communities in India seemed to draw back from the brink. Secularism was for a while strengthened. It took some time for the forces of Hindu chauvinism to make the progress which they have recently registered.
- 21 My source here is a paper by John Roosa, 'Composite Culture and Communalism', presented at the conference on Culture, Community and Nation, Hyderabad, India, December 1993.
- 22 Roosa, 'Composite Culture and Communalism'.
- 23 L. Greenfeld, 'Transcending the Nation's Worth', *Daedalus*, vol. 122, 1993 and *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, MA, 1992.
- 24 M. Kramer, 'Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity', *Daedalus*, vol. 122, 1993.
- 25 I have discussed this theme at greater length in 'Les sources de l'identité moderne', in G. Laforest, ed., *Les frontières de l'identité*, Quebec, 1996.

9 Modern multinational democracies: transcending a Gellnerian oxymoron

Alfred Stepan

By 1986, three years before the walls came down, two new important bodies of literature were in place that should have helped us to think carefully about the difficult relationship between democratisation and nationalism. Ernest Gellner published his magisterial *Nations and Nationalism* in 1983, the same year that saw the publication of another modern classic on nationalism, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.¹ In 1986 the four-volume work edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillipe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule* was released and immediately created the field of 'transitology'.²

What now strikes me as amazing is that these two bodies of literature, which in retrospect should have learned so much from each other, were virtually separate and non-communicating discourses. In the four volumes on democratic transitions, nationalism is never thematised as a major issue, or even given one separate chapter. Indeed, the word 'nationalism' only appears in the index of one of the four volumes, that on southern Europe, and the reader is only referred to one page on Spain, one page on Portugal and two pages on Greece. The name of Ernest Gellner does not appear in the index of any of the four volumes, nor does the name of Benedict Anderson. As the author of one of the comparative papers in this series, I of course must share responsibility for the oversight.

For their part, on the other hand, neither Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism*, nor Anderson in *Imagined Communities*, in any way thematises democracy, and indeed the word does not enter into the index of either book.³

In my judgement, two of the most urgent problems facing modern democratic theorists and practitioners are how to reconcile nationalism and democracy, especially in multiethnic settings, and how to improve the quality of consolidated democracies. This chapter is devoted to the first question but it has implications for the second. Obviously, if we are to make advances concerning the first question, then the two previously

non-communicating discourses must come into constant dialogue with one another.

As an analyst of democratisation, and as the first rector of the Central European University, I mentioned this problem of our non-communicating discourses, and the opportunity to contribute to overcoming it, to Ernest Gellner, the founder of CEU's Centre for the Study of Nationalism. With his characteristic collegial generosity and energy he immediately accepted the challenge to bring the discourses together. He attended a series of four lectures I gave in CEU Prague on the relationship of democratisation to nationalism, and personally typed eight pages of suggestions in 1994 on an early draft of what is now a book Juan Linz and I have co-authored on the problems of democratisation.⁴ Obviously, my attempt to relate democratisation to Gellner's thoughts on nationalism is only a shadow of what it could have been had Gellner lived to flail me. But let me now turn explicitly to what Gellner says, and does not say, about the relationship of nationalism and democracy in his last great book, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*.

Gellner's bounded world of nation-states

Ernest Gellner stated his functionalist argument for 'one nation one state' especially forcefully in *Conditions of Liberty*:

[T]he new imperative of cultural homogeneity . . . is the very essence of nationalism . . . [F]or the first time in world history a High Culture . . . becomes the pervasive and operational culture of an entire society . . . The state has not merely the monopoly of legitimate violence, but also of the accreditation of educational qualification. So the marriage of state and culture takes place, and we find ourselves in the Age of Nationalism . . . For the average person, the limits of his culture are . . . the limits of his employability, social acceptability, dignity, effective participation and citizenship.⁵

But what happens if there are one or more conscious nations in the territory, nations which do not partake of this state-culture congruence? Gellner, as always, was direct: 'Under the new social regime, this[condition] becomes increasingly uncomfortable. Men then had two options, if they were to diminish such discomfort: they could change their own culture, or they could change the nature of the political unit.'⁶

Gellner did not really develop the full implications of the above assertions, but for the sake of even more brutal clarity I shall call the major cultural change option *assimilation*, and the major political change option *boundary change*. In this chapter I will explore what implications Gellner's argument properly has, and does not properly have, for the crafting of multinational democracies.

Later in the book, Gellner, in his brilliant and sweeping way, used the metaphor of marriage to discuss the four time-zones, as he conceived them, of Europe. For Gellner, in 'time-zone' I, encompassing roughly the Atlantic coast of Europe (Ireland and parts of northern Spain being the major exceptions), historically strong dynastic states correlated with high cultural areas. According to him, 'If nationalism requires the marriage of state and culture, then in this zone the couple had been cohabiting long before their union was acclaimed by nationalist Manifest Destiny . . . History had made a present to nationalism . . .'⁷

'Time-zone' II, to the east, was different. It was an area of 'quite exceptional political fragmentation', but 'was exceedingly well-equipped with pre-existing, codified, normative High Cultures'.⁸ Thus for Gellner, in what is now Germany and Italy, there was some – but not great – need for state-building, because, 'An existing High Culture had to be endowed with a political roof worthy of it and capable of giving it shelter. It took a certain amount of military and diplomatic activity, but not much else.'⁹

In time-zone III, most of which is now central and eastern Europe, no dominant states existed. This time-zone 'presented the greatest problems from the viewpoint of the implementation of the nationalist principal of *one culture, one state*'.¹⁰ For Gellner, 'If the eventual units were to be compact and reasonably homogeneous, more had to be done: many, many people had to be either assimilated, or expelled or killed.'¹¹

In Gellner's view, the path in the czarist empire, which concerns his time-zone IV, was roughly similar to that in time-zone III until what he calls the 'Leninist *Umma*' emerged. Then, 'The new ideocracy and the institutions it spawned controlled the entire territory with ease, and obliged its inhabitants to proclaim that their nationalist aspirations were satisfied. This fiction was maintained well into the 1980s . . .'¹²

Gellner argued that the postcommunist situation in most of the former Soviet Union was even more complicated than in time-zone III because not only was it an area '[w]here neither the political bridegroom nor the cultural bride was available for the required marriage of nation state and national culture, but where the search for them was delayed by seventy or forty years of Bolshevik ideocracy . . .'¹³ It is this special context, according to Gellner, that explains why the economic and political aspects of civil society in postcommunist Europe are difficult to bring into being, while 'ethnically based and defined associations appear to be capable of almost immediate formation and firm as well as rapid crystallisation'.¹⁴

Where does *Conditions of Liberty* leave democratisation crafters and/or theorists interested in the prospects of democratisation outside of

territories that are actually a part of, or analogous to, time-zones I and II? The central implication of *Conditions of Liberty* is that if a single high culture, and a state broadly supportive of that culture, do not coexist in one territory, the crafting of a democracy will be substantially more difficult than if they do. Unfortunately for those like myself who personally value the quality of life in a culturally diverse society, the existing empirical evidence would seem to indicate that Gellner's argument is justified.

We should also note for the record that some of the world's most influential liberal and democratic theorists can be seen to be in fundamental agreement with Gellner. For John Stuart Mill, for instance, it was almost axiomatic that, 'free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feelings, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion necessary to the working of representative institutions cannot exist . . .'¹⁵ In our own time, Dankwart Rustow, the seminal founder of the dynamic-conflict approach to modern democratisation theory, argues that his model of democratisation 'starts with a single background condition – national unity . . . National unity . . . must precede all the other phases of democratisation.'¹⁶ The leading American theorist of pluralism and democracy, Robert A. Dahl, does not argue that multinational democracies are impossible, but he does suggest that if there is no clarity about which groups or individuals are members of a political community 'we cannot solve the problems of the scope and domain of democratic units from within democratic theory. Like the majority principle, the democratic process presupposes a unit.'¹⁷ The contemporary Oxford political philosopher, David Miller, argues on grounds of quasi-Humeian moral sentiments that 'democratic states that have successfully pursued policies aiming at social justice have a unifying identity'. Miller goes on to suggest that a high degree of trust and solidarity are necessary for democratic redistributive policies, and 'for that reason socialists should be more strongly committed than classical liberals to the nation-state as an institution . . .' For Miller the positive consequences of solidarity and cultural homogeneity are such that 'political authorities are likely to function most effectively when they embrace just a single national community'.¹⁸

What can democratic theorists and practitioners learn from Gellner and where, why and how must we attempt to go beyond him?

In my judgement, the legitimate insight that Gellner makes, and that in different ways is implicit in the work of Mill, Rustow and Dahl, is that if there is only one homogeneous high culture in the territory, and the vast majority of long-term residents identify with that culture, *and* that

culture has a supportive state, many of the problems that will *normally* appear in the effort to democratise a multinational community are simply *not* on the agenda in such 'one nation one state' polities. On balance, David Miller's book is probably also right that national homogeneity may make certain state-wide policies concerning social justice more politically feasible than in a multinational, multicultural polity. But let us return to Gellner's time-zones. How far will they take us, even metaphorically? First, we must recognise the well-documented fact that there are very few states in the entire world that are relatively homogeneous nation-states and approximate Gellner's time-zone I.¹⁹ But the evidence from those that did begin their democratic process in time-zone I supports Gellner's thesis.

For those territories that are analogous to Gellner's time-zone I, whatever other problems they had or have, they did *not* have to manage the culture-state incongruence problem. Japan is the clearest example. Long before any western polity, Japan had culture-state congruence. Portugal, as western Europe's longest standing dictatorship, faced many problems when it began its democratisation process in 1974. However, because it was one of the world's oldest and most homogeneous nation-states, culture-state incongruence was not an issue, notwithstanding the return of an overseas population proportionately five times greater than that which France had to absorb after Algeria.

Democratisation in Greece and South Korea was somewhat more analogous to time-zone II than to time-zone III because these countries had relatively homogeneous high cultures. Of course, at various times in their history they had some time-zone III qualities because their high common culture lacked a political roof due to the existence of foreign rule or occupation. However, when Greece and South Korea began their democratisation processes in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively, they conformed to what Gellner would label time-zone II. Though the diaspora in Greece, and the geopolitics of 'two Koreas', presented some congruence problems, these problems complicated, but ultimately did not prevent, democratisation.

Some parts of the world's map are of course more culturally homogeneous in the 1980s than they were in the 1930s, but in Poland and in Czechoslovakia this was 'helped' first by Nazi genocide of Jewish and Gypsy minorities and later by the Soviet-backed expulsion of the Germans, an expulsion which the Allies accepted. As the millennium turns, Croatia is now nearly homogeneous, but at the cost of ethnic cleansing and the creation of an ethnocracy. These are not useable templates for the practice and theory of democracy.

The hard reality is that, in the vast majority of the world's countries

that are not now democratic, homogeneous high cultures do not coexist within one state. Thus, if we want to avoid ethnic cleansing, if time-zone I territories cover little of the planet, and if much of the world is in time-zones III or IV, what is left in the Gellnerian world to produce culture-state congruence in a democratic way? According to Gellner, there are only two options: changing the political boundaries democratically, or voluntary and democratic cultural assimilation. Unfortunately, probably neither route can expand democratic boundaries in the world very much. Why?

In principle there is no democratic reason to oppose the democratic division of one state into two or more states. However, a democratic division is facilitated greatly if the groups to be divided live in relatively clearly demarcated cultural zones. The Czech and Slovak parts of Czechoslovakia satisfied this criterion. But, in many countries, re-drawing of the boundaries to produce culture-state congruence is simply not an available democratic option. For example, in Latvia, Russian is the dominant language in the seven largest cities; in India, the 115 million Muslims are found in numerous parts of the federation; in the Ukraine and Estonia, though major concentrations of Russian-speakers are indeed clustered on the borders with Russia, the inescapable reality is also that the capitals of Ukraine (Kiev) and Estonia (Tallinn) are located in the centres of the countries and are culturally and linguistically *de facto* multinational.

Gellner's second option involves consensual change in cultures so as to produce a culture-state congruence. This is of course conceivable for many individuals, and if voluntarily done, does not involve a violation of individual rights. However, for entire cultural communities, such as Muslims in Orthodox Christian or Hindu cultures, or working-class Russophones in linguistically distant cultures such as Estonia, cultural assimilation may not be desired, or even if desired, may be extremely difficult to achieve in less than two or three generations.

The historical question of assimilation in some time-zone I or time-zone II states probably needs to be re-examined with greater care. In some countries with a high codified culture (such as France, Germany and Italy) Gellner certainly understates the state-craft and power involved when, in a casual aside, he writes that congruence only entailed 'a certain amount of military and diplomatic activity, but not much else'.²⁰ Near cultural homogenisation in France was in fact, as Eugene Weber has so meticulously documented, the result of the assiduous combination of state sanctions and inducements concerning language, dress, education and military service.²¹

Could such state sanctions be democratically and effectively used in

many time-zone III or IV areas to produce congruence via voluntary cultural assimilation? Given the significant technological changes that have occurred since the late nineteenth-century state-induced homogenisation processes so well described by Eugen Weber, and the analytically distinct but related emergence of what Charles Taylor calls the 'politics of recognition', there are grounds for thinking such processes are now less available.²² Most of the world's minorities can keep in cultural contact with their home cultures via radio, cassettes and cheap air travel to a vastly greater extent than was possible a hundred years ago. Also, due to advances in literacy and communications, more minority communities have semi-professional 'cultural carriers', in the Weberian sense of *Träger*, than a hundred years ago. Normative changes in the form of increased desire for cultural autonomy in some minority (especially Muslim) communities – contested by rising anti-foreign sentiment in the majority cultures that reduces the integrating capacity that in theory the majority culture would like – probably have contributed to greater cultural will, and greater cultural capacity, for minorities to resist cultural assimilation.

Furthermore, the original territorial *source* of immigration (e.g. Sudan or Guatemala) and the *location* of emigration (e.g. to England or to the United States) are becoming 'deterritorialised'. For reasons of sociology, politics and even census-recording, new identities (given or adopted) and new communities (e.g. 'Muslims' in England, 'Latinos' in the United States) are emerging with at least some of the affective power previously associated only with nationalism.²³

My point is that voluntary cultural assimilation into the dominant host culture is in many parts of the world now more complex and problematic than it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If I am right in these reflections, cultural congruence via minority community choice and/or via state inducements is, not surprisingly, a waning, rather than a growing, force in our globalising societies.

Living democratically outside of nation-states

An urgent question for democratic theorists and practitioners concerns whether there is anything that can be done to improve the chances of successful democratic consolidation in polities that are actually multinational. This is a huge and complicated question, but in order to focus the debate on the possibility of multinational democracies, I will make two sets of simplifying assumptions to start our analysis.

The first is that we are talking about a polis that does not now have culture-state congruence (i.e. there are at least two self-conscious

cultures or nationalities in the territory), and for which voluntary and effective minority cultural assimilation to the dominant culture in the middle range, say twenty-five years, seems extremely unlikely, and where peaceful democratic secession is virtually impossible. This is where our reflections about Gellner's argument, and our assessment of contemporary polities, leave us in many countries in the world.

The second set of assumptions is that, for whatever reasons (their current democratic values, their desire to join a prestigious international organisation that only admits democracies, or simply out of fear of dangerous ethnic or cultural conflict if a democratic future can not be crafted), at least some important policy-making leaders from the dominant culture or nation, and of the non-dominant cultures or nations, want the polis to become a consolidated democracy or to remain a consolidated democracy.²⁴

For those interested in polities which meet the above assumptions, three connected but analytically distinct clusters of practices and concepts should be on the political and/or research agenda. First, we must analyse how the policies of nation-state building, and the policies of democracy building, are in such a polity conflicting logics. Secondly, we should explore how to contribute to the construction of complementary identities. Thirdly, we have to search for political formulas that do what many liberal democratic theorists argue is dangerous, or even impossible, that is create policies that reconcile group rights and individual rights.

Crafting integration and difference into democratic institutions

For Rogers Brubaker, leaders who pursue nation-state policies assume that the state is *of* and *for* the dominant cultural nation.²⁵ If there is only one culturally conscious demos in the polity, nation-state building and democracy building are, as David Miller would argue, mutually reinforcing political logics. But, if there are two or more culturally conscious demoi in the polity, nation-building policies *of* and *for* the dominant nation would imply restricted citizenship, or at least unequal citizenship, for many of the long-standing minority residents in the state. Formally, and prudentially therefore, in multinational or multicultural polities, nation-state building policies and democracy-building policies are conflicting political logics. Would-be democracy crafters in such a polity have to recognise this political reality and search for an alternative set of policies to that of a 'nation-state'.

If the goal is to further advance towards democratic consolidation in a multinational polity, leaders of political and civil society will have to

explore a range of state and governmental institutions that encourage political integration and loyalty towards the democratic regime, while simultaneously guaranteeing the right of minorities to organise and express cultural and national differences.

In cultural areas like schools, access to radio or the media, some politically crafted power sharing institutional formats and practices that Arend Lijphart calls 'consociational' are almost certainly called for in multiethnic democracies.²⁶ Non-territorial forms of representation need to be explored much more carefully.²⁷

If the choice is between parliamentary versus presidential systems, the 'non-winner take all' aspects of parliamentarism, and parliamentarism's greater 'coalition requiring' and 'coalition sustaining' properties, are worth serious consideration.²⁸ Electoral systems should also be studied thoughtfully for their impact on minority representation; in general, we can say that proportional representation systems are better at representing minorities than are strong majoritarian formulas such as 'first past the post' in large single-member districts.

Among the forms of territorial representation that are particularly important to consider if groups are spatially concentrated in a multinational polity is federalism. Unfortunately, there is virtually no modern high-quality comparative research on the relationship between democracy and federalism so we must have a brief excursus on this topic.

Excursus on federalism and institutional choice in multinational polities

Postcommunist Europe points out the need to be careful about federalism. If one excludes the case of 'one nation in two states' in Germany, then we can say that there were eight European states with communist political systems. Five of these were unitary states (Hungary, Poland, Romania, Albania and Bulgaria). Three were federal states (USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia). Seven years after the 'annus mirabilis' of 1989, the five unitary states remain five unitary states. But, the three federal states have fragmented into twenty-two states.

Clearly, federal systems must be crafted carefully, or instead of attenuating the problems of multinationality, they can aggravate them. For the cases of the three European communist federal ruptures, one of the major causes was that none of these federal systems was designed to operate in a context where competitive democratic elections were decisive. They only worked as long as the centralised party-state played the major coordinating role.

In the standard literature on federal systems, often no distinction is

made between democratic and non-democratic federal systems.²⁹ For modern democratic theorists this makes such literature of limited value. If federalism is to be a useful concept to employ in the comparative analysis of democratisation, we will have to re-state what should be the minimal requirements of democratic federalism. Democratic political systems probably should not be called federal systems unless they meet two criteria. First, within the state there must exist some territorial political sub-units whose electorate is exclusively drawn from citizens of the sub-unit *and* which have areas of legal and policy-making autonomy and sovereignty that is constitutionally guaranteed.³⁰ Secondly, there must be a state-wide political unit, which contains at least one chamber elected by the state-wide population, and which has some law and policy-making areas that are constitutionally guaranteed to fall within the sovereignty of this state-wide body.

Two conclusions immediately flow from these criteria. If the sub-units do not in theory and practice have at least one significant policy-making area where they are relatively autonomous *vis-à-vis* the centre, then the political system is *de facto* centralised. But, if the centre does not have a policy-making area or areas where it is relatively autonomous to make policy, the political system is not a federal system but a confederation or even only an alliance.

If one accepts these arguments it also follows that in a robust democratic federal political system, the more the citizens feel a sense of separate allegiance to two democratically legitimated sovereignties, each with its constitutionally guaranteed scope of action, the more democratically secure the federation. Ideally, therefore, citizens within a democratic federation should have *dual* but *complementary* political identities. This is so because, as citizens of a territorial sub-unit, if they and their elected leaders of the sub-unit do not feel that the centre provides some goods, security or identities that they consider valuable, and which are *not* available from the sub-unit alone, then their loyalty to the centre will be weak. Potentially they will provide a constituency for the politics of secession. In the very least, they might provide a constituency for a politics of alienation, or a sense of exploitation, neither of which will help democratic consolidation. Likewise, if many citizens of the federal state and leaders of the centre feel that the federal system entails few benefits, but imposes many political and economic costs, *and* that the costs of intervention (or encouraged exit) are relatively low, the democratic federation will be endangered.

Federalism is an attractive formula for some types of multinational polities, but the politics of building and maintaining dual and complementary identities needs more thought and research.

The most widely known example, and emulated model, of democratic federalism is that crafted in 1787 in Philadelphia. But the American model has two major characteristics that are not essential to democratic federalism and should be open to debate, negotiation and challenge. Both characteristics concern the second chamber. All modern democratic federations have second chambers. The rationale of such second chambers is that they pay particular attention to issues of special relevance to the sub-units of the federation. Not as a point of principle, but rather, as a part of the historical 'grand compromise' between the big and small states, the representatives of the big states in 1787 made two major concessions which violated formal democratic equality. First, they gave the small states equal representation, or more accurately, *massive over-representation*. Secondly, with less awareness of the implications, they made the *policy scope* of both houses basically the same. These two decisions that I will call 'disproportionate representation' but 'symmetrical scope' are a fundamental part of the US formula. But should they necessarily be a part of modern democratic federalism?

How disproportionate is the US Senate? When Robert Dahl did the calculation for the United States in the 1950s, he came to the conclusion that 'an average vote cast in Nevada has eighty-five times as much weight as an average vote cast in New York, other things being equal'.³¹

In 1988, after twenty-one years of direct military rule a Brazilian constituent assembly, following almost two years of intense debate and discussion, created what was thought to be a very democratic constitution. However, almost no discussion was devoted to the senate.³² Following Dahl's logic of presentation and the data provided by Mainwaring, I have to assert that 'an average vote cast in Roraima has 276 times as much weight as a vote cast in São Paulo, other things being equal'.³³

Such massive over-representation is not a necessary feature of democratic federalism. If an ethnic or cultural minority in a federation was over-represented by such a drastic number in the upper chamber, and if the chamber had a scope equal to that of the more democratically elected house, this would almost certainly create problems of allegiance to the federation by some leaders at the centre. There can be, and there is, a great degree of variation in the representation formulas in the second chamber of democratic federal systems. The democratic federal system with the least over-representation is Austria with a Gini Index of Inequality co-efficient of representation of only .05.³⁴ Germany is .36 and Canada is .31. But, the US has a Gini co-efficient of representation in the second chamber of .50, and Brazil is close to .60.³⁵

To compound the democratic inequalities introduced by the US

model, we have only to look at the policy scope of the second chamber. The US model, as I have mentioned, gives the second chamber *symmetrical scope* with the first chamber. The first chamber in the US follows a principle of reapportionment every ten years in order to approach perfect equality of representation. The reapportionment is based on a census taken at the end of each decade. What is important theoretically and politically, especially given our concern with multinational federations, is that the second chamber has a special role to play in all areas of fundamental importance to the federation. In a multinational federation, issues of special interest to the minority cultures and nations such as language, religion, education and citizenship should fall within the areas where they can vote and indeed exercise possibly an absolute, but normally a relative, over-ridable veto requiring a special majority of the lower house. However, it is important to insist that neither democratic theory nor modern democratic practice requires that a chamber with massive disproportionality be given symmetry of scope with the near-perfectly proportional chamber. For example, I have not seen a serious charge that the second chamber in Germany, the Bundesrat, is treated unfairly or undemocratically because of its delimited scope. The more proportional first chamber, the Bundestag, which represents all the voters in the states of Germany, has the exclusive power to elect and dismiss the chancellor. Germany's famous 'constructive vote of no confidence' is only voted in the lower chamber. Likewise, the second chamber only has special veto powers in areas concerning half of the bills, and all of those which are of special interest to the *Länder*.

This difference in scope between the US model and what eventually became the German federal model was absolutely understood – and resisted – by the American Occupation authorities during the drafting of the Bonn constitution. According to the eminent scholar of political institutions, Herman Finer, the Americans had been strongly 'convinced of the desirability of a *weak* federal authority. They were persuaded by the kind of arguments for federalism and the separation of powers needed in the nascent USA in 1787, namely, to keep government weak for the sake of a *durable* and *democratic* (that is, atomised) system. This caused the SPD [The German Social Democratic Party] to go into opposition.' Eventually the SPD prevailed over American objections and 'secured that, broadly speaking, the second chamber should not be of the dominant state-powerful type over the lower chamber'.³⁶

So German federalism is less disproportionate than US federalism, and less symmetrical in scope than US federalism. On both dimensions, therefore, German federalism is more formally (and I believe substantively) democratic.³⁷

Does the fact that US federalism entails both of these democratic shortcomings make any difference? For the most widely cited author on modern federalism, William Riker, it does not matter very much because 'If we understand . . . that states are agents of the society in just the same way as any government, the worst one could expect of them is minor perversities, no matter how pronounced the federalism.'³⁸ Indeed, elsewhere Riker even asserts that 'federalism makes no particular difference to public policy'.³⁹ These assertions simply do not hold up to close scrutiny.

The potential for blockage of the majority by a very small minority, about something that has *nothing* to do with a federal policy issue *per se*, is actually immense. Robert Dahl captures this succinctly:

The eight largest states with 54 per cent of the voters have the same number of votes in the Senate as the eight smallest with less than 3 per cent of the voters. A majority of votes in the Senate can be cast by Senators representing less than 15 per cent of the voters. Thus a policy preferred by the representatives of 85 per cent of the voters could be vetoed by the representatives of 15 per cent of the voters.⁴⁰

In newly democratising Brazil, the actual figures are even worse. Moreover, the relatively oligarchic small states in the north are often in a blocking position on federation-wide issues concerning, for example, higher standards of treatment towards indigenous peoples, or higher standards *vis-à-vis* the environment. In Brazil under the reform president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994–present), the difficulty of implementing a policy agenda is substantially, but by no means exclusively, due to the narrow voter base and wide policy scope of the Senate, a Senate which has exercised its blocking powers in such a way as to hinder efforts to enforce the efficacy and legitimacy of Brazil's new democracy.

In a multinational democracy the strains on efficacy and legitimacy, for reasons that we have already mentioned, are likely to be particularly high. Federalism, especially if the policy scope of the upper house is wide enough to have a major say on issues of particular importance to regional minorities, can help engender identification with the centre. Likewise, if the cost of federalism, in terms of disproportional weight on policy areas of legitimate interest to *all* members of the federation, is reduced by narrowing the policy scope of the second chamber, the potential for disaffection of the centre will be diminished, and centre leaders are more likely to accept the necessary costs of the federal democratic bargain. If approached in this way, a balanced democratic federalism in a multinational polity can help integrate citizens into the

political regime while constitutionally privileging a degree of sub-unit autonomy and difference.

Multiple and complementary identities in a multinational democracy

So far I have argued that democratic federalism entails two constitutionally guaranteed areas of relative policy-making autonomy, and that the legitimacy of such systems is enhanced to the degree to which citizens in the federation have a fairly high degree of multiple and complementary identities. This argument calls for explicit discussion of the phrase 'political identities'. Linz and I have discussed how many writings on nationalism focus on 'primordial' identities and the need for people to choose between mutually exclusive identities. However, *our* research into political identities has shown two things. First, political identities are not fixed or primordial in the *Oxford English Dictionary* sense of 'pertaining to, or existing at (or from) the very beginning; first in time, earliest, original, primitive, primeval'. Rather, they are highly changeable and socially constructed. Secondly, if nationalist politicians, by the atmosphere they create (or social scientists and census-takers with their crude dichotomous categories) do not force polarisation, many people may prefer to claim multiple and complementary identities. In fact, along with a common political 'roof' of state-protected rights for inclusive and equal citizenship, the human capacity for multiple and complementary identities is precisely one of the key factors that makes democracy in multinational states possible. Because political identities are not fixed and permanent, the quality of democratic leadership is particularly important. Multiple and complementary political identities can be nurtured by political leadership. So can polar and conflictual political identities. Before the conscious use of ethnic cleansing as a strategy to construct nation-states in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo was a multinational urban area, whose citizens had multiple identities and one of the highest rates of interfaith marriages of any city in the world. Sadly, we know how such multiple and complementary identities can be eroded. Yet, building on my joint work with Juan Linz, let me show how multiple and complementary identities can be socially constructed in a nurturing and highly interactive way.

In the first four years after the death of Franco, sentiments in favour of independence virtually doubled in the Basque Country, and tripled in Catalonia. However, after a sequence of state-wide elections for a constituent assembly, consensual crafting of a constitution, a referendum on the constitution, negotiations between elected officials from

the centre and the regions concerning devolution of power to the regions, a referendum in Catalonia and the Basque Country to approve the parameters of such devolution, and the subsequent implementation of Spain's new federal system of 'autonomias', sentiment in favour of independence declined sharply. Indeed, three years after the consensual creation of Spain's new federal system, of five possible identities that respondents in a 1982 survey could choose from ('Catalan', 'More Catalan than Spanish', 'Equally Catalan and Spanish', 'More Spanish than Catalan', and 'Spanish'), the modal self-identification chosen was 'Equally Catalan and Spanish'. Even when one breaks down the survey respondents to 'both parents born in Catalonia', or 'neither parent born in Catalonia', the modal category among both groups of respondents was 'Equally Catalan and Spanish'. In another survey among Catalans, 82 per cent were 'Proud to be Catalan', 73 per cent were 'Proud to be Spanish', and 83 per cent were also in favour of 'Unification of Europe via the European Community'.⁴¹

The best proof is an existence proof. Clearly the data from Spain and Catalonia prove three things:

- (i) political identities are not permanent but can be highly changeable and socially constructed;
- (ii) human beings are capable of multiple and complementary identities;
- (iii) people can simultaneously identify with, and give loyalty to, different types of complementary political sovereignties. In Catalonia, the evidence indicates that citizens were strongly and positively identified with a national sub-unit of a federation (Catalonia), the state of the multinational federation (Spain), and a potential supra-state confederation (the European Union).

Let us go to a more difficult case of multiple and complementary identities – that of Russophones in Estonia. Many ethnic Estonian political leaders would like Estonia to be a nation-state – to be, to use Rogers Brubaker's phrase, *of* and *for* ethnic Estonians. However, at independence less than 65 per cent of the long-term residents of Estonia were 'ethnic Estonians'. Indeed, about 35 per cent were Russophones. Less than 5 per cent of the Russophones had any plans to leave Estonia voluntarily. One should also note that there was great linguistic distance between Estonian and Russian, and that many of the Russophones were adults in industrial or manual labour jobs. Thus, on linguistic grounds alone, I would argue that the Russophone population in Estonia was absolutely *culturally unassimilable* into a democratic nation-state for one or two generations. However, I would also argue, on the basis of

numerous different indicators, that the Russophone population in Estonia could be almost immediately *politically integratable* as loyal citizens within a democratic state if a 'roof of rights' were to be extended over their heads. Why?⁴²

While it is true that the vast majority of Russophone adults who were born in Estonia never learned Estonian, the political context after independence changed drastically. Since over 90 per cent of the Russophones are making no plans to leave Estonia, their children's life chances will be significantly improved if they learn Estonian in school (and presumably learn Russian at least in their homes). The critical piece of evidence that supports the thesis that Russophones want to broaden the cultural and employment portfolio of their children is the following evidence from a work in progress by David Laitin. In answer to a question as to whether the best future for Russians in Estonia was to assimilate, only 7.9 per cent of the Russophones said 'yes'. Attitudes like this of course would be pointed out as evidence by some nationalist ethnic Estonian politicians as supporting their argument that such Russophones should not be citizens. However, 58 per cent of the Russian respondents agreed with the statement that all permanent residents should be fluent in Estonian. Given the difficulty for a Russophone adult to learn Estonian, this strikes me as high, but no doubt would still be unacceptably low for an Estonian nation-state advocate. But for me, the key Russophone response was in answer to the question of whether Estonian should be a compulsory subject in schools; 95.8 per cent of the Russophones agreed.⁴³

Crafting democracy is probably more about attitudes towards the future than behaviour in the past. The Russophones' answer to the question concerning the status of the Estonian language in schools indicates that they accept the *authority* of the Estonian state to demand that their children learn Estonian. This means that within two generations, if the Estonian state provides adequate language facilities, the overwhelming majority of Russophones under 40 will also be Estonian-speakers. They will have the ability, and probably the propensity, to have dual and complementary political identities. They will probably still not be 'ethnic Estonian', but they well might be loyal citizens of Estonia and identify with the 'state-nation' of Estonia.

Conclusion: transcending the individual rights versus group rights tension

An assumption of many thinkers in the liberal tradition is that all rights are *individual* and *universal*. This assumption should properly be seen as

a normative preference. Advocates of such a liberal approach are prone to look on any deviation from individualism and universalism with suspicion.⁴⁴

Thinkers associated with the liberal tradition of rights are particularly skeptical of group rights, and thus at least implicitly, of many of the 'consociational practices' that I and thinkers such as Arend Lijphart believe could be used to craft democracy in a multinational polity.

As a student of the historical development of democracies, and as an empirical democratic theorist, let me conclude this chapter with four observations about what I think could be, and at times actually have been, democratic 'group specific rights', to use Will Kymlicka's phrase.

First, individuals are indeed the primary bearers of rights and no group right should violate individual rights in a democratic polity. In our example of a democratic multinational federal state, this means that something like a bill of individual rights should be a property of the federal centre and that any laws and social policies that violate this state-wide bill of individual rights must fall outside the constitutionally guaranteed policy scope of sub-units.

Secondly, while individual rights are universal, it is simply bad history to argue that in actual democracies *all* rights have been universal. Frequently, the struggle to reconcile the imperatives of political integration *and* to recognise the legitimate imperatives of cultural difference has meant according group specific rights such as those given to the Maori in New Zealand, to Spanish-speakers in Puerto Rico, to religious and language culture councils in Belgium and to Muslim family courts in India.⁴⁵ The key point is that it is the obligation of the democratic state to ensure that no group specific right violates universal individual rights. As long as this political condition obtains, there is no contradiction between individual rights and group specific rights.

Thirdly, while individuals are the bearers of rights there may well be concrete moments in the crafting of a democracy where individuals cannot develop and exercise their full rights until they are active members of a group that struggles for some collective goods common to most members of the group.⁴⁶ Some of the cases I have discussed in this chapter illustrate this point. If Catalans (who under Franco were not allowed to organise Catalan organisations or to have Catalan language radio and television programmes) had not been given some group specific rights, it is not clear that they could have developed as individual democratic activists. It was partially the group rights won by Catalans that contributed to them having the power to argue, vote and negotiate for a form of devolution and power sharing in the newly constructed Spanish federation. Many of the individuals' multiple and

complementary political identities I have discussed emerged after some collective goods had been won by Catalan groups.

In Estonia, after an initial period when some ethnic nationalists tried to freeze Russophones out of politics and to argue against their right to organise and have Russian television channels, the recognised group right of Russophones to organise was crucial in helping some Russophones to participate as individuals (and as members of groups) in Estonian political life. As I have already suggested, effective individual rights for Russians may well only be won initially in a context of groups. Indeed, if compulsory language education in Estonian goes forward with the active assent of the organised Russian community, and if more extensive rights of national citizenship are won (partly due to the Russophone group struggles), then one could expect more extensive individual rights for more long-term residents. Such a process could also contribute to deepening the loyalty of Russophones to the state that gave them a roof of rights over their heads. If all this occurs, the incidence of multiple and complementary identities among what is now the Russophone community will grow.

Fourthly, the types of group specific rights I have discussed in the three points above may not be consistent with some nineteenth-century tenets of Anglo-Saxon liberal democracy, or the French idea of citizenship in a nation-state, but they are consistent with a polity in which group rights do not violate individual rights and where effective democratic citizenship and loyalty is broadened. They are in fact some of the few ways to craft democracy in the more difficult and more populous world than those found in Gellner's time-zones I and II.

NOTES

- 1 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983; B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983.
- 2 G. O'Donnell, P. C. Schmitter and L. Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, Baltimore, 1986. This comprised four paperback volumes devoted respectively to theory, southern Europe, Latin America and comparison.
- 3 Gellner's central preoccupation in *Nations and Nationalism* is with the relationship of the emergence of nationalism to the advent of industrialisation. In private correspondence, he said that he viewed democratisation as a complicated offshoot of industrialisation. Obviously, in the overall corpus of his work, especially in one of his last books, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, London, 1994, he is concerned with democratic practices. *Conditions of Liberty* will be the main focus of my comments in this chapter.
- 4 J. J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*:

Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe, Baltimore, 1996, especially chs. 2, 6, 19 and 20 which relate to some of the themes of this chapter. See also our joint article 'Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia', *Daedalus*, vol. 121, 1992 and Linz's 'De la crisis de un Estado unitario al Estado de las autonomías', in F. F. Rodríguez, ed., *La España de las autonomías*, Madrid, 1985, and 'State Building and Nation Building', *European Review*, vol. 1, 1993 and my 'When Democracy and the Nation-State are Competing Logics: Reflections on Estonia', *European Journal of Sociology*, vol. 35, 1994.

- 5 Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, pp. 105–8.
- 6 Ibid., p. 108.
- 7 Ibid., p. 113.
- 8 Ibid., p. 114.
- 9 Ibid., p. 115.
- 10 Ibid., p. 115.
- 11 Ibid., p. 116.
- 12 Ibid., p. 117.
- 13 Ibid., p. 123.
- 14 Ibid., p. 126.
- 15 J. S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, first published London, 1861, now in J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government*, London, 1993, p. 396.
- 16 D. Rustow, 'Transitions to Democracy: Towards a Dynamic Model', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 2, 1970, pp. 350–1.
- 17 R. A. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven, 1989, p. 207.
- 18 D. Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 90–3.
- 19 In the early 1970s, Walker Connor calculated – in 'Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?', *World Politics*, vol. 24, 1972, p. 322 – that only 12 of the world's 132 existing states were 'essentially homogeneous from an ethnic viewpoint'. For later discussions using somewhat different criteria that also arrived at very low estimates of the number of true nation-states in the world, see H. Wiberg, 'Self-determination as an International Issue', in I. M. Lewis, ed., *Nationalism and Self-determination in the Horn of Africa*, London, 1983; G. T. Kurien, *The New Book of World Ranking*, New York, 1991; and the various articles brought together in W. Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton, 1994.
- 20 Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, p. 115.
- 21 E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford, 1976.
- 22 For the argument that the recognition of difference is a growing claim in the contemporary theory and practice of democracy, see C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in A. Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and the 'Politics of Recognition'*, Princeton, 1992.
- 23 See, for example, the interesting discussion of the 'deterritorialisation' of ethnicity in D. F. Eickelman and J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton, 1996, especially chs. 5 and 6. See also R. G. Rumbaut, 'The Americans: Latin American and Caribbean Peoples in the United States', in A. Stepan, ed., *Americas: New Interpretative Essays*, Oxford, 1992.

- 24 In some polities of course there is not a significant set of such leaders and, until something happens to change that democracy is not on the agenda.
- 25 R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, 1996.
- 26 See various works by Arend Lijphart: 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, vol. 21, 1969; *Democracies: Majoritarian and Consensus Patterns of Government in Twenty-One Countries*, New Haven, 1984; and 'The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 90, 1996.
- 27 Alternative solutions to territorial autonomy as a means of cultural resolution are beginning to receive scholarly attention, but they remain under-theorised. One useful work is J. Coakley, 'Approaches to the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict: The Strategy of Non-territorial Autonomy', *International Political Science Review*, vol. 15, 1994.
- 28 One of the earliest theoretical works on this question is J. J. Linz's, 'Excursus on Presidential and Parliamentary Democracy', in J. J. Linz and A. Stepan, eds., *Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, Re-equilibration*, Baltimore, 1978. This ignited subsequent debate and quests for data to substantiate the claims made regarding parliamentarism's properties. See in particular the two-volume work J. J. Linz and A. Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, Baltimore, 1994 and A. Stepan and C. Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism', *World Politics*, vol. 46, 1993.
- 29 See the classic studies by W. H. Riker, *Federalism: Origins, Operation, Significance*, Boston, 1964 and 'Federalism' in F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science. Volume Five: Governmental Institutions and Processes*, Reading, 1975. For Riker, the United States, Canada, Yugoslavia and the USSR all fit the criteria of federal systems. Indeed, according to Riker ('Federalism', p. 101), the United States and Yugoslavia fit the same sub-type of 'centralised federalism'.
- 30 R. A. Dahl, in a short but classic discussion of federal systems in a democracy, uses the phrase 'constitutionally guaranteed' in his *Democracy, Liberty and Equality*, Oslo, 1986, especially pp. 114–26.
- 31 R. A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, Chicago, 1956, p. 116.
- 32 S. Mainwaring, *The Party System and Democratisation in Brazil*, Stanford, 1998, especially ch. 9.
- 33 Ibid., p. 134.
- 34 The Gini Index of Inequality simply measures the degree of inequality among variables, where an index of zero denotes complete equality and an index value approaching the theoretical maximum of 1.0 denotes complete inequality (which would mean here that one state has all the representatives). On this see Lijphart, *Democracies*, pp. 173–5.
- 35 Ibid., p. 174. The Gini co-efficient for Brazil is estimated on the basis of data in Mainwaring, *The Party System and Democratisation in Brazil*, Table 5.3.
- 36 H. Finer, *Governments of Greater European Powers: A Comparative Study of the Governments and Political Culture of Great Britain, France, Germany and the Soviet Union*, London, 1956, p. 690.

- 37 On German federalism, and more specifically on the German constitutional concept of *Bundestreue* (often translated as 'federal trust' or 'comity'), see B. de Villiers, 'Bundestreue, The Soul of an Intergovernmental Partnership: Comparative Analysis of the Principle underlying *Bundestreue* in the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland and Belgium', Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Occasional Papers, Johannesburg, 1995.
- 38 Riker, 'Federalism', p. 147.
- 39 Ibid., p. 143.
- 40 Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, p. 116.
- 41 For these surveys, see Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, pp. 98–107.
- 42 See *ibid.*, chs. 2 and 20 for a much more extensive argument concerning Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.
- 43 The details of these surveys are taken from D. Laitin, 'Nationalism and Language: a Post-Soviet Perspective', this volume, p. 148. Full details of this research are now available in his *Identity in Formation: The Russian Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca, 1998.
- 44 For an excellent discussion of this tradition and its discomfort with 'group rights', see W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford, 1994, especially ch. 4.
- 45 Ibid.; Lijphart, *Democracies* and 'The Puzzle of Indian Democracy'.
- 46 An elegant development of this argument is found in J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford, 1986, especially chs. 8 and 10. See too Raz's *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics*, Oxford, 1994, especially the preface and chs. 1, 6 and 8.

Part IV

Wider implications

10 Nationalism and civil society in central Europe: from Ruritania to the Carpathian Euroregion

Chris Hann

Ernest Gellner's interests embraced the whole of human history. He cooperated with archaeologists such as Paul Mellars in investigating the origins of human society; supported the work of hunter-gatherer specialists like James Woodburn, his colleague for many years at the London School of Economics; and he himself carried out extended fieldwork among tribesmen in Morocco. But I suspect that he is probably best known for his work on the transition to industrial society, and in particular, for his analysis of the links between industrialisation and nationalism. In this chapter I shall consider this powerful general theory of modernity in the context of an area that had preeminent significance in his life, if not always in his scholarly output. He spent his formative years in Czechoslovakia, in many ways the most remarkable of the 'successor states' to emerge after World War I. It enjoyed a real measure of democracy, and the Bohemian region had already taken significant steps towards a modern industrial society. Despite the name, it was also a country of rather more than two ethnic components: in addition to Czechs and Slovaks, there were large numbers of Ruthenians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews and Gypsies, to name only the most numerous.

The Prague where Gellner had a base in the last years of his life was the capital of a very different country. The Jews mostly vanished during World War II, as did the Gypsies. The Germans and Ruthenians were mostly excluded when new frontiers were determined in its aftermath. Slovaks remained, together with their large Hungarian minority, throughout the period of socialist federalism. But following the 'velvet divorce', the Czechs have come close to achieving the ideal of a nation-state, in which the political and the national unit are fully congruent.¹ Of course, perfection is hard to attain. Many awkward questions still surround the claims of Sudeten Germans, and many Czechs are still gravely irritated by pockets of Gypsies in their society as Michael Stewart has recently shown in a striking film.² Even so, this part of

Central Europe has clearly undergone a rather drastic transformation in the course of one man's lifetime.

But Gellner did not just live through these transformations; he also did much more than most to help us to understand them and to theorise them. I shall focus on his ideas concerning industrialism, nationalism and civil society, a fundamental triad in the *oeuvre*.³ I shall be critical, since I do not think Gellner ever liked hagiography. Also in line with his own preferences, I shall be concrete. I find his ideal-types 'good to think with', but very wide of the mark in the specific contexts of my own recent fieldwork. In this way I hope to provoke some reassessment of contemporary history in Central Europe and to stimulate debate on issues of vital importance to this region.

Ruritanian ideal: east Galician reality

Gellner's depiction of 'Ruritania' is a marvellous, colourful caricature of how nationalism is created in agrarian societies that have no history of nationhood:

The Ruritanians were a peasant population speaking a group of related and more or less mutually intelligible dialects, and inhabiting a series of discontinuous but not very much separated pockets within the lands of the Empire of Megalomania. The Ruritanian language, or rather the dialects which could be held to compose it, was not really spoken by anyone other than these peasants. The aristocracy and officialdom spoke the language of the Megalomanian court, which happened to belong to a language group different from the one of which the Ruritanian dialects were an offshoot.

Most, but not all, Ruritanian peasants belonged to a church whose liturgy was taken from another linguistic group again The petty traders of the small towns serving the Ruritanian countryside were drawn from a different ethnic group and religion still, and one heartily detested by the Ruritanian peasantry.⁴

The reader is later given to understand that this model of nationalism was prevalent in eastern districts of Habsburg Europe, but no more precise location is offered. It surely falls within the third of his 'time zones'.⁵ Perhaps Gellner had the Slovaks in mind, or perhaps even his former Ruthenian compatriots.⁶ He hints that he first encountered this kind of cultural nationalism as a member of a Prague youth movement, perhaps taking trips to the remote eastern provinces in an age when the peasants were not yet collectivised and the Carpathian foothills not yet tamed by tractors and modern means of communication.⁷

I am grateful to Gellner for allowing his readers to keep their options open. For me, Ruritania lies neither in Czechoslovakia nor in the Balkans: it is code for the Austrian regions of eastern Galicia. Never one of the empire's wealthier possessions, this was none the less in the later

Hapsburg period a province of considerable political and strategic importance because of the threat from tsarist Russia. This external power also played a significant role in the debates about national identity that were beginning in eastern Galicia at exactly this time. Many inhabitants looked to Moscow for their political salvation. The Austrians exacted a heavy price for this Panslavism during World War I, when Karl Polanyi, Ludwig Wittgenstein and many other late Habsburg intellectuals served their emperor on this Eastern Front. In eastern Galicia, even before this war, both Panslavism and an autonomous 'Ruthenian' orientation had been largely superseded by a new movement among eastern Slavs, that of Ukrainian nationalism. It is difficult to explain this movement in terms of the direct impact of industrialisation, since there was so little industry here at this time. However, a broader interpretation of Gellner's theories, one which emphasises uneven development rather than industrialisation *per se*, and which recognises that positions in rapidly expanding secular bureaucracies may have the same sociological consequences as industrial jobs, nevertheless shed some light on the Ukrainian case. At any rate, the Austrians did little to stifle this new nationalism, since it promised both a buffer against Russia and a counterweight to the increased assertiveness of the Poles. The latter were dominant in western Galicia, where they generally formed the most numerous group in both towns and villages. They had turned Cracow into the cultural capital of a Polish nation which as yet lacked political frontiers. But in eastern Galicia the Poles were heavily outnumbered by eastern Slavs in most rural areas, while in the towns and cities Poles and Ukrainians had to jostle for position alongside large Jewish populations, and also smaller communities such as Armenians.

All these people had their own languages, their own churches, their own educational systems. They co-existed over centuries in a framework that exemplifies what Gellner termed 'the Agrarian Age', in which cultural diversity is compatible with political unity. Also in line with Gellner's model, this society had rather little social mobility: people were born into particular communities, and they acquired the characteristics and skills (such as they were) of their forebears. In eastern Galicia Roman Catholic Poles generally had the upper hand, as landowning aristocrats and as cultured townspeople, while the mass of the peasantry spoke dialects of what gradually came to be known as Ukrainian. Those east Slavs who did become wealthy were likely to become 'Polonised', often altering their names as well as their language. Sometimes they also altered their religion, a process known as 'latinization'. At lower levels there were also many cases of Roman Catholic peasants and Poles of the impoverished gentry class becoming, 'Ruthenised', i.e. adapting the

language and religion of the dominant rural population. Although the division between western and eastern Slavs generally corresponded quite closely to that between the western (Latin) and eastern (Byzantine) traditions of Christianity, the fit was by no means perfect on either side.

This was an extremely poor agrarian society, and this poverty probably got worse in the closing decades of imperial rule. Vienna invested in railways and in fortifications, but there was little in the way of public or private industrial accumulation. The expanding rural population had little alternative to overseas emigration. Huge numbers crossed the Atlantic, where the new communities they formed contributed to the formation of new identities both in America and in the 'homelands'.

So, with a high degree of cultural diversity and inequality, we can say that eastern Galicia down to the demise of Franz Josef meets the main criteria of Gellner's model of agrarian society. Poles, Ukrainians and Ruthenians were all busy in this period, promoting their collective causes in the Ruritanian manner. Poles had better resources to work with in some 'objective' historical sense, given the long history of Polish statehood. However, this was by no means self-evident on the ground where 'Polish' villagers were seldom any more conscious of their national identity than were their East Slav neighbours. They were not even called Poles, a name that frequently was applied only to wealthy land-owners, i.e. to the *Pan*.

Before poking fun at these embryonic nationalists and taking 'Megalomania' to be an unambiguously negative evaluation of the House of Habsburg, we should also note a virtue of this political formation. As Gellner himself liked to point out, so long as that empire lasted you could travel from eastern Galicia to the shores of the Adriatic without a passport.⁸ He saw the Hapsburgs as permitting the development of benign forms of cultural nationalism within the framework of an increasingly federal polity – still in essence the solution which commends itself to many intellectuals who debate the demise of nation-states and a 'Europe without frontiers' at the close of our century. I shall return to this theme below.

Three transformations: *plus ça change*

Where Gellner's theoretical model offers essentially one transformation from the agrarian age to the industrial era, eastern Galicia has in the course of this century experienced at least three major political convulsions. The extent to which the region can be called industrialised is still rather debatable, even at the end of the century. The collapse of Ruritania (in Anthony Hope's sense rather than in that of Gellner) was

best symbolised by that day in 1915 when the tsar arrived in Przemyśl to inspect his conquering army. Przemyśl was the Austrian military stronghold in eastern Galicia and one of the jewels in the Hapsburg crown. But the tsar himself was soon swept aside, and the Austro-Hungarian empire disintegrated in 1918. With almost everything up for grabs, the future of eastern Galicia was decided less by diplomacy in Paris than by direct action on the ground. The peacemakers reinvented the state of Poland, but spontaneous risings of eastern Slavs succeeded temporarily in creating an independent Ukraine. This initiative was soon squashed. The military strength of the new Poland proved stronger than that of Bolshevik Russia. Eastern Galicia, with all its cultural diversity, was forcibly incorporated into the new Poland.

This drastic political change was not accompanied by accelerated industrial development. In the fields of education and administration the Poles preserved a good deal of the Austrian legacy. Promises to create a Ukrainian university were broken, and large numbers of Polish colonists were given help to settle in the region, while Ukrainians were disqualified from purchasing land that they badly needed. Although the rhetoric of 'poor Galicia' became less fashionable, emigration opportunities were now severely restricted. Overall, the interwar decades were characterised by intense depression and poverty. This period was marked by an intensification of ethnonational conflicts. The Poles could find solace for their economic problems in the glorious re-emergence of their state and their new military strength. Ukrainians resorted to 'terrorist' organisations to pursue their cause, since the prospects for achieving any form of autonomy by constitutional means seemed gloomier than they had been under the Austrians. In multiethnic cities like Przemyśl and, increasingly, in the countryside as well, the accommodations of the past were now more difficult to sustain. These tensions were most evident in religion: there was pressure on all Poles to conform to the Latin variant of Catholicism, while the Greek Catholic church became even more firmly identified with the cause of Ukrainian nationalism and experienced political repression from Warsaw as a result. Both western and eastern Catholics participated in anti-Jewish activities.

These tensions led to tragedy on a massive scale in the 1940s. Przemyśl became a divided city when Poland was partitioned by Germany and the USSR in 1939. Many Ukrainians, victims of Polish oppression in preceding decades, were persuaded by Nazi assurances that cooperation with the occupying power would lead in time to full Ukrainian independence. After 1941, when the Nazis attacked the USSR, the levels of violence in eastern Galicia escalated still further.

The Jewish population was exterminated. As German and Soviet armies moved back and forth across this region, other groups, both Polish and Ukrainian, perpetrated their own horrors, often against their close neighbours. This mutual 'ethnic cleansing' was in effect formally ratified at the end of the war when the new border was set by the so-called 'Curzon Line', just a few miles east of Przemyśl. Further agreements led to the 'voluntary repatriation' of millions of Poles from the eastern districts, many of them to be resettled in the far west of the country, in lands 'regained' from Germany, while large numbers of east Slavs were transported from Poland to various points of the Ukraine. The Greek Catholic Church was suppressed, following the Soviet precedent. The cleansing policy culminated in 1947 when the Polish authorities, embarrassed by the continued campaign of the 'terrorist organisation UPA' in the Carpathian mountains, took decisive action by deporting the entire remaining east Slav civilian population and scattering it across areas in the far north and west of the country previously inhabited by Germans.

In the space of a few years the ethnic map of eastern Galicia and all adjacent regions had altered dramatically. Socialist Poland, unlike its predecessor, could claim to be almost where the Czechs are today, one of the most ethnically homogeneous states in Europe. It had, of course, given up most of the old east Galician lands to the Ukraine. Ukraine itself was rather less homogeneous because of the large Russian presence in the east; but in the Galician districts, even in cities such as L'viv, formerly largely Polish, Ukrainians became virtually as dominant on their side of Curzon's Line as the Poles became in cities such as Przemyśl and their hinterlands.

The socialist period that was inaugurated with such bloodshed was later marked by many other changes in Poland. Economic progress was significant. Even if the south-east received relatively little investment, the large plants established in locations such as Silesia and Nowa Huta ensured that once again opportunities for emigration were opened up. At the same time educational opportunities made it possible for large numbers of peasant children to aspire to white-collar work. Consequently, the early decades of socialist rule showed high rates of inter-generational social mobility. It is true that later these rates began to decline and that the prestige of some of the traditional professions remained as high as ever, whatever socialists might attempt in terms of levelling salaries and tinkering with university entrance systems. The picture is a complex one, and it is perhaps still too early to draw up a final balance sheet. But, though the socialists soon produced their own distinctive forms of stratification, I suggest that in this period Poland

began to approximate to Gellner's ideal type of a modern industrial society. Socialist Poland achieved a high degree of meritocratic mobility, thanks to an effective national education system that used a single standardised national language and fostered a basic sense of *equality* among all citizens of the state, the great majority of whom felt themselves to be members of one Polish nation.

This relative success in accomplishing a modern industrial society was flawed in a number of ways. One of the most significant was the political failure to proceed with the collectivisation of agriculture after the disturbances of 1956. This failure had especially dire consequences in the Galician districts, given the extreme sub-division of farms here that dated back to Austrian times. These villagers still tended to have more than twice as many children as town dwellers. Some of these children took their chance in Silesia, some became commuters to their local market town, but even these would often return to settle in the village because of the urban housing shortages. The rural sector was characterised by an almost complete absence of investment in production and the persistence of an irrational structure of land ownership and use. Yet *faute de mieux* a very large proportion of the population still carried out most of its consumption here.

The more serious flaw in the Polish People's Republic's claim to modernity was that it was advanced in the name of socialism. The sad consequence of this fact is that much of the real progress that was made down to 1989 has been undone since then, in the chaos unleashed by 'shock therapy'. It is generally agreed that Poland has experienced one of the more extreme 'transitions' to market economy. It is less frequently noted in the west that this was not a path chosen by Polish voters; on the contrary, they voted at the first opportunity for a 'reform socialist' style of government. In effect it has been the west, in collaboration with various elites, most of them concentrated in the capital, that has dictated the course of Poland's third great period of convulsion this century. It is obviously premature to assess the final outcomes, but visiting the country recently I found it hard to agree with those economists and politicians who assert that 'shock therapy has worked'. Certainly the economy now appears to be growing rapidly, after several years of catastrophic decline. But how do we assess the social costs? A society that had banished the threat of unemployment must now recognise this as part of its everyday reality. Another part of this reality is having to step over the beggars on every railway station and every urban underpass. Yet there is no doubt that consumers who remember the shortages of past decades are grateful for the market conditions that prevail today, however bitterly they may complain about the prices.

It seems to me that the chief price being paid in Poland's present transition relates to those elusive ideals of meritocracy and equality. Already weakening in the later socialist decades, they have crumbled dramatically since 1989. The village children of the south-east, whose parents at least had the opportunities to move elsewhere in the country and some chance of joining the bureaucracy, are in some ways back to where their grandparents or greatgrandparents were, with few opportunities for mobility of any kind. In Przemyśl county today more than half of the population lives in villages. The *voivode* (prefect), himself born into a peasant family and a beneficiary of socialist policies, is brutally frank about the prospects of young people today. He was recently quoted as saying:

In the past villagers had alternatives. They could go off to other regions of the country, to Silesia, to large cities and industrial agglomerations. At the same time Przemyśl itself offered relatively cheap flats in the cooperative system and – albeit for lousy wages – jobs. In the new conditions there are no such alternatives. It is therefore necessary to create conditions for young people to build their future where they are born, in the countryside. This is where they ought to find jobs, build their accommodation, organise their lives, not necessarily in agriculture . . . it is therefore necessary to restructure the countryside.⁹

Lest this be dismissed as locally specific, and therefore irrelevant, by those who believe in the redemptive powers of market capitalism in this region, let me quote also the careful assessment of some Warsaw sociologists whose research has focused upon the impact of recent political and economic changes on the occupational structure. They have concluded that:

although we have been able to trace some positive developments undoubtedly modernising Polish occupational and sectoral structures, these developments were outweighed by tendencies leading in the opposite direction . . . Job moves from the state sector to the private did not produce any upgrading effect on either sectoral or occupational structure . . . Downward mobility was on the rise, and women seemed to lose more mobility chances than men did.¹⁰

None of this augurs well for Poland, whose imperfect approximation to Gellner's ideal-type of modernity looks like becoming more imperfect still in the new capitalist conditions.

Civil society and Euroregions

I wish now to return to the themes of ethnicity and nationalism in the context of some very recent events in the city of Przemyśl.¹¹ I used to visit this city regularly between 1979 and 1981, when I was doing

fieldwork in a village some 60 miles away across the mountains, Przemyśl was the diocesan centre for both the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic churches and I found archival materials related to my village stored by the state in an ecclesiastical building confiscated after the Greek Catholics were suppressed in 1946. The building had retained all its essential features externally, and even internally it was most unlike any other archive or library I have known. This was my introduction to the city's complicated history. Later I heard more about past conflicts surrounding more famous churches in the city centre. In 1982, when 'martial law' was still in force, the highest representatives of the Greek Catholic church in the city, surviving in semi-clandestine form under the 'protection' of the Roman Catholics, told me of the antagonism they continued to experience not so much from the socialist coteries as from the highest levels of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

Some of this history of antagonism became evident for all the world to see after the collapse of socialist government in Poland. In 1991 the Pope asked the Roman Catholics to return the cathedral church of the Carmelites to the Greek Catholics, to whom it had belonged before 1946. However, as an inscription at the entrance to the church today informs visitors, 'a part of the local society' declined to accept this message from the head of the universal Catholic church. The building was the focus of a campaign by Polish nationalists which eventually forced the Pope to back down. The Greek Catholics have had to make do with another building, with which they have no historic ties, while the Carmelite church is now adorned with every kind of nationalist sloganising, with a huge map engraved onto an interior wall showing Poland with its pre-1939 frontiers. This is part of what the reassertion of 'civil society' has meant in Przemyśl. The slogan of civil society has been generally used by western commentators and a few local intellectuals in the same unambiguously positive sense as 'market economy'. The general argument is that free, mediating institutions between persons and families on the one hand, and the state on the other, were ruthlessly suppressed under communism. The reassertion of this civil society is held to be a key part of the reconstruction of democracy and an effective 'public sphere', at local as well as national levels. However, the realities on the ground have often been very different.

It is worth recalling that, following protracted 'round table' negotiations, Poland elected a non-communist government several months before the more dramatic, revolutionary upheavals elsewhere in eastern Europe at the end of 1989. It was only after the impact of these external developments that the political atmosphere in Przemyśl was transformed. Where free association had previously been discouraged or

prohibited, under new legislation you needed to muster just fifteen members to register your voluntary association. Many such groupings emerged on the nationalist right, mostly with overlapping if not identical memberships. In fact a single individual was the driving force behind most of this activity. He was said to be an ex-communist, indeed, a former KGB agent, who had been born and raised in those former eastern lands that Poland had lost to the Ukraine. Most of his new organisations were more or less overtly anti-Ukrainian. They included groupings to commemorate those who had fought against Ukrainians in the city in 1918–19, and those murdered by Ukrainian terrorists during and after World War II. These national activists were the prime organisers of the opposition to the Pope's wish to restore property to the Greek Catholics. They have made astute use of the local press: the text of their 'letters to the editor' is sometimes shorter than the list of signatures, each followed by the full formal title of the organisation and the individual's status within it. (One of the established small businesses to do well out of the new civil society has been the manufacturer of ink stamps: the taste for these trappings of organisational power provides a strand of continuity not only with socialist bureaucracy, but also with the age of Musil and Kafka.) The nationalists have been able to put pressure on the city council e.g. to object to the Ministry of Culture's plans to organise a festival for Poland's Ukrainian minority in Przemyśl in 1995 (in the end the festival went ahead, but in an atmosphere poisoned by – among other atrocities – an arson attack on the local Ukrainian club). They have also lobbied effectively at national level, e.g. in securing the removal of a county conservation officer who was allegedly spending too much of his budget on the preservation of *Ukrainian* cultural monuments in the region. Employees of the city council have been forced out of their jobs simply for being suspected of having Ukrainian blood in their families. At one stage the leader of the rightist groupings had himself appointed deputy *voivode* of the county. That did not last very long, and he has never held any significant elective office. Nevertheless he is in many ways the most powerful man in the city, whose views must be taken constantly into consideration by elected counsellors, newspaper editors, the *voivode*, the police chiefs etc. There is no countervailing power of any sort at the other end of the political spectrum, while the country's major centre-liberal party, the Union of Freedom, which has done much to promote cultural tolerance at the national level, performs very badly in Przemyśl. These are not the conditions of liberty, and I think it is because he saw these problems very clearly that Gellner recognised the continuing need for strong central authorities to restrain ethnic extremists in postsocialist conditions.¹²

A fine illustration of the workings of the new local political culture is provided by events surrounding the inception of a 'Carpathian Euro-region'. This idea was taken up in the early 1990s by a *voivode* of whom the local nationalists disapproved because of his alleged Ukrainian descent. This idea caught on in several neighbouring countries, particularly when a number of western organisations took interest and offered funding. The ostensible motives were straightforward: to simplify and encourage cross-border contacts in this crossroads of Europe, in both cultural and economic spheres. It is possible that, to some, the Euroregion had some vague Habsburgian appeal. From the point of view of western sponsors, notably the Institute for EastWest Studies with its headquarters in New York, the object was simultaneously to promote a strong civil society and to further the goals of the privatisation campaigns by enabling the new entrepreneurs to launch cross-border initiatives and avoid the red tape associated with the socialist planned economy. The western sponsors added the standard rhetoric about support for the 'nonprofit sector'.¹³ Liberal enthusiasts of civil society, such as Adam Michnik in Warsaw, wrote messages of support for this initiative: it was self-evidently a good thing for people to forge closer ties with their close neighbours and become less dependent on the over-centralised Polish state and its remote capital.

Unfortunately no one reckoned with the nationalist reaction in Przemyśl. Having emerged victorious from their tussle with the Pope over ecclesiastical property, the right-wingers were determined to obstruct what they saw as a potentially dangerous external intervention. They had no wish to weaken borders or to promote respect for neighbouring cultures. They argued that any relaxation of frontier controls would only lead to an uncontrollable influx of cheap labour from the east, accentuating the city's rising unemployment problem. Taking full advantage of legislative provisions designed to enhance local democracy, in summer 1993 they mounted a campaign for signatures to call for a referendum to prevent the elected councillors from taking Przemyśl into the Euroregion. This signature campaign was aggressive (people were accosted on the streets) and soon met the target required to force a referendum. Following complex legal manoeuvring by the authorities, this was not held. The county did join the Euroregion, and although the city councillors eventually resolved in 1995 to withdraw from it, this is not considered to have any legal force. The county remains a full member, along with the neighbouring county of Krosno, and other counties in eastern Slovakia, north-eastern Hungary and western Ukraine. (Romanians have also participated, but only as 'observers'.) There is a secretariat that was based for a time in Poland,

but has since transferred to Hungary. Foreign ministers have signed agreements, and lots of newsletters have been produced in Atlanta, Georgia, by the Institute for EastWest Studies. This Institute regards the creation of this Euroregion as a success story, a positive example of the measures that can be taken to promote private enterprise and break down the power of centralised states over their subjects. It claims that non-governmental organisations have been the driving force in this campaign, and that the Euroregion has been 'run entirely by the representatives of local communities'.¹⁴

Local people in Przemyśl are agreed in rejecting this interpretation.¹⁵ One of my friends there describes the Euroregion as simply 'fiction': no cultural or economic contacts have been promoted that would not have developed in any case. The most important form of cross-border contact remains the bazaar sector, the myriad forms of petty trading to which not even the nationalists object, recognising how vital they are to postsocialist survival strategies in the city, even though the mess and disorder of these market contacts inevitably fuel stereotypes of the typical Ukrainian as a 'dirty trader'.¹⁶ All the Euroregion has really done is supply a further opportunity for the nationalists to whip up anti-Ukrainian sentiment, and to combine this with the ever-present powerful resentment felt towards superfluous bureaucracy. The Euroregion may have created a few more jobs for officials and inspired liberals to much wishful thinking, but surely some better use could have been found for the western resources it has absorbed.¹⁷

Conclusion

This chapter has ranged over roughly a century of central European history, but it is obvious that my principal concern is with understanding the impact of the region's most recent transition. I find it difficult to be optimistic about the present state of the Polish 'nation-state', and my main conclusions can be summarised as follows.

First, in terms of the general structure of society it is clear that the shift from Agraria was slow in getting started in eastern Galicia. The most significant progress was made in the socialist period, when for the first time all members of a relatively homogeneous integrated national society could participate on the basis of a high degree of equality in a labour market that offered significant opportunities for social as well as geographical mobility. But much of that progress is now being undone and recent research suggests that the ideals of social mobility and meritocracy are now being further undermined. It is true that in industrial societies, *relative* rates of social mobility have shown remark-

able continuity over time, despite the increase in absolute mobility rates.¹⁸ However, it is this increase in *absolute* rates, brought about through the progressive modernisation of labour markets, which has had the more significant material impact on populations as a whole. But in contemporary Poland, primarily because of its antiquated agrarian structure, the absolute indicators would seem to be adverse. One would not expect Gellner to pay much attention to the relativist arguments, but the present shift towards intensified absolute inequality is in sharp contradiction with his ideal-type of modern industrial society.

Secondly, these depressing socio-economic trends seem to be associated with an upsurge in more virulent styles of nationalism. In this chapter I have charted the emergence of ethnically more homogenous states in this region, the most decisive events being those of the 1940s. The tensions of recent years in Przemyśl suggest that the 'time-zone' distinctions made by Gellner, whatever their validity in the past, have now collapsed. The propagation of a certain version of 'civil society' has in practice enabled a small minority of Polish nationalists to dictate the policies of the city and county, and to have a pervasive poisoning impact on Polish-Ukrainian relations. The creation of a Carpathian Euroregion, with overseas funding linked in part to the privatisation campaigns, presented these groups with an excellent opportunity to assert their nationalist values.

I conclude by suggesting that Gellner's apparent nostalgic sympathy for the Franz Josef prototype of Euroregion is misplaced. This was never anything like a federation of culturally diverse but equal nations. Ruritanians under Hungarian rule, including those inherited by Czechoslovakia, were subject to ruthless Magyarisation. Galician Ruritania was initially predicated on Austrian domination, but the ground that the Austrians later conceded to Poles was not ground the latter were ever willing to concede to the Ukrainians, or the Ukrainians to Ruthenians or regional groups such as the Lemkos. It was all thoroughly unstable. Only socialism brought any kind of stability and egalitarianism to this region, though at a terrible price. Socialism did not last long enough for the memories of ethnic hatreds to die away. In a climate of great political and economic instability, elite policies designed to promote local democracy and western interventions to strengthen 'civil society' in this region are helping to fan the flames of these past hatreds.

NOTES

This chapter was drafted in September 1995 following a number of brief visits to the city of Przemyśl in south-east Poland. These visits were linked to an ESRC

research project, 'The Politics of Religious Identity: the Greek Catholics of Central Europe' (reference number R00023071).

- 1 Cf. E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, p. 1.
- 2 Stewart's 'What Magdalena Said' was shown on BBC I 'Everyman' programme in January 1994. Cf. A. Tucker, 'The New Jews', *Telos*, vols. 98–9, 1993–4.
- 3 See, in particular, Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* and *Conditions of Liberty*, London, 1994.
- 4 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 58.
- 5 Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, pp. 113–18.
- 6 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 59. Miroslav Hroch has informed me that the locations were almost certainly Slovak. According to Hroch, Gellner never forgot the Slovak folk songs that he heard on these trips.
- 7 See P. R. Magocsi, 'Made or Re-made in America: Nationality and Identity Formations among Carpatho-Rusyn Immigrants and Their Descendants', in P. R. Magocsi, ed., *The Persistence of Regional Cultures*, New York, 1993.
- 8 Personal communication at a seminar in Cracow in May 1994.
- 9 S. Bajda, *Zycie Przemskie*, 3 May 1995.
- 10 B. W. Mach and K. M. Slomczynski, 'Occupational Structure and Mobility in the Transition from Communism to Post-Communist Capitalism', in E. Wnuk-Lipinski, ed., *After Communism: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Radical Social Change*, Warsaw, 1995, pp. 135–51.
- 11 For further information, see C. Hann, 'Ethnic Cleansing: Poles and Ukrainians Beside the Curzon Line', *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, 1996.
- 12 Thus Gellner often disagreed with those other analysts who wished to see the fastest possible dismantling of the centralist socialist state. For example, he did not think that postsocialist Russia should acquiesce in the secession of relatively homogenous peoples like the Chechens (personal communication). Cf. E. Gellner, 'The Rest of History', *Prospect*, May 1996.
- 13 According to the most recent report I have seen (K. J. Ners and I. T. Buxell's *Assistance to Transition Survey*, Warsaw, 1995, p. 78), 'in 1994 the Michigan-based Charles Stewart Mott Foundation provided the IEWS (Institute for EastWest Studies) with a grant of \$3.9 million to establish a Fund for the Development of the Carpathian Euroregion (FDCE), which will focus particularly on cross-border interactions. The Fund's initial mission will be to strengthen the capacity of non-profit organisations and local governments to address community problems and needs and is a step closer to the development of a civil society in the countries of the region.'
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 78.
- 15 For an extremely mild version of the common criticisms (because written by a public official), see D. Iwaneczko, 'Euroregion karpacki jako przykład współpracy transgranicznej' (The Carpathian Euroregion as an example of cross-border cooperation), *Fraza*, vol. 4, 1995.
- 16 See J. Jestał, 'Stereotyp Ukraińca w świadomości młodzieży Polski południowo-wschodniej' (The Stereotype of the Ukrainian in the Consciousness of Young People in South-East Poland), *Fraza*, vol. 4, 1995.
- 17 For example, resources might be deployed to counter Przemysł's nationalists with a campaign to promote awareness of the city's multicultural traditions.

The Ukrainian population today is tiny, and yet in the absence of any countervailing education or information it is generating the same 'phantom limb' effect often noted in connection with the country's Jews – on which see R. Wisse, 'Poland's Jewish Ghosts', *Commentary*, vol. 83, 1987.

- 18 R. Erikson and J. Goldthorpe, *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*, Oxford, 1992. I am grateful to Rosemary Crompton for advice on the formulation of this point.

11 From here to modernity: Ernest Gellner on nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism

Dale F. Eickelman

Islam is one of the basic 'bricks' in Ernest Gellner's political thought, along with segmentation, psychoanalysis, nationalism, Marxism and the transition to the Enlightenment.¹ The Islamic 'brick', like the others, emerges as a 'neat, crisp model'. In Gellner's words: 'Any structure, any theory will do – not because it's true but because it makes you notice that evidence goes against it or for it.'² Islam held a particular fascination for Gellner. He regarded 'Muslim society' as the exception to the pervasive trend towards a shared culture of nationalism, with its ensuing fruit of modernity – commonly educated, mutually substitutable, atomised individuals with the potential for participating in a Civil Society – Gellner's capitals – which, among other features, precludes an 'ideological monopoly'.³ This chapter argues that Gellner's Islamic brick made readers notice evidence which went for and against it more than it described historical or contemporary developments and that Muslim politics and society, far from being an exception to worldwide trends, exemplify them.

The Islamic 'brick'

Gellner's depiction of Islam in *Conditions of Liberty*, the last book published during his lifetime, reiterates his long-standing convictions about 'Muslim society'. He preferred the single, society, to the plural, societies, in writing about Islam because he regarded Islam as a faith as imposing 'essential' constraints on the conduct and thought of those committed to it.⁴ For Gellner, Islam was a 'closed system' of thought for which he had a 'horrified fascination'.⁵ With the collapse of Marxist regimes, only Islam, he argued, continued to resist the universal trend towards secularisation and nationalism. In the West, 'the essence of nationalism . . . is that a 'high – literacy-linked – culture becomes the pervasive, membership-defining culture of the total society'. In Islam, in contrast, fundamentalism becomes the essence of total society, so that regimes are judged by 'the religious norms of sacred law, rather than the

secular principles of a Civil Society'. For Gellner, the collective Islamic self-representation provides a new and powerful self-image for 'an anonymous mobile mass society produced by modern conditions', one no longer able to identify with smaller, primordial entities. On its downside, this vision of Islam 'exemplifies a social order which seems to lack much capacity to provide political countervailing institutions or associations' and 'operates effectively without intellectual pluralism'.⁶

Gellner's argument resonates strongly with certain Western assumptions that the Muslim world offers an 'exception' to the emergence of both nationalist movements and civil society elsewhere. As a means to provoke argument and capture the reader's imagination, it ranks alongside Samuel Huntington's 'West versus Rest' claim of a coming crisis pitting the 'West' against 'Confucian' and 'Muslim' civilisations.⁷ Paradoxically, Huntington refuted the basic tenets of his 'cultural' argument prior to the publication of his 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article: 'Confucian democracy may be a contradiction in terms, but democracy in a Confucian society need not be', and the dynamism inherent in any cultural tradition can radically transform it, even in remarkably short time spans. Thus Huntington argues that 'Spanish culture' was described as 'traditional, authoritarian, hierarchical, deeply religious, and oriented towards honour and status' in the 1950s, but by the 1970s, 'these words had virtually no place in a description of Spanish attitudes and values'.⁸ Gellner made no major revision to his views on Islam.

Indeed, there is a remarkable consistency between Gellner's first presentation of his argument on Islam in the 1960s and his final ones. He believed, along with Daniel Lerner, that the Muslim world faces a stark choice: 'Mecca or mechanisation'.⁹ 'Islam' for Gellner constituted the 'one very real, dramatic and conspicuous exception' to the overall post-Enlightenment trend to the decline of religious faith and observance, leading to few celebrated forms of community 'other than possibly the national state'.¹⁰ Gellner writes: 'To say that secularization prevails in Islam is not contentious. It is simply false. Islam is as strong now as it was a century ago. In some ways, it is probably much stronger.'¹¹

Gellner's argument is nothing if not bold. Although his basic image of Islam is a Morocco-inspired contrast between walled towns as islands of a literate urban elite surrounded by a vast sea of tribes people, well over half the world's billion Muslims, from the southern Philippines to North Africa, live in areas where the contrast between a 'High Islamic' town and a 'Low Islamic' tribal hinterland, questionable even for 'pre-modern' Morocco, is even less applicable.¹² Two centuries after the advent of Islam in 622 CE, Arab Muslims were outnumbered by the

Muslim populations of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Africa, to whose ranks are now added the growing Muslim populations of Europe and North America. All these groups contribute to the diversity of Muslim expression and practice.

Gellner eventually conceded that he overstated the contrast between a Protestant-like scriptural puritanism and a more particularistic rural/tribal Islam tied to saint worship and that the two 'patterns' of religious comportment largely co-existed.¹³ Yet what Gellner acknowledges in passing in relation to the modern era for Muslim societies – multiple interpretations of religious tradition and experience – applies equally to the long, unspecified years of premodernity, as is also the case for Christianity. One need only think of Peter Brown's discussion of the cult of saints in early Latin Christianity or Ernst Troeltsch's characterisation of the Christian tradition as one of shifts at various levels and times between compromise and non-compromise with the social world.¹⁴

The premodern Muslim tradition shows similar creative tension, involving scripture and practice, tradition and interpretation, that cannot readily be reduced to monochromatic contrasts between rural and urban, high and low. Saints also exist in towns; renowned scholars often resided in the Moroccan countryside (and one person's saint was often another's religious scholar); and the *zar* cults in the Sudan or visits to shrines in Turkey suggest ways in which both women and men, now and in the past, conceive of alternate social realities and collaborate in religious practices.¹⁵ Similarly, notwithstanding the pious fiction of some Muslim jurists that there can be no change in the divinely revealed law (*shari'a*), emendations and additions have occurred throughout Islamic history, and at an increased pace since the mid nineteenth century. The supposedly complete divine law has also been circumscribed by the growth of parallel legal traditions, as in the case of Ottoman reforms from 1839 through 1876.¹⁶

Just as Pope Pius X in 1907 declared modernism (which for him encompassed a heresy, including democracy, religious tolerance, science and 'rationalism'¹⁷) conservatives in the Muslim world have reacted vigorously to the accelerated pace of innovation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even if a significant degree of political activity in the Muslim world is legitimised in religious terms, however, this does not mean that the political activity of Muslim activists is a throwback to a premodern era. As James Piscatori has argued, the premodern era in the Muslim world has been characterised by a *de facto* secularisation, just as contemporary states, even while claiming adherence to Islamic principles, conduct their business and secular affairs in a manner indistinguishable from, and as diverse as, their non-Islamic counterparts.¹⁸

With the exception of Turkey, secularisation in most of the Muslim world has been, as Sadik al-Azm points out in luxuriant Geertz-like prose, 'slow, informal, hesitant, adaptive, absorbent, pragmatic, gradualistic, full of halfway houses, partial compromises, transient marriages of convenience, and plenty of temporary retreats and unending evasions, but no striking moment of high drama'.¹⁹ This *de facto* secularisation is no less real for its lack of drama. Expert opinion similarly predicted that an 'unchanging bedrock of Islamic identity' would emerge with the collapse of Communist regimes in Central Asia – such identity has emerged as merely one possibility among many.²⁰

Muslim politics today

There is a sense in which 'Muslim politics' can be used legitimately without recourse to the kiln of bricks from which Gellner extracted his Islamic one and without having to assert that Muslims are more driven by dogma and belief than adherents of other world religious traditions. Politics are 'Muslim' when they relate to a widely shared, although not doctrinally defined, tradition of ideas and practice. The awareness of participating in a world-wide religious movement empowers Muslims in France, Egypt and elsewhere, encouraging them to call for social and political reforms. The November 1979 attack on the Great Mosque in Mecca and the 1981 assassination of Egypt's President Sadat show how some Islamic groups use violence to confront political authority, but the 1989 head-scarf controversy in Creil, France, temporarily resolved by the state remanding the issue to local authorities rather than provoke a major political crisis, is also an example of Muslim politics.

Gilles Kepel has suggested that the 1989 head-scarf dispute in Creil was a 'Copernican revolution', signalling a shift among French Muslims from regarding France as a land of work opportunities (*terre de contrat*) in which they temporarily reside to regarding it as a land of mission (*terre de mission*) in which they are permanently settled.²¹ Muslim groups calling for democratisation in such countries as Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco indicate how Muslims as self-conscious religious actors use the instruments of existing political systems to magnify their political voice and intensify pressure for reform. State authorities inevitably see both forms of assertiveness as challenging official ideologies and control over policy. Even when asserting universality, however, Muslim politics assume distinctly national and local forms, and their political claims reflect considerable internal debate. The statements of the leaders of the Algerian Front Islamique du Salut (FIS), like those of political movements elsewhere, range from moderation to radical populism, but this

divergence is not unique to Islamic movements.²² Before FIS was outlawed in March 1992, this internal debate was publicly sustained within and without the movement, although FIS equated its political voice with Islam and legitimacy ('another form of democracy') and opposition to western-dominated 'democrats'.²³ Muslim politics, like all politics, operates in distinct national spheres.

A useful way of looking at politics, including Muslim politics, is to conceive of it as the setting of boundaries between decision-making units in society and the enforceable rules for resolving jurisdictional disputes among them. Even when self-consciously Muslim groups accept the existing political hierarchy, they do not necessarily acquiesce to existing boundaries. For instance, the religious authorities ('*ulama*') in Egypt vigorously protested President Sadat's 1979 effort to liberalise family law – specifically, women's rights in marriage. They saw Sadat's efforts as an intrusion on their authority. Muslim politics, like politics elsewhere, involves a contest over the extent of state control – locating the boundaries of legitimate state and non-state activity.

The notion of politics as centred on power relations and 'interests' does not take account of relations among individuals in a society or between societies that are based on what they think is right, just or religiously ordained.²⁴ The idea of politics as 'a struggle about people's imaginations' is a corrective to some conventional thinking.²⁵ More broadly, politics can be conceived of as cooperation in and contest over symbolic production and control of the institutions – formal and informal – which serve as the symbolic arbiters of society.²⁶ Politics as Leviathan is thus decisively abandoned in favour of politics as symbol maker. Of course, this perspective involves understanding culture as contested, temporal and emergent. Even Gellner, a firm believer in 'culture-transcending truth', acknowledges that in most circumstances 'preaching across cultural boundaries' is 'a fairly pointless exercise'.²⁷

Gellner's claim that 'fundamentalism' is the essence of a monolithic Muslim society runs counter to the highly diverse political and religious currents which suffuse Muslim societies and Muslim-majority polities. The fascination of Western commentators with 'fundamentalist' Muslim discourse has meant that there has been less attention paid to the rising tide of Muslim moderates responding to what they see as the bankruptcy of traditionalist religious discourse. These significant other voices, like the fundamentalists, are distinctively modern, in that they break with earlier forms of conventional religious authority. A case in point is Muhammad Shahrur's 800-page *al-Kitab wa-l-Qur'an* (The Book and the Qur'an), which booksellers in Kuwait and Morocco claim

is 'worse than Rushdie' because the author, a Muslim civil engineer with wide-ranging intellectual interests, attacks the 'classical' religious authorities of whom they approve. Banned in Saudi Arabia and initially in Egypt, but with at least 10,000 clandestine photocopies in each of these countries and on the open market in Egypt since late 1993 and personally approved for circulation by Sultan Qaboos of Oman, Shahrur's book and others like it can be seen as experiments in capturing a new readership and in defining Islam as involving dialogue and interpretation in opposition to populist street slogans asserting the 'true' meaning of Islam.²⁸ Paradoxically, the element of mass education, which Gellner sees as an essential component of Western nationalism and modernity, equally pervades the Muslim world, where it is profoundly altering how people conceive of religion and politics.

Mass higher education and the political imagination in the Muslim world

Religious fundamentalism, the claims of its adherents notwithstanding, is a distinctively modern phenomenon.²⁹ Its supporters are the beneficiaries of mass higher education, and it is not the sole or principal product of the massification of education and communications. Mass education, important in itself, also suggests basic transformations in ideas of what people accept as legitimate political authority. An exclusive focus on fundamentalism deflects attention from the more profound changes taking place throughout Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and other places in the Arab world which are correlated with mass higher education and mass communication, factors which have begun to profoundly affect how people think about authority and responsibility in the domains of religion and politics.

Throughout the Muslim majority states, mass higher education has expanded significantly since the 1960s, reshaping conceptions of self, religion, nation and politics. It is as significant as the introduction of printed books in sixteenth-century rural France. Ironically, however, we know more about literacy in medieval and premodern Europe than in the contemporary Muslim and Arab worlds. Many scholars have noted linkages between advanced education and religious activism, but the focus on extremism deflects attention from basic conceptual innovations and emerging networks for communication and action.

For the most part, mass higher education is a recent phenomenon throughout the Muslim world. It began in earnest only in the 1950s, with Egypt's commitment to universal schooling following the 1952 revolution. By the 1970s, large numbers of students had begun to

complete the advanced educational cycles. The timing of educational expansion varies for other countries and regions. For example, major educational expansion in Morocco began after independence in 1956, accelerated in the 1960s, and today almost matches the rate of population growth.

A complementary measure of change is the circulation of books and the proliferation of magazines. The Moroccan writer Mohammed Bennis recalls his student days in Fes in the 1970s, when the first 'little' intellectual journals began to flourish in Arabic, rather than French, which had been the dominant language of the educated elite. In lectures and public meetings, students began to insist that teachers and their classmates express themselves in Arabic and that they not use French words when Arabic words and phrases were available.³⁰ The shift from French to Arabic, important in the massification of education in France's former North African colonies, and the growing enrolments in higher education significantly increased participation in debates about politics, culture and society. The intellectual effervescence of the 1970s which Bennis describes saw the emergence of the first cohort of Moroccans to acquire their pervasive 'habits of thought' in Arabic, the country's national language. As elsewhere, pressure from this cohort created a demand for 're-imagining' Islam and politics and produced a significant readership for 'quality' books in Arabic. In spite of the rising rate of unemployment among university graduates, reading has for them become a means of 'appropriating, organising, and making objective ideas of society, politics, and self'.³¹

As a result, new books and new markets for them have developed, which suggests a sea change in images and vocabulary and affecting the prospects for political thinking. Egypt provides an excellent case study of the changing market for books and magazines. Although studies of readership in Egypt, as elsewhere in the Arab world, are weak, the few that are available suggest that only 1 to 2 per cent of the population read books regularly. But discussions about books – through word of mouth, the broadcast media or newspapers and magazines – reach much larger segments of the population. Even censors draw attention to books by banning them or attempting to restrict their circulation.³² The most rapid growth is occurring in publications with religious content: the growth of secular mass education has increased attachment to Islamic culture. During the Nasser era in Egypt (1952–70), religious books were of marginal importance, at least in terms of official production figures.³³ With the opening of the book market in the 1970s, the relaxation of censorship controls, and subsidies from the oil-rich states, religious books became much more common. In recent years, books have become

a part of mass culture in Egypt, and 'products' intended for the consumption of a literary elite have become an endangered species.

Such mass culture 'Islamic books' are growing rapidly in popularity. These are inexpensive, attractively printed texts, accessible to a readership that lacks the literary skills of the educated cadres of an earlier era. The style is often a breezy mix of oral style and colloquial diction. The covers take advantage of modern printing technologies and are designed to be both readily accessible and eye-catching, with titles such as Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk's *Ayyuha l-Muslimun, Ufiqu* (O Muslims, Awake!), the cover of which shows a bearded Muslim (bright blue), seated at a table in front of a red-covered Qur'an, covering his eyes in order to sleep. An orange and blue serpent hovers above him, poised to strike.³⁴

Other covers are reminiscent of pamphlets distributed by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Layla Mabruk's *Rihla ila 'alam al-khulud: 'adalat yawm al-qiyama* (A Trip to Eternity: Justice on Judgment Day) shows a weakened hand sticking out of a bright red pool, while above the title at the right and encircled by a green garland, two Muslims, oblivious to the scene below, pray.³⁵ A Saudi pamphlet with a curious cover showing a bright red ball plunging into a well in an otherwise parched desert, explains that democracy, which is 'creeping' (*tatasarrub*) into the Muslim world, is incompatible with Islam because Islam offers governance by the Creator (*al-khaliq*) as understood by a properly instructed religious elite, whereas democracy, a non-Arabic term, necessarily implies rule by the created (*al-makhluqin*), in which unbelievers and the ignorant have an equal say in governance and usurp God's rule.³⁶ In many parts of the Muslim world, including North Africa, this style of argument – in some respects a mirror image of Samuel Huntington's 'West versus Rest' – is regarded with amusement by many, but it also offers a style of argument more accessible than that sustained by Muslim moderates who argue for political pluralism in the mainstream Arab print media.³⁷

'Islamic' books seek to capture the religious – and with increasing explicitness the political – imagination of a new generation. In them, readers find echoes of what they already know and have their questions about religion and conduct answered. Conventional intellectuals may accord no legitimacy to the commercial entrepreneurs who benefit from a market which allows Shaykh Sha'rawi to sell 250,000 copies of a book when the sale of 10,000 books is regarded as a success and 50,000 as a best-seller. However, few can fail to recognise the significance of an emerging and distinctive 'popular culture' in which the 'Islamic' book has become a massified commodity.³⁸

In retrospect, the 1952 Egyptian revolution appears less a break with

the past than an intensification of the prior monarchical vision of directing change from above, a notion visualised by King Farouk's personal bookplate, which shows a printing press directly under his name, a crown in the upper left and a city and minarets in the background.³⁹ A learned man in front of the press passes a book to a peasant kneeling next to his plough and oxen. This self-image of the distribution of knowledge was not significantly challenged in the years of the military junta and Nasser's presidency, and it was largely compatible with the versions of modernisation theory then prevailing. The real revolution in ideas of authority came later, as mass education created a new public for the printed word. In retrospect, the economic reforms set in motion in the 1970s unintentionally created the space for a cultural and intellectual reorientation through 'market forces' which favoured 'Islamisation from below' – uncontrolled and uncontrollable by state forces.

In a general sense, the implications of mass higher education and mass communication include a changed sense of authoritative discourse, the emergence of a sense of religion and politics as system and object, and altered conceptions of language and community. First, mass education fosters a sharp break with earlier traditions of authority, with direct – albeit selective – access to the printed word. Belief and practice are now expressed publicly without reference to the authority of traditionally educated religious elites and are more directly related to political action than was the case earlier. The rise of this new dominant discourse affects both the expressive forms of the state and its religious and secular opposition.

Secondly, mass education and mass communication encourage the conception of religion and politics as self-contained systems which can incorporate features from other systems. Mass education encourages this by treating Islam as one subject among many, even as students are told that 'Islam is one' and all-encompassing. Changes in the successive editions of Sayyid Qutb's *Social Justice in Islam* (first edition 1949; seventh edition 1974) show how he refined his view of Islam as 'an inwardly consistent and harmonious "system" . . . making it possible for it to be at once flexible, comprehensive, and distinctive'.⁴⁰ Even radical Islam 'accepts much that is borrowed from the West', although such borrowings are often denied or unrecognised.⁴¹ 'Moderates', as opposed to radicals, are more likely to acknowledge such borrowings, arguing that while Islamic principles are eternal, the way they are implemented can be adjusted to historical context.

This point was brought home by a religious activist in the Arab Gulf. In 1978 he explained that *al-dimuqratiyya* [democracy] would never take hold in the Muslim world because it was a concept alien to

shura, which was Qur'anic and Islamic. In 1990 he asserted that *al-dimuqratiyya* was compatible with Islam. When reminded of what he had said a decade earlier, he replied: 'Now we know better. *Shura* is not a major concept in the Qur'an, and its few usages there are ambiguous. Democracy can be adapted to Islamic ideals.' Likewise, when Islamic activists in Morocco declare that they are engaged in the 'Islamisation' of their society, they make explicit their sense of one system of ideas and practices – theirs – acting against the system of beliefs and practices held by other members of society. Among the Ibadiyya of Algeria and Oman, modern education and intensified contact with other Muslims have encouraged such phenomena as catechisms, videos and pamphlets to help Ibadi students explain their doctrines to Muslims liable to misunderstand them.⁴²

Finally, the standardised language of mass higher education encourages new senses of community and affinity. In India, the temple-mosque dispute at Ayodhya in December 1992 went from a local matter to a national crisis in Hindu-Muslim relations because of 'a massive expansion in the availability of television and the ending of the Indian government's carefully managed news monopoly'. The BBC World Television reporting of the incident, widely followed by English-speakers in India, was a model of balance, but the pictures acted 'as recruiting banners for the militants on both sides'.⁴³ The video clips fed to Oman television by an American network at the time of the massacres in the Sabra/Shatila refugee camps in Beirut in 1982 had a similar effect, as did footage of the Hebron/al-Khalil killings and their aftermath in February 1994. Benedict Anderson argues that the rise of written vernacular languages in Europe and the spread of print technology have created language communities wider than those of face-to-face interactions yet narrower than the communities created by shared sacred languages.⁴⁴ With modifications, this premise can be transposed to the Arab world, in which there has been intensified access to the printed word and, in terms of the spoken word, to a more standardised Arabic. In Arab countries where languages such as Berber or Kurdish are spoken, there is increased use of Arabic as the principal language of education and formal communication.

Conclusion

This shift in the religious and political imagination of a younger, educated generation in many parts of the Muslim world constitutes a fundamental break with prior structures of religious and political authority. Mass education empowers citizens to talk back to state and

religious authorities, fragmenting religious and political authority by making the state one actor among many and eroding the authority of traditional religious scholars. Although the scale and intensity of this fragmentation of authority is unique to the last decades of the twentieth century, it is an ongoing element of the political life of Muslims. As a system of belief, Islam may be no more secularisable than Roman Catholicism or Christian fundamentalism, but Muslims, and Muslim societies, are secularisable, and the process is well advanced. Civil society may be fragile or in short supply in much of the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world, but the causes of this are not inherent to Islam. Religion and state (*din wa-dawla*), far from being indissoluble in the Muslim world, became separable not long after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and the establishment of dynastic rule,⁴⁵ and nationalism is alive and well throughout the Muslim world. In a word, Gellner's Islamic 'brick' is friable – a brittle abstraction which fits awkwardly with known history and historical context. In thinking about Islam, however, Gellner's bold design has made us notice the evidence which goes 'against it or for it'. The prospects for 'Civil Society' may be uncertain, but a lasting element of Gellner's legacy is a standard of civility in thinking about religion, society and politics which is often hard to match.

NOTES

The author wishes to thank Deborah Hodges for comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

- 1 John Davis, 'An Interview with Ernest Gellner', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 12, 1991, p. 71.
- 2 Ibid., p. 70.
- 3 E. Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*, London, 1994, p. 211.
- 4 Davis, 'Interview with Ernest Gellner', p. 70 captures the tenacity with which Gellner held to his core convictions concerning the Islamic brick. Referring to his research among the Ihansalen in Morocco's High Atlas in the 1950s he remarked: 'When I read ethnographies of other parts of the Muslim world I have the feeling that I am utterly familiar with this pack of cards. It happens to be shuffled a bit differently, but I know the cards.'
- 5 Ibid., p. 69.
- 6 Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, especially pp. 22, 29. In contrast A. R. Norton argues vigorously ('Introduction', in his *Civil Society in the Middle East*, Leiden, 1994, p. 25) that civil society is 'theoretically, conceptually, normatively, and ontologically' part of political discourse in the Middle East.
- 7 S. P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilisations?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, 1993.
- 8 S. P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, 1991, pp. 310–11.

- 9 The alliterative quotation is from D. Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernising the Middle East*, New York, 1964, p. 405, although the notion is fully consonant with Gellner's conception of progression from agrarian to industrial society.
- 10 E. Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, London, 1992, pp. 4–5.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 12 For a review of Gellner's model of religious development as it applies specifically to Morocco, see D. F. Eickelman, 'New Directions in Interpreting North African Society', in H. Barakat, ed., *Contemporary North Africa: Issues of Development and Integration*, London, 1985, with additional references. Discussions concerning the applicability of Gellner's version of segmentation theory were most intense in the 1970s and early 1980s. Also see, however, H. Munson, 'Rethinking Gellner's Segmentary Analysis of Morocco's Ait 'Atta', *Man*, vol. 28, 1993, which argues that Gellner's depiction of the Ait 'Atta is 'fundamentally flawed'. Gellner's reply in 'Segmentation: Reality or Myth?', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 1, 1995 (which also includes Munson's reply) stresses that segmentation is an 'absolutely indispensable' tool for understanding 'agrarian' societies, another important 'brick' in his conceptual apparatus. For fuller discussion of the difficulties in assuming a 'great divide' between tradition and modernity in Muslim societies, see D. F. Eickelman and J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton, 1996, pp. 22–37; for Hinduism, see P. van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Berkeley, 1994, pp. 12–18.
- 13 E. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 214–20; see also his *Conditions of Liberty*, pp. 16–20.
- 14 P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints in Early Latin Christianity*, Chicago, 1981; E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, New York, 1960.
- 15 See, for example, J. Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*, Madison, 1989 and N. Tapper and R. Tapper, 'The Birth of the Prophet: Ritual and Gender in Turkish Islam', *Man*, vol. 22, 1987.
- 16 Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, p. 26.
- 17 Cited in Sadik J. al-Azm, 'Islamic Fundamentalism Reconsidered: A Critical Outline of Problems, Ideas, and Approaches', *South Asia Bulletin*, vol. 13, 1993, p. 102.
- 18 J. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States*, Cambridge, 1986. See also S. Zubaida, 'Is There a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's Sociology of Islam', *Economy and Society*, vol. 24, 1995 and Sadik J. al-Azm, 'Is Islam Secularizable?', *Jahrbuch für Philosophie des Forschungsinstituts für Philosophie Hannover*, vol. 7, 1996.
- 19 al-Azm, 'Is Islam Secularizable?', p. 22.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 21 Cited in H. Tinco, 'L'Islam de France se radicalise', *Le Monde*, 12 August 1994, pp. 1, 3.
- 22 For a selection of FIS writings, see M. al-Ahnaf, B. Botiveau and F. Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses islamistes*, Paris, 1991.
- 23 Abdelaslem el-Difraoui, 'La critique du système démocratique par le Front

- Islamique du Salut', in G. Kepel, ed., *Exils et royaumes: les appartenances au monde arabo-musulman aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1994, pp. 123–4.
- 24 P. G. Cerny, *The Changing Architecture of Politics: Structure, Agency and the Future of the State*, London, 1990, pp. 17–18.
- 25 K. Pekonen, 'Symbols and Politics as Culture in the Modern Situation: The Problem and Prospects of the "New"', in J. R. Gibbins, ed., *Contemporary Political Culture: Politics in a Postmodern World*, London, 1989, p. 132.
- 26 See, for example, C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, pp. 193–233.
- 27 Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty*, p. 214.
- 28 See D. F. Eickelman, 'Islamic Liberalism Strikes Back', *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 27, 1993.
- 29 An earlier version of the argument concerning mass education appeared in D. F. Eickelman, 'Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 19, 1992.
- 30 Interview with Mohammed Bennis, Mohammediya, Morocco, 16 July 1992.
- 31 R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, Princeton, 1987, pp. 6–11.
- 32 Y. Gonzalez-Quijano, 'Les gens du livre. Champ intellectuel et édition dans l'Egypte républicaine (1952–1993)', Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, Ph.D. Thesis, 1994, pp. 398–408.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 159–60.
- 34 'Abd al-Hamid Kishk, *Ayyuha l-Muslimun, Ufiqu* [O Muslims, Awake!], Cairo, 1989.
- 35 L. Mabruk, *Rihla ila 'alam al-khulud: 'adalat yawm al-qiyama* [A Trip to Eternity: Justice on Judgement Day], Cairo, 1989.
- 36 Muhammad Shakir al-Sharif, *Haqiqat al-Dimuqratiya* [The Truth about Democracy], Riyadh, 1992, pp. 16–18.
- 37 Note, however, that Islamic activists and fundamentalists come from all social classes and educational levels, with the 'mix' across national and class lines varying state by state. See M. Tessler and J. Jesse, 'Gender and Support for Islamist Movements: Evidence from Egypt, Kuwait, and Palestine', *Muslim World*, vol. 86, 1996, pp. 214–15. For an example of 'liberal' writing on Islam, see Sa'id Binsa'id, 'al-hiwar wa-l-fahm la al-qat'iyya wa-l-jahl' [Dialogue and Understanding, Not Alienation and Ignorance], *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* [The Middle East], London, 7 July 1993, p. 10. This generally liberal, Saudi-financed newspaper is one of the most widely circulated newspapers of the Arab world.
- 38 Gonzalez-Quijano, 'Les gens du livre', pp. 270, 412.
- 39 Reproduced in *ibid.*, p. 96b.
- 40 W. Shepard, 'The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Qutb as Reflected in Earlier and Later Editions of *Social Justice in Islam*', *Die Welt des Islam*, vol. 32, 1992, pp. 200, 211.
- 41 W. Shepard, 'Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19, 1987, p. 315 and 'Islam as a "System" in the Later Writings of Sayyid Qutb', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, 1989, pp. 31–50.
- 42 Ahmad bin Hamad al-Khalili, *Who Are the Ibadhis?*, Zanzibar, 1988.

- 43 'Feeding Fundamentalism', *The Economist*, 21 August 1993, p. 36.
- 44 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1991.
- 45 Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. 46–57.

12 Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism

Rogers Brubaker

The resurgence of nationalism in eastern Europe and elsewhere in the last decade has sparked – with only the shortest of lags – an even stronger resurgence in the study of nationalism. As a certifiably ‘hot topic’, nationalism has moved rapidly from the front pages to the journal pages, from the periphery – often the distant periphery – to the centre of numerous scholarly fields and subfields.¹ This new centrality is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the robust demand for knowledge about – and ‘fixes’ for – nationalism brings new opportunities, resources and attention to the field. On the other hand, the rapid expansion of the field has strengthened analytically primitive currents in the study of nationalism,² threatening to erode (or simply – given the volume of the new literature – to overwhelm) the analytical gains previously made in sophisticated works by Benedict Anderson, John Armstrong, John Breuilly, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and a number of other scholars.³

Borrowing Charles Tilly’s phrase, this chapter addresses six ‘pernicious postulates’, six myths and misconceptions that, newly strengthened by the dizzying expansion in the literature and quasi-literature on the subject, inform, and misinform, the study of ethnicity and nationalism.⁴ Although I draw illustrative empirical material mainly from postcommunist east central Europe and the former Soviet Union, the theoretical debates I engage are central to the study of nationalism generally.⁵

Nobody took greater pleasure, or displayed greater vigour, in demolishing myths than Ernest Gellner; and the trenchancy with which he punctured nationalists’ own myths – as well as other myths about nationalism – was exemplary. I would like to think, therefore, that the present chapter is Gellnerian in spirit. The chapter is not, however, *about* Gellner’s theory of nationalism; it engages his theory only incidentally. Gellner approached the study of nationalism from Olympian distance, situating the emergence and vicissitudes of nationalism in world-historical perspective. My concerns in this chapter are rather less

global and do not, for the most part, directly engage Gellner's arguments.

I begin by addressing two opposed appraisals of the gravity and 'resolvability' of national conflicts. The first is the 'architectonic illusion' – the belief that the right 'grand architecture', the right territorial and institutional framework, can satisfy nationalist demands, quench nationalist passions and thereby resolve national conflicts. Most conceptions of grand architecture have involved the reorganisation of political space along national lines, based on an alleged right of national self-determination or on the related 'principle of nationality'. Against this, I want to argue that nationalist conflicts are in principle, by their very nature, irresolvable, and that the search for an overall 'architectural' resolution of national conflicts is misguided.

Sharply opposed to the meliorist optimism of this first view is the dire pessimism of the second. This is the 'seething cauldron' view of ethnic and national conflicts. This gloom-and-doom perspective sees all of eastern Europe – and many other world regions – as a seething cauldron of ethnic and national conflict, on the verge of boiling over into violence. More generally, it sees nationalism as *the* central problem in these regions, and sees national identities as strong and salient. Against this, I want to assert that ethnonational violence is neither as prevalent, nor as likely to occur, as is often assumed; and that national feeling is less strong, national identity less salient and nationalist politics less central than is often assumed.

Next, I will address two opposed views of the sources and dynamics of resurgent nationalism. The first is the 'return of the repressed' perspective. In its specifically eastern European form, this view sees national identities and national conflicts as deeply rooted in the precommunist history of eastern Europe, and as subsequently frozen or repressed by ruthlessly anti-national communist regimes. With the collapse of communism, these pre-communist national identities and nationalist conflicts have returned with redoubled force. Against this, I will stress the pervasive shaping and structuring of national identities and nationalist conflicts by communist regimes.

Categorically rejecting the primordialist understanding of nationhood that often accompanies the 'return of the repressed' view, and refusing to see national identity and nationalist conflicts as deeply encoded historically, is the 'elite manipulation' view. This perspective sees nationalism as the product of unscrupulous and manipulative elites, who are seen as cynically stirring up nationalist passions at will. While conceding, of course, that unscrupulous elites often do seek to stir up nationalist passions, I want to argue against this view that it is not always

so easy for elites to stir up nationalist passions; and that it is mistaken to see nationalism in purely instrumental terms, to focus solely on the calculating stances of self-interested elites.

The fifth perspective I call that of 'the realism of the group'. Based on a 'groupist' social ontology, this view sees nations and ethnic groups as real entities, as substantial, enduring, sharply bounded collectivities. It sees the social world, like a Modigliani painting (to borrow Gellner's image), as composed of externally bounded, internally homogeneous cultural blocs. Against this, I will argue that the 'Modiglianesque' vision of the social world is deeply problematic, that ethnic and national groups are not well conceived as externally sharply bounded, internally culturally homogeneous blocs.

Finally, I address the 'Manichean' view that there are, at bottom, only two kinds of nationalism, a good, civic kind and a bad, ethnic kind; and two corresponding understandings of nationhood, the good, civic conception, in which nationhood is seen as based on common citizenship, and the bad, ethnic conception, in which nationhood is seen as based on common ethnicity. Against this, I will argue that the distinction between civic and ethnic nationhood and nationalism is both normatively and analytically problematic.

I

I begin with the 'architectonic illusion'. This is the belief that if one gets the 'grand architecture' right – if one discovers and establishes the proper territorial and institutional framework – then one can conclusively satisfy legitimate nationalist demands and thereby resolve national conflicts. There have been many different conceptions of just what the proper grand architecture should look like. But most of these have appealed in one way or another to the idea of national self-determination or to the so-called principle of nationality.

The principle of national self-determination assigns moral agency and political authority to nations; it holds that nations are entitled to govern their own affairs and, in particular, to form their own states. The principle of nationality asserts that state and nation should be congruent; it thereby provides a powerful lever for evaluating, and redrawing, state boundaries, for legitimating, or delegitimising political frontiers according to a kind of 'correspondence theory' of justice.

These principles underlay, albeit imperfectly, the post-World War I territorial settlement in central and eastern Europe; the mid-twentieth-century wave of decolonisation in Asia and Africa; and the recent

reorganisation of political space in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In each of these cases, the period preceding the reorganisation of political space along national lines was one of intensifying nationalist movements. In each case, the demands of these nationalist movements were viewed with sympathy by much of world public opinion. In each case, it was widely believed that a new 'grand architecture', involving the reorganisation of political space along national lines, would satisfy the demands of these national movements and contribute to regional peace and stability by resolving national tensions.⁶ Yet, in each case, this expectation was disappointed. Political reconfiguration did not resolve national tensions but only reframed them, recast them in new (and in some cases more virulent) form.

I am not arguing that the reconfiguration of political space along ostensibly national lines in these cases was necessarily a bad thing (though I think in some cases – such as the former Yugoslavia – it was unfortunate). I am arguing, instead, against the idea that nationalism is a problem that can somehow be solved by 'correct' territorial and institutional arrangements; and, more specifically, against the idea that nationalist demands can be satisfied and national conflicts resolved by applying the principle of national self-determination or redrawing political boundaries according to the principle of nationality.

Today, of course, this argument is less likely to be advanced than it was a few years earlier. Several years after the last major reorganisation of political space along national lines, it is all too evident that national conflicts have not been resolved, and that the most virulent conflicts have occurred after rather than before the reorganisation of political space. But it is worth remembering that only a few years ago, a great deal of hope was invested in national self-determination. The prospect of the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was welcomed as a story of national liberation; the prevailing narrative was one of national imprisonment and liberation. The rising curve of enthusiasm for national self-determination, as communist regimes began to crumble, did not, to be sure, reach the apogee of seventy-five years earlier, when the first wholesale reorganisation of previously multinational political space along national lines was undertaken. Yet the *fin-de-siècle* re-enchantment with national self-determination was substantial enough, incautious enough, and – in view of the disastrous sequel to the early twentieth-century experiment in national self-determination⁷ – puzzling enough to give us pause.⁸ Moreover, even if the re-enchantment has since yielded to a new disenchantment, even if yesterday's narrative of national imprisonment and liberation today seems one-sided, mischievous or even downright pernicious, still the underlying way of thinking about

nationalism that has historically accompanied appeals to the principle of national self-determination remains robustly entrenched.

The principle of national self-determination and the related principle of nationality are of course normative, not analytical principles; and I do not want to make here an argument in normative political theory.⁹ But for a century and a half, the appeal to the principle of nationality or to an alleged right of national self-determination has been closely related to a particular – and I believe mistaken – account of the sources and dynamics of nationalism. And it is this account that I would like to dwell on for a moment.

This account is fundamentally a nation-centred understanding of nationalism. It is grounded, as Gellner observed,¹⁰ in a ‘social ontology’ that posits the existence of nations as real entities whose tendency or *telos* – at least under modern social and political conditions – is to seek independent statehood. Nationalism, on this view, is thus nation-based, state-seeking activity.

If this understanding of nationalism were correct, then one might indeed expect the reorganisation of political space along national lines to resolve national conflicts by fulfilling nationalist demands. The imagery here is that nationalism has a self-limiting political career. Fundamentally oriented towards independence, national movements in a sense transcend themselves, and wither away in the very course of realising their aims. When nationalist demands for statehood are fulfilled, the nationalist programme is satisfied; it exhausts itself in the attainment of its ends.

However, I do not think nationalism can be well understood as nation-based, state-seeking activity. In the first place, nationalism is not always, or essentially, state-seeking. To focus narrowly on state-seeking nationalist movements is to ignore the infinitely protean nature of nationalist politics; it is to ignore the manner in which the interests of a putative ‘nation’ can be seen as requiring many kinds of actions other than, or in addition to, formal independence; it is to be unprepared for the kinds of nationalist politics that can flourish *after* the reorganisation of political space along national lines, *after* the break-up of multinational states into would-be nation-states. It is to be unprepared for the fact that nationalism was not only a *cause* but also a *consequence* of the break-up of old empires and the creation of new nation-states.

In the new or newly enlarged nation-states of interwar central and eastern Europe, and in the new nation-states of postcommunist eastern Europe today, several kinds of nationalism have flourished as a *result* of the reorganisation of political space along ostensibly national lines. Here I would like to briefly characterise four such forms of non-state-seeking nationalism.

The first is what I call the 'nationalising' nationalism of newly independent (or newly reconfigured) states. Nationalising nationalisms involve claims made in the name of a 'core nation' or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole. The core nation is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state, which is conceived as the state *of* and *for* the core nation. Despite having 'its own' state, however, the core nation is conceived as being in a weak cultural, economic or demographic position within the state. This weak position is seen as a legacy of discrimination against the nation before it attained independence. And it is held to justify the 'remedial' or 'compensatory' project of using state power to promote the specific (and previously inadequately served) interests of the core nation. Examples of such nationalising nationalisms abound in interwar Europe and the postcommunist present.¹¹

Directly challenging these 'nationalising' nationalisms are the trans-border nationalisms of what I call 'external national homelands'. Homeland nationalisms are oriented to ethnonational kin who are residents and citizens of other states. Transborder homeland nationalism asserts a state's right – indeed its obligation – to monitor the condition, promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions, and protect the interests of 'its' ethnonational kin in other states. Such claims are typically made, and typically have greatest force and resonance, when the ethnonational kin in question are seen as threatened by the nationalising policies and practices of the state in which they live. Homeland nationalisms thus arise in direct opposition to and in dynamic interaction with nationalising nationalisms. Prominent instances of homeland nationalism are furnished by Weimar (and in a very different mode) Nazi Germany, and by Russia today.¹²

The third characteristic form of nationalism found in the aftermath of the reorganisation of political space along national lines is the nationalism of national minorities. Minority nationalist stances characteristically involve a self-understanding in specifically 'national' rather than merely 'ethnic' terms, a demand for state recognition of their distinct ethnocultural nationality, and the assertion of certain collective, nationality-based cultural or political rights. Salient examples include Germans in many eastern European countries in the interwar period and Hungarian and Russian minorities today.

The fourth form is a defensive, protective, national-populist nationalism that seeks to protect the national economy, language, mores or cultural patrimony against alleged threats from outside. The bearers of such putative threats are diverse but can include foreign capital, transnational organisations, notably the IMF, immigrants, powerful foreign

cultural influences and so on. This kind of nationalism often claims to seek a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism, is often receptive to anti-Semitism, brands its political opponents as antinational, 'un-Romanian', 'un-Russian', etc., is critical of the various ills of 'the west' and of 'modernity', and tends to idealise an agrarian past. The social and economic dislocations accompanying market-oriented reforms – unemployment, inflation, tighter workplace discipline, etc. – create fertile soil for the use of such national populist idioms as a legitimisation strategy by governments or as a mobilisation strategy by oppositions.

Nationalism, then, should not be conceived as essentially or even as primarily state-seeking. Nor, as Gellner emphasised, should it be understood as nation-based, that is as arising from the demands of nations, understood as real, substantial, bounded social entities. Nationhood is not an unambiguous social fact; it is a contestable – and often contested – political claim. Consequently, neither the principle of national self-determination nor the principle of nationality can provide an unambiguous guide to the reorganisation of political space.

Claims to nationhood are often disputed – think, for example, historically, about the Macedonians, or about the dispute concerning whether interwar Czechoslovakia was one nation or two. Or, more recently, think of the Kurds, the Palestinians, the Québécois, and of a host of west European ethnoregional movements. And even when the status of nationhood itself is not disputed, the territorial or cultural boundaries of the putative nation are often contested, as is the manner in which nationhood ought to be construed for purposes of implementing the right of self-determination or of redrawing frontiers along national lines.

Given the very large number of more or less serious (and often conflicting) claims to nationhood, how are we to identify the national selves who are to enjoy the right or privilege of self-determination? And once we have identified these favoured national selves, how are we to determine their bounds and contours? This is not a theoretical quibble, but a question of the utmost practical import.

Take for example the case of Yugoslavia. Even if one could have agreed that the national selves who were to enjoy self-determination were the officially recognised constituent nations of Yugoslavia (but why not the Albanians? Why not the Hungarians in Voivodina?), one still could not have avoided the question of how those national selves were to be construed. To put the question in its simplest form, supposing we agreed that self-determination was to be exercised by Serbs, Croats and Muslims. How, then, were these self-determining units to be construed? Was the right of self-determination to be exercised by Serbia or by

Serbs? By Croatia or by Croats? By Bosnia-Herzegovina or by Yugoslav Muslims? By territorial entities, that is, or by boundary-transcending ethnocultural nations? Were all the inhabitants of the Croatian republic to enjoy a single right of self-determination? And similarly for all the inhabitants of the Serb republic, and of Bosnia-Herzegovina, by majority vote? Or rather, was self-determination to be exercised by the Croatian, Serb and Muslim ethnonations, whose populations spilled over republican borders? In practice, the international community opted for the former – but perhaps without realising the tremendous difference between the two modes of construing self-determination for the same national units.¹³ And the consequences were catastrophic.

There are of course many other examples of conflicting claims about how national selves should be construed. The negotiations concerning the post-World War I settlement furnished a whole catalogue of such conflicting claims, many involving a clash between historic-territorial and ethnocultural versions of nationhood, with parties typically opportunistically advancing whichever claim would benefit them.

On a more philosophical level, we arrive here at the inescapable *antinomies of national self-determination*. Self-determination presupposes the prior determination of the unit – the national self – that is to enjoy the right of self-determination. But the identification and boundaries of this self cannot themselves be self-determined: they must be determined by others. Just as the boundaries of the demos that is presupposed by democratic institutions cannot themselves be democratically determined,¹⁴ so too the boundaries of the national self that is presupposed by national self-determination cannot themselves be self-determined. Only in practice, the problem with national self-determination is more serious than with democracy. For in the routine functioning of democracy, the bounds of the demos are simply taken as given and unproblematic. But since national self-determination is precisely about setting the initial boundaries of the demos, there is no analogue in the sphere of self-determination to the routine functioning of democracy within the frame of a taken-for-granted demos. Since the whole point of invoking national self-determination is to change unit boundaries, such boundaries cannot be taken for granted – especially given the pervasively contested, conflicting and overlapping nature of claims to nationhood.

Against the architectonic illusion, then, against the illusion that nationalist conflicts are susceptible of fundamental resolution through national self-determination, I am asserting a kind of ‘impossibility theorem’ – that national conflicts are in principle irresolvable; that ‘nation’ belongs to the class of ‘essentially contested’ concepts; that

chronic contestedness is therefore intrinsic to nationalist politics, part of the very nature of nationalist politics; and that the search for an overall 'architectural' resolution of national conflicts is misguided in principle, and often disastrous in practice.

In criticising this naively optimistic view I should emphasise that I do not want to adopt a gloom-and-doom perspective. In fact the next myth I want to criticise is precisely the gloom-and-doom view of the region. My point is not to substitute a pessimistic for an optimistic reading, but rather to suggest that the search for solutions and resolutions of national conflicts – especially grand, 'architectonic', isomorphic, 'one-size-fits-all' solutions and resolutions – is misguided. To assert the irresolvability of national conflicts is not to assert anything about their salience, intensity or centrality. Indeed I believe, as I am about to argue, that their salience, intensity and centrality are generally overstated. The search for some fundamental architectural resolution of national conflicts, then, is not only philosophically problematic and practically misguided; it is often, also, simply unnecessary.

To criticise the search for solutions and resolutions of national conflicts is not to suggest that institutional design does not matter. On the contrary, it matters a great deal.¹⁵ Clearly, institutional design can either exacerbate or ameliorate ethnic and national conflicts. But it cannot solve such conflicts. Rather, good institutional design can give political actors incentives to work around ethnic and national conflicts, to disregard them for certain purposes, to frame political rhetoric and political claims in non-ethnic or trans-ethnic terms. Moreover, institutional design is unlikely to have even these limited (but very important) effects if carried out in a grand, architectonic, one-size-fits-all mode. Good institutional design is more likely to be subverted than informed by grand architectural principles like the principle of national self-determination or the principle of nationality. Good institutional design has to be context-sensitive in a strong sense, that is, sensitive not only to the gross features of differing contexts but to finer details as well; it presupposes relatively 'thick' understandings of the local contexts in which it is to apply.¹⁶

In my view, national conflicts are seldom 'solved' or 'resolved'. Somewhat like conflicts between conflicting paradigms in a Kuhnian history of science, they are more likely to fade away, to lose their centrality and salience as ordinary people – and political entrepreneurs – turn to other concerns, or as a new generation grows up to whom old quarrels seem largely irrelevant. We need to devote more attention to studying how and why this happens – not only how and why politics can be pervasively, and relatively suddenly, 'nationalised', but also how and why it can be pervasively, and sometimes equally suddenly, 'denationalised'.

II

The second misconception that I want to discuss is in some ways the opposite of the first. If the architectonic illusion is characterised by the naively optimistic view that national conflicts are capable of a final resolution, the second misconception is characterised by a bleakly pessimistic appraisal of east European nationalism. I will call this the 'seething cauldron' view, since it sees the entire region as a seething cauldron of ethnic conflict, on the verge of boiling over into ethnic and nationalist violence, or, in another metaphorical idiom, as a tinderbox that a single careless spark could ignite into a catastrophic ethnonational inferno.¹⁷

This might also be called the 'orientalist' view of east European nationalism, since it often involves, at least implicitly, an overdrawn, if not downright caricatural, contrast between western and eastern Europe, built on a series of oppositions such as that between reason and passion, universalism and particularism, transnational integration and nationalist disintegration, civility and violence, modern tolerance and ancient hatreds, civic nationhood and ethnic nationalism.

Indisputably, there are important differences, conditioned by historical traditions and present economic, cultural, political and ethnodemographic realities, between prevailing forms of nationhood and nationalism in western Europe and eastern Europe. Yet one must reject the complacent and self-congratulatory account of western Europe that is implicit or explicit in this orientalist, 'seething cauldron' view of eastern European nationalism. After all, the 'Europhoria' that surrounded discussions of European integration a few years ago was dissipated by the unforeseen (and partly nationalist) resistance to the Maastricht treaty; and nationalist and xenophobic parties have established a secure place in the political landscape of almost all western European countries.

One must also reject the 'seething cauldron' account of eastern Europe. It is this gloom-and-doom view of the east, rather than the paired complacent view of the west, that I address here. I focus on two problematic aspects of this account. The first concerns violence, the second the strength and salience of nationalism and national identities.

The violence in the region – in the former Yugoslavia, in Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus, in parts of Soviet Central Asia – has indeed been appalling. But the undifferentiated image of the region as a hotbed of ubiquitous, explosive, violent or at least potentially violent ethnic and national conflict is quite misleading. Violence is neither as prevalent, nor as likely to occur in the region, as is generally believed.

Journalists and scholars have focused on spectacular but atypical cases of violence (the former Yugoslavia) rather than on unspectacular but more typical cases of 'routine' ethnic and nationalist tensions, and they have tended to generalise from the atypical cases to the region as a whole. This case selection bias is one reason for the overemphasis on violence.¹⁸

Not only the actual incidence of violence, but also the danger of future violence is overestimated. Violence is often presented as an omnipresent possibility. 'If it happened in Yugoslavia' – so goes the argument – 'it could happen anywhere.' I think this is mistaken. I have done some work, for example, on Hungarian minorities in neighbouring states, especially Romania and Slovakia. In this setting, several forms of nationalism are intertwined. The most important are the autonomy-seeking nationalism of the Hungarian minorities; the 'nation-building' or 'nationalising' nationalisms of Slovakia and Romania; and the 'homeland' nationalism of Hungary, oriented to protecting the rights and interests of its co-ethnics in neighbouring states. Yet I think the danger of large-scale ethnic violence or nationalist war is minimal in this case. This is not because these national tensions can somehow be 'resolved'. I do not think they can be. These interlocking, mutually antagonistic nationalisms of national minority, nationalising state and external national homeland are intractable and are likely to persist as chronic tensions and conflicts. But their intractability should not be conflated with explosiveness or with a potential to engender large-scale violence.

If I am right about this, it raises the analytical question of what prevents these chronic, intractable, interlocking nationalist conflicts from escalating into violent confrontation. This neglected question of how to explain the absence or containment of violence, as political scientists James Fearon and David Laitin have recently argued,¹⁹ is as important as the much more studied question of how to explain the occurrence of violence. In the case of Hungary and its neighbours, I would propose three reasons for the absence of violence.²⁰ The first is that Hungarians in the neighbouring states have enjoyed an accessible and relatively attractive 'exit' option – the possibility of emigrating to or working in Hungary. This has functioned as a 'safety valve' and has worked against the radicalisation of ethnonational conflict, especially in Romania. Secondly, the embeddedness of national conflicts in regional processes of European integration has 'disciplined' central political elites, especially in the foreign policy domain. This has induced Hungary to limit its support for transborder co-ethnics to support for Hungarian culture and to scrupulously avoid inciting destabilising

political activity on the part of its co-ethnics. This is true even of the national-populist Antall government of the early 1990s, despite its strong rhetorical commitment to transborder co-ethnics. Third, the absence of credible narratives linking past ethnonational violence to present threat makes it difficult for radical, violence-oriented ethnopollitical entrepreneurs, whose stock in trade is fear, to succeed. By contrast, such narratives of danger and threat, linked to past violence, were strikingly evident in the former Yugoslavia before war broke out.²¹

Nor is this an isolated case. Estonia, for example, has been in the news a lot in recent years in connection with its bitterly contested citizenship laws and, more generally, in connection with the status of its large Russian minority. Rhetoric has been heated, indeed overheated: Russians (more frequently Russians in Russia than local Russians) have accused Estonia of apartheid and ethnic cleansing; Estonian nationalists have spoken of the Russian minority as colonists or illegal immigrants. Yet despite this overheated rhetoric, there is little fear of violence on the ground.²²

It is not only violence that is overemphasised by the seething cauldron view. More generally, the strength, salience and centrality of national feeling, national identity and nationalist politics also tend to be overestimated. Consider for example nationalist mobilisation. There have, of course, been dramatic, even spectacular, moments of high nationalist mobilisation. One thinks, for example, of the 'human chain' across the Baltics in August 1989, or of the great crowds that filled the main squares of Yerevan, Tbilisi, Berlin, Prague and other cities in 1988–90. These searing moments, transmitted worldwide by television, are etched forever in our memories. But they have been the exception, not the rule. Moments of high mobilisation – where they did occur – proved ephemeral; 'nation' was revealed to be a galvanising category at one moment, but not at the next. On the whole, people have remained in their homes, not taken to the streets. In conspicuous contrast to interwar east central Europe, demobilisation and political passivity, rather than fevered mobilisation, have characterised the political landscape. Much has been written on the strength of nationalist movements in the former Soviet Union; not enough has been written on their comparative weakness. And while the weakness of nationalism in certain regions (especially ex-Soviet Central Asia) has indeed been noted, too much attention has been given to variation across *space* in the intensity of nationalist mobilisation, too little attention to variation over *time*. Declining curves of mobilisation have been particularly neglected, although they are as common, as deserving of explanation, and as theoretically challenging as the more sexy ascending curves.

Even where national conflicts and national identity remain salient in the political sphere, they are not necessarily salient in everyday life. Nationalism may occur in the legislatures, in the press, in some branches of the state administration without occurring in the streets, or in the homes.²³ There is a loose coupling, or lack of congruence, between nationalist politics – which seems to run in a sphere of its own, unmoored from its putative constituencies – and everyday life. People do not necessarily respond particularly energetically or warmly to the nationalist utterances of politicians who claim to speak in their name. This general lukewarm responsiveness or even non-responsiveness to nationalist appeals of politicians is a legacy of a more general cynicism towards and distrust of politics and politicians. An ‘us’ versus ‘them’ distinction was indeed central to the way people understood politics under communism, and one might think this would be easily transposed into an exclusionary nationalism. Under certain circumstances, it may indeed be so transposed. In general, however, the ‘us’ – ‘them’ distinction divided not one ethnic or national group from another, but ‘the people’ from ‘the regime’. ‘They’ – representatives of the regime – were assuredly not ‘us’, even when they claimed to speak in our name (as they always did, of course, under communism). Nor did this change with the collapse of communism: deploying the idiom of ethnonationalism (rather than that of class solidarity or socialist internationalism) is no guarantee that ‘they’ will be able to persuade ‘us’ that ‘we’ belong together, separated not by position in the mode of domination but by ethnic nationality from an external ‘them’.

Nor are national identities in the region as strong as is often assumed. I return to this theme below; suffice it to observe here that, given the overwhelming evidence of contextual and situational shifts in self- and other-identification, one should be skeptical of the oft-repeated emphasis on the deep historical encoding of national identities in the region, and alert to the danger of over-historicisation.²⁴

Incipient but not insignificant cosmopolitan tendencies in the region, finally, have been obscured by the orientalist opposition between western supranationalism and eastern nationalism. Consider again Hungarians in Romania. It is no doubt true that, since the fall of Ceauşescu, the Hungarian national element in their self-understanding has become more pronounced. The linguistic, cultural, religious, historical and economic ties that link them to Hungary as *anyaország* or ‘mother country’ have become more palpable, more ‘real’. But there is not necessarily an inverse relationship between national and cosmopolitan self-understandings. At the same time that they have become more aware of and concerned with their trans-state Hungarian nationality,

they have also become more aware of and concerned with the wider European world.

Television has played an interestingly ambivalent role here. The establishment, relatively lavish financing, and diffusion from Hungary of Duna TV, a channel intended chiefly for Hungarians in the neighbouring states, has reinforced the Hungarian national self-understanding of Transylvanian Hungarians. At the same time, however, the high prestige of French, German and English-language channels (Eurosport, BBC, etc) – widely available in Transylvania through cable and satellite systems – has probably had a certain (though admittedly hard to measure) denationalising or transnationalising effect.²⁵ An anecdote reveals the national ambivalence of television. Romanian authorities were distressed when they learned that a particular cable package was to include MTV. To them, this meant Magyar TV, i.e. the state television from Hungary. In fact, of course, it was the American music video channel that was at issue. And to the Transylvanian Hungarians, the American MTV was no doubt far more interesting than the Hungarian.

In sum, ethnic and nationalist conflict has been both less violent, and less salient, than many commentators have suggested; and where such conflict has occurred, it has often been chronic and low-level, a kind of 'background noise' occurring far from the focus of everyday life, rather than acute and explosive.

III

So far I have considered two overall appraisals of nationalist conflicts in the region, an optimistic view that sees them as resolvable through reorganising political space along national lines, and a pessimistic view that sees them as deeply entrenched, pervasive, destabilising, and on the verge of violent explosion.

I would now like to turn to two opposed accounts of the sources and dynamics of nationalist resurgence. The first of these is the 'return of the repressed' view. The gist of this account is that national identities and national conflicts were deeply rooted in the precommunist history of eastern Europe, but then frozen or repressed by ruthlessly anti-national communist regimes. With the collapse of communism, on this account, these precommunist national identities and nationalist conflicts have returned with redoubled force.

This view can be expressed in (and often seems to draw at least implicitly on) a quasi-Freudian idiom. Lacking the rationally regulative ego of self-regulating civil society, the communist regimes repressed the primordial national id through a harshly punitive communist superego.

With the collapse of the communist superego, the repressed ethno-national id returns in full force, wreaking vengeance, uncontrolled by the regulative ego. (The quasi-Freudian idiom makes clear the orientalist inflection of this view, and its close relation to the myth of the seething cauldron.)

Obviously, communist regimes of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union did repress nationalism. But the 'return of the repressed' view mistakes the manner in which they did so. It suggests that these regimes repressed not only nationalism, but nationhood; that they were not only *anti-nationalist* but *anti-national*. It suggest further that a robust, primordial sense of nationhood survived in this period in spite of strenuous regime efforts to root it out in favour of internationalist and class loyalties and solidarities.

This view is fundamentally mistaken. Let me suggest why with a few words about the Soviet case.²⁶ To see late- and post-Soviet national struggles as the struggles of nations, of real, solidary groups who somehow survived despite Soviet attempts to crush them – to suggest that nations and nationalism flourish today *despite* the Soviet regime's ruthlessly anti-national policies – is to get things nearly backwards. To put the point somewhat too sharply: nationhood and nationalism flourish today largely *because of* the regime's policies. Although *anti-nationalist*, those policies were anything but *anti-national*. Far from ruthlessly suppressing nationhood, the Soviet regime pervasively institutionalised it. The regime repressed *nationalism*, of course; but at the same time, it went further than any other state before or since in institutionalising territorial *nationhood* and ethnic *nationality* as fundamental social categories. In doing so it inadvertently created a political field supremely conducive to nationalism.

The regime did this in two ways. On the one hand, it carved up the Soviet state into more than fifty national territories, each expressly defined as the homeland of and for a particular ethnonational group. The top-level national territories – those that are today the independent successor states – were defined as quasi-nation states, complete with their own territories, names, constitutions, legislatures, administrative staffs, cultural and scientific institutions, and so on.

On the other hand, the regime divided the citizenry into a set of exhaustive and mutually exclusive ethnic nationalities, over a hundred in all. Through this state classification system, ethnic nationality served not only as a *statistical category*, a fundamental unit of social accounting, but also, and more distinctively, as an *obligatory ascribed status*. It was assigned by the state at birth on the basis of descent. It was registered in personal identity documents. It was recorded in almost all bureaucratic

encounters and official transactions. And it was used to control access to higher education and to certain desirable jobs, restricting the opportunities of some nationalities, especially Jews, and promoting others through preferential treatment policies for so-called 'titular' nationalities in 'their own' republics.

Long before Gorbachov, then, territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality were pervasively institutionalised social and cultural forms. These forms were by no means empty. They were scorned by Sovietologists – no doubt because the regime consistently and effectively repressed all signs of overt political nationalism, and sometimes even cultural nationalism. Yet the repression of nationalism went hand-in-hand with the establishment and consolidation of nationhood and nationality as fundamental cognitive and social forms.

Nationhood and nationality as institutionalised forms comprised a pervasive system of social classification, an organising 'principle of vision and division' of the social world, to use Bourdieu's phrase. They comprised a standardised scheme of social accounting, an interpretive frame for public discussion, a dense organisational grid, a set of boundary-markers, a legitimate form for public and private identities. And when political space expanded under Gorbachev, these already pervasively institutionalised forms were readily politicised. They constituted elementary forms of political understanding, political rhetoric, political interest and political identity. In the terms of Max Weber's 'switchman' metaphor, they determined the tracks, the cognitive frame, along which action was pushed by the dynamic of material and ideal interests. In so doing, they transformed the collapse of a regime into the disintegration of a state. And they continue to shape political understanding and political action in the successor states.

Similar points could be made about Yugoslavia.²⁷ In other states of east central Europe, to be sure, the case is somewhat different; and there was not the same degree of public support for and pervasive institutionalisation of national identities. However, even in these cases, communist regimes made various, albeit limited, accommodations to the sense of nationhood; and the repression of nationhood, especially in the post-Stalinist era, was not so consistent as is widely assumed.

In emphasising the codification and pervasive institutionalisation of nationhood and nationality by the Soviet and Yugoslav regimes, I am not making a claim about the strength or depth of the ethnonational identities thus institutionalised. It is important to distinguish between the *degree of institutionalisation* of ethnic and national categories and the *psychological depth, substantiality and practical potency* of such categorical identities. The former was unprecedentedly great in the Soviet Union,

but the latter were highly variable, and in some cases minimal. At the limit – widely instantiated among some of the smaller officially recognised nationalities within the Russian Federation – strongly institutionalised categorical identities masked the near-complete absence of distinct cultural identities or distinct ethnonational *habitus*. In this limiting case, members of different ‘groups’ differed only in the official categorical ethnonational markers they bore; these categorical markers did not *represent* cultural or ethnic differences, but *replaced* them.²⁸ I do not mean to imply that this limiting case was the general one in the former Soviet Union. But the general point remains. A strongly institutionalised system of official ethnonational identities makes certain categories available for the public representation of social reality, the framing of political claims, and the organisation of political action. This in itself is a fact of great significance. But it does not assure that these categories will have a significant, pervasively structuring role in framing perception or orienting action in everyday life. Institutionalised categorical group denominations can not be taken as unproblematic indicators of ‘real groups’ or of strong ‘identities’.

There is a version of the ‘return of the repressed’ argument to which I am more sympathetic. This is relevant especially in Yugoslavia, but also in parts of the former Soviet Union. The argument is that the tabuisation of certain themes – in Yugoslavia the taboo preventing discussion of the fratricidal violence of World War II – prevented any kind of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (mastery of the past) of the sort that occurred in Germany. There was simply no way to publicly work through arguments about the massive wartime atrocities. This does not imply that discussing these openly would have resolved them: of course this would not have happened. Discussion would have engendered bitter conflicts. But still, the public discussion of these might have deprived them of some of their potency forty years later when they were resurrected in public in a situation of pervasive uncertainty and insecurity without any previous attempt to master the past discursively.

In any event, what ‘returns’ in the postcommunist present is not something from the precommunist past; it is something constituted in important ways by the communist past. In the Soviet case, many national identities were first invented, imagined, and institutionalised under communism. But even elsewhere in eastern Europe, where this was not true, the national phenomenon was constituted in part – if only negatively – by communism, by the suppression of civil society, by the suppression of a public sphere where past atrocities could have been, in part, discursively mastered.

IV

'The return of repressed' view often sees what returns as somehow primordial, or at least deeply rooted in the pre-communist history of the region. Hence the frequent reference to 'ancient hatreds'. Those who focus on unscrupulous and manipulative elites take the opposite view. Far from seeing nationalism as deeply rooted in primordial identities or ancient conflicts, they see it as stirred up in opportunistic and cynical fashion by unprincipled political elites. There is obviously much truth in this view. It is scarcely controversial to point out the opportunism and cynicism of political elites, or to underscore the crucial role of elites, whether cynical or sincere, in articulating national grievances and mobilising people for nationalist conflict. And there are certain textbook-clear examples of cynically manipulative elites stirring up nationalist tensions and passions: perhaps Slobodan Milošević is the paradigmatic case – a pure example of a nationalist of convenience, rather than conviction. The elitist, instrumentalist focus of this view is also correct in its rejection of the view that contemporary nationalist politics is driven by deeply rooted national identities and ancient conflicts.

As a general account of the sources and dynamics of nationalism in the region, however, the elite manipulation view has at least three problematic implications. The first is that nationalism pays off as a political strategy; that it is therefore a rational strategy for opportunistic elites to adopt; and that it is relatively easy for manipulative elites to stir up nationalist passions in a politically profitable manner. The second is that if elite-instigated ethnonational mobilisation could engender ethnonational war and mass violence in Yugoslavia, the same thing could happen elsewhere (in the strong version: anywhere). The third is that this elite-driven nationalism is essentially a politics of interest, and that it therefore must be explained in instrumental terms.

I think all three implications – or clusters of implications – are mistaken. To begin with, nationalism is not always a subjectively rational or objectively 'successful' political strategy. It is not always possible, let alone easy, to 'stir up nationalist passions'.²⁹ It is not always possible, let alone easy, to evoke the anxieties, the fears, the resentments, the perceptions and misperceptions, the self- and other-identifications, in short, the dispositions, the cast of mind against the background of which conspicuous and calculated nationalist stance-taking by elites can 'pay off' politically. Nor is it always possible, or easy, to sustain such a nationally 'primed' frame of mind, such propitiously 'nationalised' dispositions, once they have been successfully evoked.

The loosely related political stances or strategies we call 'nationalist' afford no generalised guarantee of political success, no generalised advantage over other political stances or strategies.³⁰ Investing in nationalism, *in general*, is no wiser than investing in any other political idiom or stance. At certain moments, to be sure, nationalist stances may yield higher returns. But it is hard to identify the boundaries of such moments *ex ante*. And once it is clear that such a moment has arrived, both politicians and analysts are likely to err by conceiving it in over-generalized terms. The collapse of communist regimes – *a fortiori* those that ruled multi- or binational states – was such a moment. But how do we define this moment and its boundaries? I would argue that political entrepreneurs, closely monitoring other political entrepreneurs within bounded fields of comparison, and seeking a share of the windfall profits won by early investors in late-communist (or early postcommunist) nationalism, have tended to overinvest in this (momentarily) successful strategy, just as analysts, monitoring other analysts (as well as politicians), and seeking a share of the windfall profits won by early analysts of late-communist (or early postcommunist) nationalism, have similarly tended to overinvest in the study of nationalism in general, and in the study of elite manipulation in particular.³¹

The history of postcommunism is short; but it is long enough to make it clear that nationalism is not always a winning strategy, even in the specifically postcommunist setting. The record of electoral failure by nationalists – beginning with Lithuania in 1992 and including Hungary (1994), Ukraine (1994), Belarus (1994), Romania (1996) and others – is by now quite substantial.³² The failure of one particular kind of nationalist appeal – the appeal to the need to protect transborder co-ethnics who are citizens and residents of other states – has been particularly striking. It is a source of chronic frustration to the Hungarian political elite, for example, how little the average Hungarian knows, or cares, about transborder Hungarians (in Romania, Slovakia, rump Yugoslavia and Ukraine). What the average Hungarian 'knows' about them, he or she doesn't like: the 'fact' that the Hungarian government should be spending 'our' money on 'them', and the 'fact' that 'they' come to Hungary to take 'our' jobs. 'They' are certainly not recognised as 'us'; the most eloquent testimony to this is that Hungarians from Transylvania who come to work in Hungary are routinely called 'Romanians'.³³ Similarly, Russian politicians' attempts to mobilise on the issue of Russians stranded in the 'near abroad' have been conspicuously unsuccessful. The one organisation specifically devoted to this theme – the Congress of Russian Communities (KOR) – failed even to clear the 5 per cent threshold in the December 1995 parliamentary elections.³⁴

The second problematic implication is that if elite manipulation drove the former Yugoslavia into ethnonational barbarism, the same could happen elsewhere. I have already criticised the conclusion to this syllogism, arguing that large-scale violence between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania is unlikely despite intractable national tensions. Here I would like to challenge the premise.

Elite manipulation was of course an important element in the unfolding Yugoslav catastrophe. But the elite manipulation thesis fails to specify the particular conditions that made key segments of the Yugoslav population especially *responsive* to elite manipulation as the state began to disintegrate; more generally, failing to account for the *differential success* of the mobilising efforts and activities of elites, it overpredicts the severity and violence of ethnic conflict. In the Yugoslav case, a whole series of distinctive factors – the massive intercommunal violence during World War II; the narratives of that violence that, deprived of a public hearing, circulated in familial settings, especially in certain key regions such as the Serb-inhabited areas of Croatian Krajina; the fear of the recurrence of that violence under conditions of rapid change in control over the means of state violence, especially when control over the means of state violence in Croatia was passing into the hands of a regime that incautiously (at best) employed certain symbols associated in the minds of Serbs with the murderous wartime Ustasha regime – help explain why people were responsive to the cynical manipulations originating in Belgrade.³⁵ Of course politicians distorted the past. But these distortions could be perceived as resonant and relevant in certain regions of Yugoslavia in a way that has no close parallel elsewhere, except perhaps in the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict. Such variation in *conditions of responsiveness* to inflammatory elite appeals remains untheorised by the elite manipulation approach.

The third problematic implication of the elite manipulation thesis is that nationalism is essentially a politics of interest, not a politics of identity, and that it therefore must be explained in instrumental terms, by focusing on the calculations of cynical, self-interested elites, not in primordial identitarian terms. We should not in fact have to choose between an instrumentalist and an identitarian approach to the study of nationalism. That this is a false opposition becomes clear when we think about the cognitive dimension of nationalism. Considered from a cognitive point of view, nationalism is a way of seeing the world, a way of *identifying interests*, or more precisely, a way of specifying interest-bearing units, of *identifying the relevant units in terms of which interests are conceived*. It furnishes a mode of vision and division of the world, to use Pierre Bourdieu's phrase, a mode of social counting and accounting.

Thus it inherently links identity and interest – by *identifying how we are to calculate our interests*.

Of course ‘interests’ are central to nationalist politics, as to all politics, indeed to social life generally. The elite manipulation view errs not in focusing on interests, but in doing so too narrowly, focusing on the calculating pursuit of interests taken as unproblematically ‘given’ (above all politicians’ interest in attaining or maintaining power), and ignoring broader questions about the *constitution* of interests, questions concerning the manner in which interests – and, more fundamentally, units construed as capable of having interests, such as ‘nations’, ‘ethnic groups’ and ‘classes’ – are identified and thereby constituted. Elite discourse often plays an important role in the constitution of interests, but again this is not something political or cultural elites can do at will by deploying a few manipulative tricks. The identification and constitution of interests – in national or other terms – is a complex process that cannot be reduced to elite manipulation.

V

The fifth idea I want to address is the ‘groupism’ that still prevails in the study of ethnicity and nationalism. By groupism – or what I will also call the ‘realism of the group’ – I mean the social ontology that leads us to talk and write about ethnic groups and nations as real entities, as communities, as substantial, enduring, internally homogeneous and externally bounded collectivities.

A similar realism of the group long prevailed in many areas of sociology and kindred disciplines.³⁶ Yet in the last decade or so, at least four developments in social theory have combined to undermine the treatment of groups as real, substantial entities. The first is the growing interest in network forms, the flourishing of network theory, and the increasing use of network as an overall orienting image or metaphor in social theory. Secondly, there is the challenge posed by theories of rational action, with their relentless methodological individualism, to realist understandings of groupness. The third development is a shift from broadly structuralist to a variety of more ‘constructivist’ theoretical stances; while the former envisioned groups as enduring components of social structure, the latter see groupness as constructed, contingent and fluctuating. Finally, an emergent postmodernist theoretical sensibility emphasises the fragmentary, the ephemeral and the erosion of fixed forms and clear boundaries. These developments are disparate, even contradictory. But they have converged in problematising groupness, and in undermining axioms of stable group being.

Yet this movement away from the realism of the group in the social sciences has been uneven. It has been striking – to take just one example – in the study of class, especially in the study of the working class – a term that is hard to use today without quotation marks or some other distancing device. Indeed *the* working class – understood as a real entity or substantial community – has largely dissolved as an object of analysis. It has been challenged both by theoretical statements and by detailed empirical research in social history, labour history and the history of popular discourse and mobilisation. The study of class as a cultural and political idiom, as a mode of conflict, and as an underlying abstract dimension of economic structure remains vital; but it is no longer encumbered by an understanding of *classes* as real, enduring entities.

At the same time, an understanding of *ethnic groups* and *nations* as real entities continues to inform the study of ethnicity, nationhood and nationalism. In our everyday talk and writing, we casually reify ethnic and national groups, speaking of ‘the Serbs’, ‘the Croats’, ‘the Estonians’, ‘the Russians’, ‘the Hungarians’, ‘the Romanians’ as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes. We represent the social and cultural world in terms reminiscent of a Modigliani painting as a multi-chrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic or cultural blocs.

I want to say a bit more about this Modiglianesque image of the social world. The metaphor I borrow from Gellner. Towards the end of *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner invoked the contrasting painterly styles of Kokoschka and Modigliani – shreds and patches of colour and light in the former case, solid, sharply outlined blocs of colour in the latter – to characterise the passage from the cultural landscape of prenational agrarian society to that of nationally and culturally homogenised industrial society.³⁷

This is a striking image, but I think it is misleading. There are in fact two versions of the Modiglianisation argument. The first – and this is Gellner’s own argument – is the ‘classical’, nation-statist version. This is the argument that culture and polity gradually converge. Gellner was a master of compressed characterisations of vast, world-historical social transformations; and no doubt in very broad historical perspective one can speak of a substantial cultural homogenisation of polities, and of a consequent convergence of cultural and political boundaries. There are, however, two problems with Gellner’s account.

First, Gellner’s stress on the homogenisation functionally required by industrial society seems to me to be trebly misplaced: in overemphasising the degree of cultural homogeneity ‘required’ by industrial

society; in sidestepping the problem, endemic in functionalist accounts, of explanation (to note that something may be 'required' or 'useful' for something else is not to explain its occurrence; no mechanism guarantees that what is 'required' will in fact be produced); and in neglecting the homogenising pressures arising from interstate competition, mass military conscription and mass nationalist public education in the classical age of the mass citizen army – pressures more powerful, in my view, than those arising from industrialism as such.³⁸

Secondly, Gellner did not specify whether the homogenising forces of industrial society are still at work, or whether late industrial society is no longer culturally homogenising. A differentiated answer is required to this question. In certain respects – for example in the global diffusion of what is in many respects a single global material culture and dispositions associated with it – powerfully homogenising forces are still at work. In other respects, however, this is not the case. Thus, for example, the very logic of advanced capitalist/late industrialist/postindustrial society generates pressures for massive imports of immigrant labour, which tends to recreate a more Kokoschka-like cultural pattern.

It seems indisputable, however, that the homogenising forces arising from militarised interstate competition in the classical age of the mass citizen army – at least in the advanced industrial world – peaked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was the maximally 'Modiglianesque' moment, I would argue: it was the 'high noon' of the citizen army, of the 'nation in arms', of the highly assimilationist, homogenising school systems that were linked in style and ideology to citizen armies, and of nation-states' claims to absolute internal sovereignty, claims that legitimated their attempts to 'nationalise' their own territories at will, even ruthlessly. With the passing of this maximally 'Modiglianesque' moment, there has been a certain relaxation in the homogenising claims, aspirations and practices of the state, at least in regions of the world (most strikingly in western Europe) where states are no longer locked in fierce geopolitical and potentially military competition with one another.

But the classical, nation-statist version of the Modigliani-map argument is not the most current one. It is universally acknowledged today that culture and polity do not converge, that nearly all existing polities are in some sense 'multicultural'. Yet the multicultural landscapes of late modernity are themselves usually represented in Modiglianesque terms, in terms, that is, of juxtaposed, well-defined, monochrome blocs. I want to argue that this newer, 'postnational' (or, more precisely, post-nation-state) version of the Modigliani map is as problematic as the older, classically 'nation-statist' version.

One might have thought that the mixed settlement patterns characteristic of most contemporary 'multicultural' polities would resist Modiglianesque representation. On this way of thinking, immigration-engendered ethnic heterogeneity, such as that of the United States, would be particularly refractory to representation in such terms; but so too would the intricately intermixed ethnodemographic landscape of Eastern Europe, and of East Central Europe in particular – a *locus classicus* of ethnically and nationally mixed settlement.

But this mistakes the nature – and the rhetorical power – of the Modigliani map. The spatial aspect of the representation – the image of continuous and homogeneous blocs situated next to, rather than interspersed with, one another – should not be interpreted too literally; it does not necessarily imply corresponding spatial characteristics of what is represented. The Modiglianesque representation of heterogeneity as the juxtaposition of homogeneous blocs does not presuppose that the blocs be territorially concentrated. The constituent blocs may be intermixed in space, for their 'blocness' – their boundedness and internal homogeneity – is conceptually located not in *physical* but in *social* and *cultural* space.³⁹ But the *conceptual* map is still groupist; it still sees the population as composed of definable, bounded, internally homogeneous blocs (for example, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, and Euro-Americans, in the 'pentagonal' multiculturalist account of America).⁴⁰ The implicit if not explicit imagery is that of internally homogeneous, externally sharply bounded, though not necessarily territorially concentrated, ethnocultural blocs.

The fact of pervasive territorial intermixing, then, is not itself incompatible with the Modiglianesque representation of ethnocultural heterogeneity. To challenge the Modigliani map, one must directly challenge the underlying groupist social ontology that informs most discussions of multiculturalism in North America (and indeed most discussions of ethnicity and nationalism throughout the world). There is by now an ample and sophisticated literature supporting such a challenge. As I noted above, moreover, a series of fundamental developments in social theory in recent decades have converged in problematising assumptions of stable and bounded 'groupness'. Yet these considerable theoretical and empirical resources have scarcely made a dent in the groupism that continues to prevail – that has indeed recently been strengthened – in theoretical and practical discussions of ethnicity and nationalism, sustained by the combined force of casually groupist ordinary language, parochial scholarly tradition (especially in ethnic and racial studies and area studies, but now also in the rapidly expanding sphere of nationalism studies), the institutionalisation and codification of groups and group

'identities' in public policy, and the group-making, group-strengthening endeavours of ethnopollitical entrepreneurs.

The forces supporting – and strengthening – groupist social ontology and groupist social analysis are even stronger in Eastern Europe than in North America. The institutionalisation and codification of ethnic and national groups, as noted above, went much further in multinational communist states than in North America. In Eastern Europe, moreover, the scholarly traditions associated with challenges to groupness – rational choice theory, network analysis, constructivism generally, and postmodernist emphases on the transient and fragmentary – have been much weaker than in North America. More fundamentally, Eastern Europe lacks the individualist traditions of North America, above all the fundamentally voluntarist conception of groupness originating in sectarian Protestantism but ramifying throughout social and political life, especially in the United States.

One might argue, moreover, that the prevailingly strongly groupist language of social analysis in Eastern Europe describes the ethnonational landscape of the region rather well. After all, this region has seen an enduring and conspicuous discrepancy between *national* boundaries – strongly maintained *within* and *against* states – and *state* boundaries. It has been the *locus classicus* of deeply sedimented, resilient and relatively stable ethnonational boundaries following, in much of the region, linguistic rather than political frontiers. The very forces that conspicuously hindered the Gellnerian convergence of culture and polity in the region, enabling ethnonational 'groups' to sustain boundaries that cut across political divisions, would seem to warrant a Modiglianesque representation.

There have indeed been impressive instances of sustained 'groupness' in the region – in particular, of the maintenance of group boundaries and strengthening of group identities against the homogenising, assimilationist pressures and practices of nationalising states. One notable instance is that of Poles in Eastern Prussia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One cannot generalise, however, from this case to the region as a whole – or even to other settings involving Poles and Germans. In other nearby settings, the boundaries between Poles and Germans proved quite weak and unstable, and a great deal of assimilation occurred in both directions. The maintenance and strengthening of national boundaries in this instance must be seen as reflecting particular circumstantial forces and factors, not as somehow emanating from some properties putatively intrinsic to 'Poles' as such. Groupness was strengthened in dynamic, interactive, organised response (involving a highly developed agricultural cooperative movement, credit associ-

ations, land purchase organisations, school strikes and strong support from the Catholic church) to the harshly assimilative practices of the Prussian/German state. It was sustained by a strong basis in the Catholic church (and by religiously as well as ethnolinguistically sustained endogamy) in a region where linguistic and religious cleavages coincided (in regions where Catholic Germans encountered Poles, national boundaries were much weaker). Groupness in this case was thus a product of politics and collective action, not a stable underlying basis for these.⁴¹

In other cases boundaries are much weaker. Consider for example late- and post-Soviet Ukraine. As we have noted above, the Soviet regime pervasively institutionalised nationhood and nationality as fundamental social categories. A key expression (and instrument) of that institutionalised scheme was the census, which recorded the self-identified ethnocultural nationality (*natsional'nost'*) of every person. At the time of the 1989 census, some 11.4 million residents of Ukraine identified their nationality as Russian. But the precision suggested by this census data, even when rounded to the nearest 100,000, is entirely spurious. The very categories 'Russian' and 'Ukrainian', as designators of putatively distinct ethnocultural nationalities, are deeply problematic in the Ukrainian context, where rates of intermarriage have been extremely high, and where nearly 2 million of those designating their ethnic nationality as Ukrainian in the 1989 census admitted to not speaking Ukrainian as their native language *or* as a second language they could 'freely command' – a figure many consider to be greatly underestimated. One should therefore be skeptical of the illusion of bounded groupness created by the census, with its exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories. One can imagine circumstances in which a self-conscious ethnically Russian minority might emerge in Ukraine, but such a 'group' cannot be taken as given or deduced from the census.⁴²

The boundary between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania is certainly sharper than that between Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine. Even in Transylvania, however, group boundaries are considerably more porous and ambiguous than is widely assumed. The language of everyday life, to be sure, is rigorously categorical, dividing the population into mutually exclusive ethnonational categories, and making no allowance for mixed or ambiguous forms. But this categorical code, important though it is as a *constituent element* of social relations, should not be taken for a *faithful description* of them. Reinforced by ethnopolitical entrepreneurs on both sides, the categorical code obscures as much as it reveals about ethnonational identifications, masking the fluidity and ambiguity that arise from mixed marriages, from

bilingualism, from migration, from Hungarian children attending Romanian-language schools, from intergenerational assimilation (in both directions) and from sheer indifference to the claims of ethnocultural nationality.

'Groupness' and 'boundedness' must thus be taken as *variable*, as *emergent properties* of particular structural or conjunctural settings; they cannot properly be taken as given or axiomatic. Comparative studies of ethnicity and nationalism provide abundant support for this point, but it remains inadequately appreciated outside this specialised research tradition. The point needs to be emphasised today more than ever, for the unreflectively groupist language that prevails in everyday life, journalism, politics, and much social research as well – the habit of speaking without qualification of 'Hungarians' and 'Romanians', for example, as if they were sharply bounded, internally homogeneous 'groups' – not only weakens social analysis but undermines the possibilities for liberal politics in the region.

VI

The final idea I want to discuss is the Manichean view that there are two kinds of nationalism, a good, civic kind and a bad, ethnic kind; and two corresponding understandings of nationhood, the good, civic conception, in which nationhood is seen as based on common citizenship, and the bad, ethnic conception, in which nationhood is seen as based on common ethnicity. This is often connected to an Orientalist conception of east European nationalism, for in general civic nationalism is seen as characteristic of western Europe, ethnic nationalism as characteristic of eastern Europe. But the civic-ethnic distinction is also used within regions, sometimes in an ideological mode, to distinguish one's own good, legitimate civic nationalism from the illegitimate ethnic nationalism of one's neighbours, and sometimes in a scholarly or quasi-scholarly mode, to characterise and classify different forms of nationalism and modes of national self-understanding. Today the distinction is often used to frame discussions of the new states of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and to 'keep score' on contemporary processes of nation- and state-building in the region; it provides a handy – all-too-handly, in my view – tool for classifying incipient processes of state- and nation-building as civic or ethnic.

By labelling this a Manichean view, I caricature it, of course, but not too violently. In its more nuanced forms, the distinction certainly has some analytical and normative merit. I myself have used a related (though not identical) distinction between state-centred and ethnocul-

tural understandings of nationhood in my own previous work.⁴³ Still, I think the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, especially in the rather simplistic form in which it is usually applied, is both analytically and normatively problematic.⁴⁴

One way of highlighting the analytical weakness of the Manichean view is by noting its uncertainty over how to conceptualise the cultural dimension of nationhood and nationalism. Roughly speaking, there are two very different ways of mapping culture onto the civic–ethnic distinction.

- (i) On the one hand, ethnic nationalism may be interpreted narrowly, as involving an emphasis on descent, and, ultimately, on race, on biology. In this case, there is very little ethnic nationalism around, for on this view an emphasis on common culture, without any marked emphasis on common descent, has to be coded as a species of civic nationalism. But the category of civic nationalism then becomes too heterogeneous to be useful, while that of ethnic nationalism is underpopulated.
- (ii) On the other hand, ethnic nationalism may be interpreted broadly, as *ethnocultural*, while civic nationalism may be interpreted narrowly, as involving an acultural conception of citizenship, a sharp separation of citizenship from cultural as well as ethnic nationality. But in this case, the problem is just the opposite: civic nationalism gets defined out of existence, and virtually all nationalisms would be coded as ethnic or cultural. Even the paradigmatic cases of civic nationalism – France and America – cease to count as civic nationalism, since they have a crucial cultural component. (Interestingly, two recent books argue for the existence of an American cultural nationality: American nationhood, they argue, is not purely political, founded on an idea; it is cultural; America is a nation-state founded on a common, and distinctive, American culture).⁴⁵

The normative weakness of the distinction similarly pivots on the ambiguous place of culture:

- (a) If ethnic is interpreted broadly as *ethnocultural*, then the blanket normative condemnation of ethnic nationalism is problematic, for in certain circumstances it is easy to have normative sympathy for the defensive power of *ethnocultural* nationalism (e.g. for that of Poland during the time of partition, for that of the Baltic nations under Soviet rule, indeed for minority cultures everywhere, whose nationalism cannot assume a civic form, though it need not, of course, be ‘ethnic’ in the narrow, biologically based sense).

- (b) If culture, however, is classified with civic nationhood and nationalism, then many nationalising 'civic' nationalisms, more or less suffused with cultural chauvinism, and seeking to reduce or (at the limit) eradicate cultural heterogeneity within a state, although indifferent to ethnicity in the sense of descent as such, are normatively ambiguous at best.

From a normative point of view, the joining of state power to nationalist or nationalising practices should always be cause for concern. A skeptical stance towards statist nationalising nationalisms (not to be equated with a blanket condemnation of them) is more adequate, and more supple, than the conceptually muddled blanket embrace of civic (and condemnation of ethnic) nationalism. The policies and practices of nationalising states may be assimilationist, in a variety of modalities ranging from benign – or not so benign – neglect of ethnic or cultural differences to harsh or even coercive attempts to eradicate such differences. On the other hand, nationalising policies and practices may be dissimilationist – premised on, even constitutive of, fundamental differences between groups. The assimilationist stances are not necessarily 'civic' in any normatively robust sense, while the dissimilationist stances are not necessarily 'ethnic' in the narrow sense (not necessarily premised on descent-based group difference). Both assimilationist and dissimilationist nationalising nationalisms warrant normative skepticism, though our normative evaluation of them will depend heavily on rich contextual knowledge – knowledge that cannot adequately be captured, even in simplified form, by an impoverished and ambiguous coding of them as 'civic' or 'ethnic'.

From an analytical point of view, a more useful (though of course closely related) distinction can be drawn between *state-framed* and *counter-state* understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism. In the former, 'nation' is conceived as congruent with the state, as institutionally and territorially 'framed' by the state; in the latter, it is conceived in opposition to the territorial and institutional frame of some existing state or states. This distinction can do the analytical work that is expected of the civic–ethnic distinction without the attendant confusions.

Clearly, there is not necessarily anything 'civic' – in the normatively robust sense of that term – about state-framed nationhood or nationalism. It is the state – not citizenship – that is the cardinal point of reference; and the state that frames the nation need not be democratic, let alone robustly so. Moreover, the notion of state-framed nationhood or nationalism can accommodate linguistic, cultural and even ethnic

aspects of nationhood and nationalism in so far as these are (as they often are in fact) framed, mediated and shaped by the state.⁴⁶ Escaping the constricting definitional antithesis between civic and ethnic or ethnocultural nationalism, we can see that state-framed nationalisms are often imbued with a strong cultural content and may be (though need not be) ethnicised is well.⁴⁷

Counter-state nationalisms, on the other hand, need not be specifically ethnic; nationhood conceived in opposition to an existing state need not be conceived in ethnic terms, or even, more loosely, in ethnocultural terms. Quite apart from the difference, mentioned above, between narrowly ethnic and broadly ethnocultural understandings of nationhood, counter-state definitions of nation may be based on territory, on historic provincial privileges, on distinct political histories prior to incorporation into a larger state and so on. These are all cases of counter-state but non-ethnic definitions of nationhood – of nation defined in opposition to the institutional and territorial framework of an existing state or states but without reference to a distinct ethnic or ethnocultural collectivity. Moreover, whether the counter-state nation in question is defined in ethnic or ethnocultural terms or in some other fashion, counter-state nationalisms may partake of ‘civic’ qualities; indeed demandingly participatory counter-state nationalist movements may provide a particularly rich setting for the cultivation, display and exercise of participatory and thereby in some sense ‘civic’ virtue – which the conventional civic–ethnic antithesis definitionally, but misleadingly, associates with ‘civic’ and denies to ‘ethnic’ nations and nationalisms.

Conclusion

The ‘pernicious postulates’ I have discussed – some directly opposed to others – do not add up to a single theory of nationalism. Nor have I sought to construct such a theory in my critique of these postulates. The search for ‘a’ or ‘the’ theory of nationalism – like the search for ‘a’ or ‘the’ solution to nationalist conflicts – is in my view misguided: for the theoretical problems associated with nationhood and nationalism, like the practical political problems, are multiform and varied, and not susceptible of resolution through a single theoretical (or practical) approach. What I have sought to provide, then, is not a comprehensive theory of nationalism, but a series of pointers away from a set of analytical clichés, theoretical dead ends and misguided practical stances towards more promising ways of thinking about, writing about and coping practically with nationalism and national conflicts.

NOTES

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- 1 A partial listing of these would include international relations and security studies (as the end of the Cold War has fostered new understandings of 'security' and 'insecurity'); political science (as the study of nationalism has spread from its traditional home in comparative politics into more theoretically ambitious, self-consciously 'scientific' areas of political science); rational choice theory (in sociology as well as in political science); anthropology (as it has increasingly taken complex, 'modern' societies as its object); sociology (especially with the 'cultural turn' in comparative, historical and political sociology); ethnic studies (with a partial convergence between the literatures on ethnicity and on nationalism); cultural studies; comparative literature; art history; women's studies; musicology; and a variety of area-studies fields including, in a spectacular instance of scholarly perestroika, post-Soviet and east European studies.
- 2 In the post-Soviet field, this has happened as academic entrepreneurs, in search of windfall profits, have entered the field, unburdened by any but the most minimal acquaintance with the comparative and theoretical literature of the field, to say nothing of the wider theoretical and empirical literature of the social sciences, and hastily converted their intellectual capital from forms suddenly devalued by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet regime into newly revalued forms, for example, in the sub-field of 'security studies', from a weapons-oriented understanding of security and insecurity to one centred on ethnic and national conflict. In other fields, far removed from the traditional disciplinary loci for the study of nationalism (cultural studies, musicology, comparative literature, etc.), the historical and social scientific literature on nationalism has been appropriated in a highly selective way.
- 3 For a sampling of that literature, see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1991; J. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, 1982; J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester, 1982; E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983; and A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986.
- 4 C. Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*, New York, 1984.
- 5 Apart from the fact that my own recent work has concerned nationalism in this region, there are good analytical reasons for focusing on this region. Nowhere – for reasons suggested in note 2 – is the theoretical primitivism in the study of nationalism more striking than in the literature (and quasi-literature) on this region. Nowhere, moreover, do the myths and misconceptions I address have more superficial plausibility than in this region.
- 6 It is an uncomfortable truth that, around the time of the 1938 Munich agreement, the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia through the separation of the Sudeten German lands from the rest of the country was presented and justified in Britain – and not only in Germany – in the name of national self-

determination. See A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, London, 1961 and M. Kovács, 'A nemzeti önrendelkezés csapdája' [The trap of self-determination], *Népszabadság*, 12 August 1995.

- 7 For a classic, albeit highly compressed, statement of the sequel, see the epilogue to A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, Chicago, 1976. For a more extended statement, though still splendidly concise, see J. Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, Seattle, 1974, especially ch. 1. It is problematic, to be sure, to assign responsibility for the disastrous developments in Central Europe in the two decades following World War I to the principle of self-determination, not least because the principle was applied so selectively in the postwar settlement. One could argue that it was the failure to apply the principle more consistently – for example, by allowing the peaceful accession of rump Austria to Germany – rather than the application of the principle, that proved disastrous.
- 8 Kovács, 'A nemzeti önrendelkezés csapdája'.
- 9 For sophisticated recent discussions from the perspective of normative political theory, see Y. Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, 1993; W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford, 1995; and D. Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford, 1995.
- 10 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 48.
- 11 For an analysis of interwar Poland as a nationalising state, with some concluding reflections on nationalising states today, see R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, 1996, ch. 4.
- 12 For a comparison of Weimar Germany and contemporary Russian homeland nationalism, see Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, ch. 5.
- 13 See *inter alia* S. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, Washington, 1995, pp. 209ff and Kovács, 'A nemzeti önrendelkezés csapdája'.
- 14 As Robert Dahl puts it, 'We cannot solve the problem of the proper scope and domain of democratic units from within democratic theory. Like the majority principle, the democratic principle presupposes a proper unit. The criteria of the democratic process presuppose the rightfulness of the unit itself.' See for a thorough exploration of this point Dahl's *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven, 1989, pp. 147–8, 193–209, with quotation coming from p. 209.
- 15 For penetrating analysis of institutional design, see D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, 1985 and *A Democratic South Africa?*, Berkeley, 1991.
- 16 For an eloquent contextualist plea for 'the adjustment of claims to circumstances', see M. Walzer, 'The New Tribalism', *Dissent*, Spring, 1992. To argue that good institutional design must be context-sensitive in a strong sense does not mean that generalising analysis of the workings of different types of institutions – say, for example, different types of electoral systems – is inappropriate. Horowitz undertakes such generalising analysis, but it is a generalising analysis of the very different effects that 'the same' electoral system can have in differing contexts. And Horowitz's most sustained discussion of institutional design – in *A Democratic South Africa?* – is densely contextual in my sense, blending relatively 'thick' description of a particular context with generalising arguments about the effects of particular institutions in a variety of settings.

- 17 Although I limit my remarks to eastern Europe here, the gloom-and-doom view of putatively explosive ethnic nationalism has considerably wider currency. It is even used in the United States, for example, to link multiculturalism to 'Balkanisation' and attendant bloodshed. Critical though I am of many multiculturalist pieties (see, for example, pp. 292–98), I find the argument of a 'slippery slope' leading from the follies of multiculturalism à l'américaine to ethnic warfare just plain silly.
- 18 J. D. Fearon and D. D. Laitin, 'Explaining Interethnic Cooperation', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 90, 1996.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 I should emphasise that this is a relative, not an absolute, absence of nationalist violence. There was one serious incident of violent clashes between Hungarians and Romanians in Tirgu Mires in the spring of 1990, but this did not trigger further violence. Other forms of violence – notably violent attacks on Gypsies in Romania and other east European countries – have been quite serious; my attention here is limited to relations between Hungary and the majority nationalities in states neighbouring Hungary.
- 21 Fearon and Laitin, 'Explaining Interethnic Cooperation', correctly caution against explaining ethnic violence by appealing to narratives of 'loss, blame, and threat', arguing that such narratives characterise non-violent forms of ethnic conflict as well. But not all such narratives are equal, or equally likely to be connected to violence. There is an important difference, in particular, between memories and threats of death and physical violence on the one hand and narratives of loss, blame and threat in general on the other. Credible narratives of loss, blame and threat are ubiquitous; credible narratives linking memories of past mass violence to threats of future mass violence are not. What was distinctive about the Yugoslav situation – and in my view centrally connected with the violence there – was the availability of plausible, and for some key actors, compelling narratives linking the occurrence of large-scale violence, in particular, mass killings, in the past to the threatened recurrence of such violence in the present.
- 22 David Laitin, personal communication.
- 23 In Estonia and Latvia, for example, the clash between the claims of the newly independent nationalising states and those of their Russian and Russophone minorities, strongly amplified from the outside by the homeland nationalist claims of Russia to 'protect' Baltic Russians, has remained intense and intractable at the level of high politics. But there has been little popular nationalist mobilisation in the last few years on the part of majority nationalities or on the part of the Russian and Russian-speaking minorities (on the relative political passivity of Russians, see N. Melvin, *Russians beyond Russia*, London, 1995).
- 24 There is, of course, a parallel danger of under-historicisation. I address this below in my discussion of the failure of 'elite manipulation' accounts to explain or systematically address the historically conditioned differential resonance of appeals made by manipulative or opportunistic nationalist politicians. (To the extent that historically conditioned differences in responsiveness to inflammatory nationalist rhetoric are addressed at all in the

'elitist' literature, they are addressed in an *ad hoc* fashion, relegated to the category of 'other factors' or to an undertheorised residual 'context'.)

- 25 Both the Hungarian Duna-TV and the various western European channels have high prestige among Transylvanian Hungarians. Romanian state television, by contrast, has low prestige although a new private Romanian channel, self-consciously Western in style, is widely watched. Its effect is mainly in contributing to the alienation of Transylvanian Hungarians from the regime, and, perhaps, from the state itself.
- 26 For a fuller version of this argument, see Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, ch. 2.
- 27 V. Vujacic and V. Zaslavsky, 'The Causes of Disintegration in the USSR and Yugoslavia', *Telos*, vol. 88, 1991.
- 28 In Bourdieuan terms, two sets of persons might share exactly the same habitus (or, more sociologically, the same distribution of habitus); they might look at the world in the same way, speak the same language, dress in the same manner, consume the same goods, etc.: yet they might still exist as two 'groups' because of public categorical recognition.
- 29 The expression itself is problematic: presuming that nationalist passions are already there to be 'stirred up', it glosses over the difficulties involved in what might be called the 'work of nationalisation'.
- 30 For a sophisticated argument to the contrary, see J. Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics*, New York, 1981, pp. 41–66, especially pp. 64–5.
- 31 In another sense, to be sure, analysts have underinvested in the study of nationalism; or, their investments have been short-term rather than long-term. In search of a quick pay-off, they have underinvested in the long-term study of nationalism, but over-invested in quick discussions and in 'bidding up' the significance of the phenomenon of nationalism.
- 32 One should not replace a global overestimation of the power of nationalist political appeals with a global underestimation. The 'return of the left' does *not* mean that nationalism is no longer a viable political option in the region. The 'return of the left' – especially, of a 'left' whose economic policies have been (in some instances) far more monetarist, far more acceptable to the IMF, than anything the preceding 'right' government undertook – may well be followed by the 'return of the return of the right'. Moreover, the 'left' – think of the communists in Russia – is quite as capable of nationalism as the 'right', if these labels mean anything at all, which is doubtful. Nationalism had no fixed location on the political spectrum back when it made sense to speak of a political 'spectrum'; still less does it have any such fixed location today.
- 33 This is not, of course, peculiar to Hungary: 'Germans' from Kazakhstan who resettle in Germany are called 'Russians', as are Jews from Russia (or elsewhere in the former Soviet Union) who resettle in Israel.
- 34 The lack of electoral success of appeals to the protection of Russians outside Russia does not mean that this theme will disappear from Russian political discourse. Even if such appeals are unprofitable in the arena of domestic political competition, they may be useful in international contexts. This argument is developed in Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, ch. 5.
- 35 For a more detailed statement of this argument, see Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, pp. 72ff.

- 36 The argument of this and the next paragraph is drawn from, and developed more fully in, Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, ch 1, especially pp. 13ff.
- 37 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 139–40.
- 38 Gellner of course did devote considerable attention to education, notably in *Nations and Nationalism*, ch. 3. But he saw mass ‘exo-education’ as arising from the logic of industrial society, not from the logic of interstate competition in the age of mass warfare.
- 39 Even mixed settlement patterns, though, are often imagined in mosaic-like terms as composites of bounded and homogenous units. ‘Heterogeneity’, in this mode of imagining it, is a distribution of homogenous units. Heterogeneity is still conceptualised in groupist terms. Sometimes this finds literal representation in maps – as, for example, when maps of ethnic ‘diversity’ or ‘mixing’ are represented as juxtaposed solid colour patches. How to represent ethnic heterogeneity on a two-dimensional map is a difficult – and philosophically interesting – question. Certainly, though, the simple juxtaposition of solid colour fields is quite often misleading, suggesting a much greater degree of local homogeneity than in fact exists, and relegating heterogeneity to a higher-level unit. That is, such maps imply that provinces (for example) are heterogeneous, but smaller regions and villages are not; and this implication is often mistaken.
- 40 For critical discussions of conceptions of this multicultural pentagon, see D. Hollinger, *Post-Ethnic America*, New York, 1995 and M. Lind, *The Next American Nation*, New York, 1995.
- 41 For a general statement of this point, see C. Calhoun, ‘The Problem of Identity in Collective Action’, in J. Huber, ed., *Macro-Micro Linkages in Sociology*, Newbury Park, 1991, p. 59.
- 42 The data on nationality and language are taken from Gosudarstvennyi Komitetet po Statistike, *Natsional’nyi Sostav Naseleniia SSSR*, Moscow, 1991, pp. 78–9.
- 43 R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, MA, 1992.
- 44 For a critique of the civic–ethnic dichotomy from the point of view of political theory, see B. Yack, ‘The Myth of the Civic Nation’, *Critical Review*, vol. 10, 1996.
- 45 See Hollinger, *Post-Ethnic America* and Lind, *The Next American Nation*.
- 46 France may again be cited as a paradigmatic instance of state-framed nationhood. Culture is indeed constitutive (not – as I argued in *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* – simply expressive) of French nationhood; but this is pervasively state-framed culture, not culture conceived as prior to and independent of the territorial and institutional frame of the state.
- 47 Again, in this case, we would be talking about a *statist* ethnicisation of nationhood, not some kind of pre-state or extra-state ethnicity. ‘Ethnicity’ and ‘culture’ thus may be found in state-framed nationalism, but only in so far as they themselves are state-framed or state-‘caged’ (to use Michael Mann’s term, drawn from his *The Sources of Social Power*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1986 and 1993). There is no opposition between the statist component – which refers to the framing – and ethnicity or culture.

Bibliography of Ernest Gellner's writings on nationalism

Comments about nationalism occur throughout Gellner's writings, not least when discussing particular national identities, Islam, the options of modern European thought, and the sociology of development: this is scarcely surprising given that the interpretation of nationalism is part of a larger social philosophy. The following list concentrates on the theory of nationalism, and so omits most occasional references and much of the more general social philosophy. As the list that follows is extensive, key texts have been marked with asterisks. It follows Ian Jarvie's 'Bibliography of Ernest Gellner' in J. A. Hall and I. C. Jarvie, eds., *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, Amsterdam, 1996. Please note that the pieces collected in *Encounters with Nationalism* are not listed here by date of original publication; equally, translations and reprintings are not cited.

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