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1

Introduction: Knowing Nationalism

Before delving into more specific perspectives and approaches, we need to appreciate the fundamental difficulties involved in defining nationalism and formulating core concepts to guide our investigations of it. Sensitizing us to these difficulties is the main objective of this introduction.

Perplexing Variety

How do we know when we are looking at an instance of nationalism? Consider the examples from the recent past in Box 1.1.

Which, if any, of these diverse episodes best exemplifies nationalism? Some readers may only regard some of these examples as clear instances of nationalism, and each one can, of course, be viewed through other conceptual lenses – constitutional reform, regime collapse, ethnic politics, international *realpolitik*. They are not offered as any sort of easy demonstration of what nationalism is, but to sensitize us to the diversity and complexity of the processes we routinely attach to this term, and the likelihood of misunderstanding and miscommunication on this topic. Their causes and contexts are highly varied – shifting distributions of governance in an evolving Europe, a weakened state following the collapse of the USSR, inter-ethnic conflict on a small island with a restricted economy and a global super-power asserting its international strength in a domestic atmosphere of insecurity. No doubt in each case there are elites and factions vying to mobilize popular support around particular agendas, and complex combinations of calculated interests, collective sentiments and evocative symbols shaping the course of events. And specifying how these play out in each case is fundamental to explaining them. But these are the stuff of politics and society in general, and not peculiar to nationalism. So what is it that makes us look at examples like these and so often think: ‘nationalism’?

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Box 1.1 Exemplifying Nationalism

Example 1: On 11 September, 1997, the people of Scotland voted in a referendum, by a strong majority, to establish a Scottish parliament with legislative authority over much of Scotland's domestic affairs. The new parliament was officially opened on 1 July 1999. This was the outcome of decades of building political pressure for greater self-government in Scotland, and Britain-wide pressures for constitutional reform. Some supporters are content with this new arrangement, others would like to see the parliament's range of powers increase, and still others would like to see Scotland become an independent nation-state, while retaining membership in the European Union.

Example 2: In February 1998 Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, sent Serbian troops into parts of Kosovo controlled by the Kosovo Liberation Army, triggering brutal guerrilla warfare, urban riots and abortive peace negotiations. On 24 March NATO launched a campaign of air bombardment that lasted for 78 days, finally achieving an agreement to the withdrawal of Serb troops on 9 June. These events arose out of Milosevic's rescinding of the provincial autonomy of Kosovo in 1989, the general disintegration of the Yugoslavian state after 1991 and the Bosnian War of 1992–5, with its 'ethnic cleansing' in the Serbian parts of Bosnia. At the time of writing all that remains of Yugoslavia is the loose federation of Serbia and Montenegro.

Example 3: In May 2000 Fijian businessman George Speight led a small private army in a coup, seizing control of the Fijian parliament. He

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When we focus on the more abstract language of theories and generalization it is easy to lose sight of the messy reality we seek to understand. To help offset this tendency, throughout this book in the even-numbered expository chapters I have offered case study boxes to illustrate some of the issues under discussion. It is in the nature of concrete examples, however, that they can exemplify many different themes at once, and at the same time they highlight general issues in idiosyncratic ways. Some cases are included because they are paradigmatic for the literature (e.g. Czech nationalism in nineteenth-century Bohemia), others because they are likely to be less familiar and perhaps counterintuitive (e.g. spirit mediums mediating territorial attachments in the insurgency that transformed Rhodesia into Zimbabwe in the 1970s). Thus some examples are meant to help strengthen the reader's familiarity with cases that have strongly influenced the literature, while others are meant to tease the mind a bit in relation to the discussions they are located in. But most fundamentally

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sought to remove the Indian-descended Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudry, and called for a new constitution guaranteeing the political supremacy of indigenous Fijians. After holding the Prime Minister and his cabinet hostage for 56 days, Speight and his army surrendered, ushering in a period of martial law. This was the third coup d'état since 1987 led by indigenous Fijians (around 50 per cent of the population) in response to perceived political domination by Indo-Fijians (around 44 per cent of the population). Descended from indentured labourers brought to Fiji under British colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Indo-Fijians today dominate the economic sector, while the military is controlled by the indigenous Fijians.

Example 4: Between 20 March and 15 April 2003, after failed attempts to get full UN backing and strong resistance from France and Russia, a 'coalition of the willing', led by the US with its main partner the UK, waged a war against Iraq, toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein. The war was justified on various grounds: that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was prepared to put them into the hands of terrorists, posing an imminent threat to the US and the UK; that Hussein had flaunted UN resolutions calling him to disarm for over a decade and had to be brought to heel; and that he was a brutal tyrant and deposing him was a humanitarian act, liberating the Iraqi people. More broadly, the war arose out of the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks on the US on 11 September 2001, which triggered a US policy of heightened national security and an international 'war on terrorism', in the first instance on Al Qaeda and their Taliban allies in Afghanistan.

they should keep reminding us of the perplexing variety that lies beneath the conceptual abstractions. I have also tried to achieve a reasonable amount of global and historical scope overall in the examples chosen.

Competing Definitions

If we survey a few examples of how the nation and nationality have been defined by major commentators, the results are just as diverse. One established approach to these questions is to begin with the assumption that 'nationalism' is what 'nations' do. In a famous essay of 1882 the French rationalist scholar Ernest Renan defined the nation broadly as a combination of social solidarity built up out of historical contingencies, with a voluntary collective will in the present to continue to build on that solidarity:

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A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which strictly speaking are just one, constitute this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the common possession of a rich legacy of memories; the other is actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the heritage that has been received in common. (Renan 1996: 57–8)

In the 1950s, strongly influenced by the developing field of cybernetics, the political scientist Karl Deutsch emphasized the frequency and density of social communication, a theme that continues to be central to many conceptions of nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1991):

What is proposed here, in short, is a functional definition of nationality. Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group, than with outsiders. This overall result can be achieved by a variety of functionally equivalent arrangements. (Deutsch 1953: 97)

Yet another key theme, prevalent in many popular (as well as scholarly) definitions, has been to stress notions of ancestry, kinship and descent. The nation is an imagined extension of bonds of blood relationship:

Our answer, then, to that often asked question, ‘What is a nation?’ is that it is a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group that can command a person’s loyalty because of felt kinship ties. . . . The sense of unique descent, of course, need not, and *in nearly all cases will not*, accord with factual history. (Connor 1994: 202, emphasis in original)

And again, in a line of thought running from Emile Durkheim (1965 [1915]), through Carlton Hayes (1960), up to Benedict Anderson (1991: 5–6), the parallels between nationalism and religion have often been noted, many seeing the national community as a modern replacement for religious community, supplying a criteria for ultimate good and a focus for social solidarity. As Josep Llobera puts it:

The nation, as a culturally defined community, is the highest symbolic value of modernity; it has been endowed with a quasi-sacred character

equalled only by religion. In fact, this quasi-sacred character derives from religion. In practice, the nation has become either the modern, secular substitute of religion or its most powerful ally. In modern times the communal sentiments generated by the nation are highly regarded and sought after as the basis for group loyalty. As a symbolic value, the nation is the stake of complex ideological struggles in which different groups participate. That the modern state is often the beneficiary should hardly be surprising given its paramount power. (Llobera 1994: ix-x)

And recently, in the face of highly negative conceptions of nations and nationalism as malign forces inevitably leading to chauvinism, social conflict and violence (e.g. Hobsbawm 1996), some have tried to articulate more philosophical justifications for why nations may be necessary and even beneficial:

Consider what is involved in a set of people forming a team. When we describe a group of people in this way, we imply that they work or play in close proximity to one another. But we also imply more than this: we imply that they see themselves as co-operating to achieve some end, that they regard one another as having obligations to the team. These two parts of the definition can pull apart. For instance, we might say ‘The England cricket team isn’t really a team at all; they’re just a bunch of individuals . . . We can imagine two participants arguing about such a claim, one seeing individualism where the other sees co-operation, and we could see that it would not be easy to decide who is right . . . Nations are like teams in this respect.’ (Miller 1995:17–18)

So which is it? Is the nation a historically formed community, an artefact of communicative interaction, an imagined macro-family, a pseudo-religion, a team? While not absolutely incompatible, these various definitions point us in different directions, and each seems to work better in some cases than others. We will attempt a ‘working definition’ of nationalism towards the end of this introduction. For now what we need to appreciate is that our definitions do not so much delimit the subject matter as direct our attention towards specific aspects of a complex phenomena that has proved very difficult to encapsulate in a few words.

Underlying Assumptions

Most of us bring fundamental assumptions about what kind of thing nationalism is to our studies of nationalism, assumptions that shape from the outset our attempts at more formal definitions. We need to be aware of our own prejudices in this regard, because they have a powerful affect on how we read – what we find appealing and unappealing, convincing and unconvincing. The usual starting points are:

Nationalism is a feeling: At bottom, nationalism is made of passions, emotions and sentiments. It arises out of the subjective experiences of those who consider themselves nationalists, and patterns of sympathy among those with similar feelings. For this reason it is ultimately irrational or at least non-rational (Mill 1996; Connor 1994; Grosby 1995).

Nationalism is an identity: It is a way of categorizing oneself and others, which fulfils a fundamental human need for such labelling. While the social divisions and attendant labels of nationalism may be viewed as socially and historically contingent, the need to anchor the self in relation to others is a necessity (McCrone 1998; Penrose 1995; Reicher and Hopkins 2001).

Nationalism is an ideology: It is a particular system of morally charged beliefs about the world, which sees the world as naturally made up of discrete nations, each with a natural right to self-determination. This ideology can seize the minds of key thinkers and spread to entire populations, creating a worldview that directs collective behaviour (see Kedourie 1993 [1960]; Greenfeld 1992; Smith 1991: 74).

Nationalism is a social movement: Feelings, identities and ideas can be amorphous and elusive, their social effects difficult to demonstrate. Better to look for actual behaviour, social action in the name of the nation, people organizing themselves on a substantial scale to achieve nationalist goals. Only by tying it to observable behaviour can we give the concept reliable meaning (see Breuilly 1993; Hroch 2000; Hechter 2000).

Nationalism is a historical process: While usually encompassing the previous premises, which are all undoubtedly historical processes, by this we mean something broader – the tendency to view nationalism as a world historical trend, which has localized beginnings, most would agree in Europe, but which spreads to encompass the globe. In the guises of ideology, social movement and historical process, nationalism is closely

identified with modernization in general. The key point with this last, however, is that nationalism is seen somewhat coolly, as a process that can be described with some detachment, and that objectively exists apart from the sentiments and convictions of actual nationalists (see Kohn 1967; Gellner 1983; Mann 1992).

My own position is that nationalism can be all of these things at once – feeling, identity, idea, movement and process – though certain cases, and approaches to research, will tend to direct our attention to some aspects more than others. And in practice most students of nationalism observe this catholicity of understanding, despite tending to anchor themselves in one of these broad conceptions. What I want to suggest here at the outset is that we should not let our biases towards one of these conceptions impede our ability to grapple with the ideas of those who see it differently.

Primordialism versus Modernism

Since the 1970s students of nationalism have increasingly been viewed as falling into two great camps: primordialists versus modernists (Özirimli 2000; Smith 1996a, 1996b; Gellner 1996a). Surveying these approaches and assessing their strengths and weaknesses is the main purpose of the first half of this book. Briefly, primordialists tend to view nationalism as a variant of ethnicity, often emphasizing its emotional dimension, and arguing that many modern nations have evolved continuously out of premodern ethnic formations. Modernists, on the other hand, tend to see nations as concomitants of the formation of modern states and economies, often emphasizing their ideological dimension and seeing them as evidence of the plastic and socially constructed nature of ethnicity.

While this dichotomy encodes some very real and fundamental differences in the conception and understanding of nationalism, it has also become a somewhat sterile framework for making sense of nationalism. What once fruitfully stimulated debate and forced people to articulate their arguments has increasingly become a pair of entrenched, ritually opposed positions, which many would now like to move beyond (e.g. Nairn 1997). Among other things, I will be arguing in the chapters that follow that although primordialist approaches pay salutary attention to the role of feelings in nationalism, the social nature of feelings is frequently under-theorized, and too easily attributed to the power of symbols. On the other hand, modernist approaches, while rightly drawing

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attention to the historical specificity of nationalism, have a misleading tendency to represent modernity as a relatively stable state, failing to appreciate the accelerating dynamism of modernity, which continues to generate new nationalisms.

Ethnicity and the State

The concept of ethnicity tends to become unhelpfully blurred with those of culture and nationalism. I would define ethnicity as the process generating relatively bounded, self-identified groups, defined in relation to similar groups, usually through notions of common descent and practices of endogamy, and often occupying a distinctive economic or ecological niche (see Eriksen 1993: ch. 1). The crucial ideas here are, first, that there is more to an ethnic group than common social traits such as language variety, religion, skin colour, customs and so on. Indeed an ethnic group might be quite diverse in terms of such traits, or share such traits with other distinct ethnic groups. What matters is that the group regards itself as a unique population, with a name for itself, some sense of collective history and ways of symbolically marking membership in the group. Second, ethnic groups by definition come in contrastive sets, the notion of 'us' is defined in contrast to other such groups, to 'them' (Barth 1969).

Thomas Eriksen usefully lists some of the typical headings under which we encounter ethnic groups: (1) urban ethnic minorities, where processes of immigration in search of work have brought people of different origins together in the same urban space; (2) ethnic groups in 'plural societies', usually colonially created states in which pre-existing ethnic diversity and labour immigration combine to create an ethnically segmented citizenry; (3) indigenous peoples, whose identities have been embedded and maintained within nation-states (sometimes called 'first nations'); and (4) proto-nations, groups usually arising out of 2 or 3 above, and politically organized to actively pursue nation-statehood (1993: 13–14). Such groups are shaped by inter-ethnic competition and cooperation, which in turn is conditioned by the number of groups interacting in any given setting, and their relative sizes and strength. Typically ethnic identity is sharpened by competition between groups for advantages within a specific urban and/or state context, or by having their distinctiveness institutionalized by state structures, and/or by resistance to the state and dominant ethnic groups. The crucial point to make here at the outset is that the pursuit of equal representation and rights by ethnic groups within a given political system is ethnic politics, not nationalism.

Only when such groups make claims to jurisdiction, to some degree of self-government in a given territory, have we entered the realm of nationalism. Ethnic groups that are strongly embedded in urban contexts and relatively detached from homelands of origin, have little ability to engage in nationalism in that urban context, although they may be able to influence nationalisms in their distant homelands (Anderson 1998: ch. 3).

Related to but distinct from the opposition between primordialism and modernism, is a general tension in nationalism studies between those who assimilate the concept of the nation to that of ethnicity (Smith 1986) and those who assimilate it to that of the state (Breuilly 1993). Either nations and nationalism are a particular kind of ethnicity, or they are ideologies that necessarily accompany the state (especially the modern state). If we encountered a debate among meteorologists, one side arguing that thunderstorms are caused by masses of cold air, the other by masses of warm air, we would surmise that both sides had fundamentally misconstrued the process in question, failing to understand that thunderstorms are caused by the encounters between masses of colder and warmer air. Broadly speaking, I argue that nations and nationalism are more usefully thought of as arising precisely out of the interactions of ethnicity-making and state-making processes, as, in an important sense, 'neither here nor there'.

A word on terminology is in order here. The point has often been made that if by 'nation-state' we mean the congruence of a single ethnicity with a single state, then these are rare creatures indeed (see Connor 1978). However, there is a convention of using this term more loosely to label powerful modern states that claim to bind the allegiance of their citizens through a shared identity, often styled as national, notwithstanding underlying ethnic or national diversity in their populations. When I use the term in this book, it is in this latter, putative sense that it is intended. Nation-states are those that subscribe to this dominant idea, which should not be taken as an adequate description of their social composition.

Power and Culture

My own perspective, developed in the second half of the book, is that the study of nationalism necessarily relies heavily on concepts of power and culture, and thus how we conceive of these will fundamentally affect our understandings of nationalism. Few would deny this although, as we will see, some place more emphasis on the one and some on the other. There is a tendency, however, for those who emphasize power to define

nationalism primarily in terms of the pursuit of state power, and the ideological power of the state to generate social identities and political allegiance. While agreeing with the importance of this dimension, I think we need to conceive of power as something that permeates social relations and forms of social organization, not just as something locked up in the state and that emanates from it. Thus understanding nationalism is often a matter of grasping how the power inherent in less manifestly political forms of social organization – ethnic groups and associations, religious communities and institutions, speech communities, urbanism, gender relations – articulate with the powers of the state and provide the necessary infrastructures for challenging and pursuing state power. In saying this I am not trying to be novel, but rather to move to the fore an aspect of nationalism that is too often taken for granted. To do this I will try to bring some general theories about the nature of social power to bear on nationalism studies.

Culture, on the other hand, has a tendency to be disassociated from, or even opposed to power. Here I make two arguments. First, to the degree that we define culture in ideational terms, as a system of ideas, attitudes and values embodied in symbols and myths, we need to appreciate the difficulty of distinguishing between culture and ideology, in other words ideas bound up with the making and unmaking of power. In fact, the distinction is probably a hazardous one, and we should always look for the political charge in the mental representations that suffuse nationalism. Second, and here I will draw particularly on the history of how culture has been conceptualized in the discipline of anthropology, I argue that there is another, often forgotten sense of the term culture, that should be restored. In this second sense, culture is not a set of ideational *contents* – symbols, myths, values and so on – but rather a pattern of *relations* among all kinds of social phenomena, ideational, but also emotional, institutional, organizational, material, which makes them appear to ‘hang together’ (Deutsch 1953: 88).

It is the influence of centres of power, created through myriad forms of social organization, which patterns relations among social phenomena such that they appear to hang together through their common orientations to power. Thus culture, especially in this second sense, far from being opposed to power, is a conceptual guide to the perception and analysis of power and its workings. The point of view I have just sketched and will elaborate later on, with its interdependent conceptions of power and culture, is obviously a general one, which I would advocate for all social enquiry, not just the investigation of nationalism. But because nationalism is such a complex and pervasive aspect of our times, and we regularly

invoke notions of power and culture in wrestling with it, I think it is valuable to try to work through what we mean by power, culture and nationalism, together. Whether or not readers find this perspective appealing, it should provide a way of directing attention to fundamental issues, and of interrogating some of the conceptual assumptions of nationalism studies.

A Working Definition

I have suggested that defining nationalism is a particularly problematic task. Nonetheless, I'm obliged in a book like this to offer some sort of working definition, a general guide to what I have in mind when I talk about nationalism. Let me offer a relatively short definition, to be followed by some elaboration and qualification:

Nationalism is the making of combined claims, on behalf of a population, to *identity*, to *jurisdiction* and to *territory*.

This definition, while not reducing nationalism to a political ideology, nonetheless stresses that at its core it involves the assertion of social claims, and that these claims are normally articulated and advanced by smaller social groups in the name of a larger population, which may or may not follow. Three particular kinds of claims are specified. The first, to *identity*, is not just to a common name or label shared with the rest of the national group, but to substantive content that characterizes the group. This claim may include such 'cultural' factors as religious beliefs or language, or notions of shared biological substance, or of inherited historical experiences, but it can also invoke more abstract qualities such as core values (e.g. egalitarianism, liberty, democracy). The kinds of content that make up the claimed identity can be quite variable. The second claim, to *jurisdiction*, asserts entitlement to power and the authority to make and enforce laws, although this may be claimed only to a degree, within a larger political system. Frequently this aspect of nationalism's claims is specified with the terms 'self-government' or 'sovereignty'. I choose the less common term jurisdiction because it tends to direct our attention to the goal of translating aspects of identity into laws, and the fact that laws, to be real, must be in force 'somewhere'. This takes us to the third claim, to *territory*, which normally concerns lands that at least some of the national group occupies, but can also concern lands from which the group has been wholly displaced. Usually when we think about nationalism, the issue

of territory is problematic, because the territory claimed is embedded within a larger territory that is otherwise claimed, and/or divided between the jurisdictions of separate states. The crux however is that there needs to be a real place where jurisdiction can secure identity. Thus in some forms of nationalisms, such as the official nationalisms of well-established states, the issue of territorial claims is not problematic, and only implicit, and thus nationalism reveals itself primarily through the other two claims. To be nationalism, these three kinds of claims have to come together as a package, and be viewed as interdependent by those who make these claims.

In discussions of nationalism, it becomes almost unavoidable that one moves back and forth between fairly narrow senses of the term such as the one above, and a much broader sense of nationalism as an epochal social process shaping modern world history. It is usually clear from the context which sense is meant, and I use the term in both senses in this book. The definition above is meant to help us decide what to designate as nationalism when we look around the world today. But it is somewhat historically under-specified. Something like these three combined claims can be found around the globe throughout much of human history (a point I would expect the committed primordialist to seize upon!). To specify nationalism in the fully modern sense, we need to say something about how these claims are *legitimated* and how they are *communicated*. Modern nationalism seeks broad popular support, casting political leaders as the agents of a collective will of the people. Large, complex political systems have always had to take some account of the sentiments and opinions of those at the base of the social hierarchy, but the processes of expressing consent to leaders was generally enchained, such that any support at the bottom for power at the top was heavily mediated through intervening layers of authority and consent. Modern politics is dominated by the idea that power at the top gets its legitimacy directly from the base, whether through democratic elections, or attendance at mass public rallies. Such processes of mobilizing popular support and gaining consent are greatly facilitated by means of mass communication. The expansion of literacy and the printed word, beginning about 500 years ago, and more recently the development of electronic media have extended, intensified and accelerated communications between the base and the top of the social hierarchy. Without such technologies it is difficult for the full-fledged claim-making process of nationalism to get off the ground.

I have chosen to define nationalism in the first instance, rather than nations. I would avoid the hyperbolic position that nationalism always

comes first, making nations where none existed (Gellner 1983) – the relationship between the two is more dialectical than this suggests. But it is collective social action, rather than its effects, that should be our starting point. Finally, the social world is too complex and messy to ever be adequately contained by such working definitions. These can at best guide our enquiries. If some cases appear marginal, falling neither clearly inside nor outside our definition, then recognizing that may itself be useful for understanding such cases.

Historical Orientation

There is a fairly conventional historical narrative about the rise and spread of nationalism that informs most academic discussions, and what follows is a schematic account of that narrative, more chronology than history. It is not offered as gospel truth, but simply as a synopsis of how the story routinely gets told, highlighting some of the major historical reference points, to help readers contextualize some of the discussions in this book. Most writers on the subject are either taking for granted, or arguing for or against, a story of unfolding forms of nationalism that goes something like this.

Forerunners and Preconditions

Glimmers of precocious nationalism have sometimes been discerned in the societies of the circum-Mediterranean world in the first millennium BC, particularly in the religiously integrated but politically marginalized Israelites, in the semi-democratic city-states of Greece and in the early Roman republic. However, in keeping with the modernist view, most have regarded these as at best distant relatives, seeing nations and nationalism as such as outcomes of long-term social transformations in Europe beginning around the fourteenth century.

Two processes are usually thought of as laying some of the groundwork for modern nationalism. First, the Renaissance (c. the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries) saw the rediscovery and revival of the classical art, literature and learning of the ancient Greco-Roman world. A new style of humanist thought, concerned with the study of human affairs rather than theological debate, developed in the Italian city-states and spread throughout Europe. A crucial aspect of this period was the recovery of classical republican and democratic ideas, and their reapplication in the early modern context. Second, the Reformation (sixteenth century), stimulated

in part by the critical style of humanist thought, had several important effects. It led to the establishment of break-away 'national' churches in the newly Protestant countries, thus obliging the Catholic Church in the countries of the counter-reformation to take on a more national form. It promoted the expansion of literacy through the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages. It also stimulated the idea of a horizontal community of individuals with direct relationships to God, in contrast to an institutional hierarchy mediating that relationship, thus laying ideological groundwork for the idea of a mass society of equals. And new attention by Protestants to the Old Testament revived the notion of 'chosen peoples' in Western political thought. Thus the Renaissance and the Reformation together profoundly altered intellectual and political horizons in Europe.

The Reformation led to intense religious factionalism and fighting between Protestants and Catholics throughout Europe. The political effects of the Reformation took important institutionalized form in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). This treaty ended the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) between Catholic and Protestant forces in Europe. It established France, the United Netherlands (newly independent from Spain) and, for a time, Sweden, as major European powers. But more crucially for our story, it broke the overarching power of the Holy Roman Emperor, allowing the rulers of German states to determine the religion in their lands. In the study of international relations it is often regarded as one of the foundations of the modern system of nation-states in Europe, with its conventions of international diplomacy, and as marking a shift from wars based on reasons of religion, to wars based on reasons of state.

Two intellectual movements in Europe are also usually highlighted in historical discussions of nationalism: the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In some respects a further development of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment was centred on the eighteenth century, although it had important precursors in the previous century. In general key figures such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Voltaire and Immanuel Kant argued for the powers of human reason and science, and against superstition and the veneration of tradition for its own sake. Spurred on by advances in the physical sciences and global exploration, the Enlightenment thinkers typically argued that by approaching the world rationally and critically, humans could achieve progress and social improvement. Romanticism was centred around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Whereas the Enlightenment tended to combine philosophy and science, Romanticism tended to combine philosophy and art. Influenced by such figures as Jean

Jacques Rousseau, Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, it celebrated the authenticity of strong emotions, the beauty of nature and individual imagination and artistic genius. This frequently took the form of an interest in reviving languages, cultures and folk arts, which were seen as embodying the spirit and genius of a people, especially when these were seen as threatened by the more dominant languages and cultures of Europe. Romanticism is often viewed as a reaction to the cold rationalism of the Enlightenment, and as a response of Germanic society to the domination of France. There is truth to this, but they might also be viewed as symbiotic and roughly contemporaneous reactions to modernity. Both placed new value on the individual, and were critical of an archaic aristocratic social order, although the Enlightenment tended to emphasize mastering the future through reason, while Romanticism focused more on the reform of the soul through art.

The Heyday of Nationalism

The main arc of the story of nationalism is often seen as running from the French Revolution to the end of the Second World War (1789–1945). For many, *the* pivotal event in the rise of nationalism is the French Revolution (1789–1802), with its determination to overturn the old monarchical politics of the *ancien régime* with principles of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’. Arguments for republicanism, constitutionalism, democracy, equality, natural rights and the sovereignty of ‘the people’ reached a kind of climax in this event. After the violent chaos of the final years of the Revolution French people welcomed the stability of Napoleon’s imperial rule (1804–14). Napoleon rendered the ideas of equality among citizens and the sanctity of property rights as laws in the famous *Code Napoléon*, which was then instituted in the various countries conquered by the French imperial forces, thus helping to disseminate this new worldview throughout Europe. It is worth tempering this Francocentric view, however, by remembering that France was only the centrepiece in a wave of republican rebellions and revolutions in both Europe and the European colonies in that period. Others include: Corsica (1755, 1793), Geneva (1768), South-East Russia (1773), the United States (1776), Dutch Netherlands (1784), Austrian Netherlands/Belgium (1787), France (1789), Liège (1789), Hungary (1790), Poland (1791), Haiti (1791), Sardinia (1793), Ireland (1798), Serbia (1804), Spain (1808), Tyrol (1809), Spanish America (1810).

The ‘Age of Revolutions’, with its ideas of liberalism, democracy and republicanism, is widely seen as spawning an initial wave of modern

nation-building in Western Europe and the Americas, especially in Britain, France, Spain and the US. In Western Europe, long-standing dynastic integration of territories provided a foundation for this transformation. In the Americas, European settlers (that had subjugated and displaced indigenous populations) were able to innovate, developing new constitutions and political systems based on the new ideology. In both cases, the wealth generated by imperial global trade, industrialization and capitalism facilitated this new consolidation of power around the nation-state.

Following the lead of these rising powers, a second wave of nation-building in Europe is normally identified in the unification of the fragmented principalities of Germany (1815–71) and Italy (1848–61, ‘the *Risorgimento*’), through the expansion of the small states of Prussia and Piedmont-Sardinia, respectively. This process was aided by a relatively high degree of linguistic and cultural continuity within these politically unifying areas, and was partly stimulated by a new wave of liberal revolutions (1848–9) that were quickly crushed by reactionary conservative powers. Nonetheless, by the 1870s the modern nation-states of Germany and Italy had taken shape. The model begun on the Atlantic coasts of Europe and America appeared to be radiating eastward through Europe.

Further East in Europe, the fates of three empires were crucial to the unfolding of a third wave of nationalism in the Balkans and Eastern Europe more generally. Control of the Balkans was fought over from the west by the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918), from the east by the Ottoman Empire (c. 1400–1923) and from the north by the Russian Empire (1682–1917). Unlike the German and Italian regions, this area was more of an ethnic, linguistic and religious patchwork, shaped by centuries of wars, population movements and imperial designs. Within the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, from the 1860s to the 1920s, various ethnic groups that occupied subordinate positions in the social hierarchy – for example, Magyars, Czechs, Croatians, Serbs, Romanians, Greeks – struggled for greater political autonomy or national independence. By the eve of the First World War (1914–18) the great powers of Europe, each with its own imperial interests within Europe and/or abroad, were aligned in two great blocs. In the war these became the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottomans and Bulgaria), and the Allied Powers (United Kingdom, France, Russia and Serbia, later joined by Italy, Portugal, Romania and Greece, and crucially the United States in 1917). In 1917 the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and sued for peace (either ending Russia’s imperial history or beginning a new kind of empire, depending on how one defines ‘empire’). After the war,

the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dismantled, and the Balkan region was 'reconstructed' in a series of treaties (1919) with the defeated countries of the Central Powers in an awkward attempt to make states and nations match more closely. By 1923 the Ottoman Empire, reduced in territory and weakened by the war, was transformed into Turkey by modernizing nationalists. To this day, the Balkans remain a 'hot spot' of ethnic and nationalist conflicts.

The humiliations of defeat in the First World War and the severe economic and social strains of global depression (1929–39) inspired many to seek a remedy in the new, extremist and expansionist nationalism of fascism, especially in Germany and Italy. Fascism took hold first under Mussolini's dictatorship in Italy (1922–45), where it focused on the cult of his leadership and ambitions of regional hegemony. In Germany under Hitler (1933–45), fascism's cult of leadership was wedded to the racial essentialism of Aryanism and anti-Semitism, and an elaborated mythology of national history and destiny. Meanwhile, Japan was heavily burdened by the depression, and sought national revival in rapid industrialization and military-imperial expansion, particularly against China. These three countries became allies in the Second World War (1939–45) through the 'axis' agreement, waging war on multiple fronts. However, they were unable to match the combined industrial and military might of the allied powers – the United Kingdom, Russia and the United States – and were ultimately defeated in 1945. This period has left a complex legacy of guilt, ambivalence and resentment in regard to national identity in Germany and Japan today.

A Continuing Story

The years between the world wars are often seen as marking the apotheosis of nationalism, in the extreme form of fascism, followed by a new form of bi-polar geopolitics, determined by ultimate allegiances to capitalism and Communism rather than nations. But others have seen the Cold War as a process that put European nationalism in suspended animation, only to be released again with the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989). At the same time, the post-Second World War growth of international organizations such as the United Nations, NATO and the World Trade Organization has suggested to some that a post-national age was beginning to take shape from this time. However, a broader view suggests that nationalism never really went away and is far from over.

The years following the Second World War saw waves of nationalist struggles for independence against European colonial powers in Africa,

the Middle East, the Asian subcontinent and South-East Asia (c. 1945–77). This created a series of often very ethnically diverse states, whose territories had been defined somewhat arbitrarily by colonial geopolitics, with little regard for the actual distribution of ethnic groups. Perhaps in part to overcome these divisions, these movements were often inspired by marxist ideologies, receiving military and financial backing from the USSR. Similar insurgencies and revolutions were happening in Latin America, but because these states had already won independence from Spain and Portugal under the rubric of an earlier liberal nationalism, these movements often were viewed as more purely a matter of Cold War geopolitics. However, often this same global context obscured the nationalist dimension of all these struggles in the minds of Western political observers and theorists.

Such anti-colonial nationalisms are sometimes viewed as the final wave of the global form of the nation-state, radiating throughout the world as colonized peoples adopted and adapted to the modern political form created by the colonizers of the West. This reading of events has its detractors, however, and does not work so well for those new nationalisms, sometimes called ‘neonationalisms’, that have gained strength in the older, established liberal nation-states of the modernized West in recent decades (c. 1960–present). Primary examples include Scotland and Wales in the United Kingdom, Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain, Quebec in Canada, Brittany in France and the Flemish in Belgium. These nationalisms have often been seen as the result of rising expectations in the affluent West being regionally stimulated and/or frustrated by uneven economic fortunes, and thus as merely ‘regionalism’, and not qualifying as ‘true’ nationalisms. They are also commonly regarded as defensive responses to increasing global political, economic and cultural integration. Nonetheless, they frequently draw on long-standing cultural, linguistic and religious divisions, often combining ‘ethnic’ notions of national identity with liberal and civic political ideologies, and can be difficult to define in terms of a left–right political spectrum.

The most recent ‘wave’ of national independence movements has been associated with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War (1989–present), including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (i.e. the Baltic States), Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Chechnya. To the west, Czechoslovakia has split into two republics, eastern and western Germany have reunified and the Balkans have been in a state of violent transition with the collapse of former Yugoslavia. Many regarded the USSR as, in effect, the last of the Eurasian empires, its

collapse allowing the messy but unfinished process of political and economic modernization to resume in its former domain.

Summing Up

In this schematic account, just when you think it's over, another wave comes along. This should make us sceptical about eager predictions of the end of nationalism. That is not to say that the world is not changing, or that nationalism will be with us always – but it does appear to be something we are still 'in the middle of'. This story is conspicuously Eurocentric. It is difficult not to see Europe (perhaps in tandem with its American colonies) as the epicentre of this process. Nonetheless certain parts of the world – China, Latin America, Australia – tend to get marginalized in this account, even though we know nationalism is a part of their histories as well. And important current processes can be difficult to integrate into this story. The movements for political autonomy by 'first nations', ethnic groups based on indigenous populations embedded within modern Western states (e.g. the Nunavut in Canada), seem to partake of aspects of both anti-colonial nationalism and neonationalism. The rise of Islamism in recent decades clearly articulates with many nationalist projects, but has a distinctive transnational religious and ideological agenda. So, this outline history of nationalism is in no sense plain truth, but rather a summary of the academic discourse about nationalism, an imperfect map to guide us, and perhaps be amended along the way.

Further Reading

For key articles and chapters exploring the conceptual problems involved in defining nationalism, see especially Brubaker (1998), Connor (1978), Hall (1993), Hechter (2000: ch. 1) and Nairn (1997: ch. 1). Several edited readers provide good collections of essays by major figures in the field, giving an initial sense of the scope of nationalism studies. Among the best of these are: Guibernau and Hutchinson (2001), Balakrishnan (1996), Hutchinson and Smith (1994) and Eley and Suny (1996). There are a growing number of major reference volumes for libraries that offer entries on many sub-topics within nationalism studies by specialists in the field. These can be particularly helpful for initiating research. See: Leoussi (2001), Leoussi and Grosby (2003), Motyl (2001) and Smith and Hutchinson (2000).

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