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1

Ethnicity, Nation and 'Race': Connections and Disjunctures

Steve Fenton and Stephen May

Ethnicity, nationalism and racism are of increasing interest, and concern, to sociologists and political theorists alike. While the study of racism has perhaps had the longest, or at least the most consistent, academic history, the study of ethnicity, with its origins in anthropology, and the study of nationalism, have also established themselves in recent years as important fields of academic enquiry. Certainly, the burgeoning literature on these topics within both sociology and politics would suggest as much. But, as with many other academic fields, this also creates its own tensions. One has to do with the usual hermetic nature of academic boundaries, which results in different disciplinary traditions often 'talking past each other' on topics of mutual interest rather than talking *to* each other about them. A second has to do with the establishment of normative, commonsense definitions of key concepts, which may well vary across disciplinary boundaries, along with an increasing proliferation and blurring of such concepts over time.

The latter is certainly evident in any attempt to differentiate clearly between the three concepts of ethnic group (or 'ethnie', following Smith, 1986, 1991),[1] nation, and 'race' which centrally concern us here. Take the criterion of size, or numbers, for example. It is often assumed at a commonsense level that nations are simply larger versions of ethnic groups, but this is clearly not the case, or at least not in all contexts. If we regard the Han Chinese in China as an ethnic group, albeit admittedly clearly the majority one in that national context, then we are speaking of a population of more than 1040 million people (see Banton, 1999). And yet, we can also find nations represented within (and by) nation-states – for example, Barbados (pop. 255 000) and Slovenia (pop. 1 940 000), or indeed Tuvalu (11 000) – which are much smaller groups in number, and even political power, than Han Chinese.

And what of those groups that are commonly regarded as nations but are currently not represented by a sovereign state system? These would include Scotland and Catalonia, both of which have populations considerably larger than Barbados or Slovenia. Similarly, groups such as Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa

who may once have been described as tribes within Nigeria, and subsequently as ethnic groups, could equally be referred to as nations in a multinational Nigeria, the postcolonial boundaries of which state reflect the exigencies of colonial rule. Despite the commonsense association of nation with larger and ethnic with smaller, size and scale are clearly not very reliable guides to the distinction between a nation and an ethnic group.

The concepts of ancestry and culture equally do not help us to distinguish nation and ethnic group. The assertions of ethnic identity and of national identity are both intimately linked to beliefs in shared ancestry and ideas of common culture. And the claims about ancestry and culture may in both cases be as much a matter of fiction and myth as a matter of fact. Just as a group referred to as a nation may make a claim to shared ancestry which is more or less fictitious – how much are 'British people' or 'English people' really a descent group? – so may the same question be asked of groups commonly described as 'ethnic' (cf. Roosens, 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). The supposition of a historically shared 'common culture' in an ethnic group is open to question just as it is in the case of a nation.

If we include the idea of 'race' here as well, we can see that all three terms are popularly, and sometimes in academic discourse, understood as 'descent and culture communities'. By this we mean groups and populations which are, at least in part, distinctive because they see themselves, or are seen by others, as sharing ancestry and cultural heritage in ways that distinguish them from other groups (cf. Barth, 1969). The emphasis on 'seeing themselves' or 'being seen by others' is not because the claim or portrayal is always misleading. Peoples actually can and do share ancestry, belief and custom, and the claim to ethnic identity may broadly reflect this. At the same time the claim to this sense of 'sharedness' is at least as important as the foundations for the claim. The inclusion of 'race' in this triad is especially true in the United States. There the popular and academic discourses of 'race' have persisted more powerfully than almost anywhere else. 'Race', despite its widely acknowledged scientific falsity (there are no such things as 'races'), continues to be regarded as an ontological category in the US, primarily because of the ongoing salience of the historical relationship between white and African Americans (cf. Gilroy, 2000). Consequently, 'races', like ethnic groups and nations, are also seen as culture and descent communities in the US context.[2]

We should keep in mind in discussing these various discourses of 'race', ethnicity and nation that we are looking at just that – discourses. These discourses are made up of classificatory systems, representations and symbolic elements. All three hinge upon difference: we know we are black and not white, we know we are British and not French, we know we are Hutu and not Tutsi. They are relational classificatory systems (Eriksen, 1993; Jenkins, 1997). But the sociology of all this rests not just in tracing out the

discourse, but in understanding the contexts of social action, social movement and social change within which these classificatory systems are worked out. This is the special contribution of writers like Etienne Balibar (1991), John Rex (1991), Michel Wieviorka (1995), among others, who constantly seek to situate 'race, nation, ethnicity' in a broader sociological and material context. They are, in effect, asking the question 'what is going on here?' And 'what is going on' is clearly not just a series of discourses. It is also a Durkheimian 'social fact' (cf. Fenton, 1984), and one with very real consequences.

It is thus perhaps not surprising that sociologists and others struggle hard to make and sustain distinctions between all these three ideas, and there are undoubtedly points of departure at the margins. But the most striking thing is not the departures but the shared terrain around ancestry, claims of family-like membership or belonging, and a sense of identity which may be expressed through custom and culture, language and religion. Remarkably, a recent volume on racism declared that 'Ethnicity is a somewhat different though related concept to that of race and racism and we are not concerned with *ethnicity* as such' (Bulmer and Solomos, 1999: 4; our emphasis). On the contrary, we suggest that the time has arrived when work on any of these three discursive areas cannot fail to deal with all three.

Just two illustrations may be given to demonstrate this point. First it is clear that one of the biggest strides in the sociology of racism has come with the recognition that racialisation is closely bound up with the creation and sustaining of national identities rather than with narrower ideas about 'race' per se. This has been most clearly articulated in recent discussions of 'new racisms' (see, for example, Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Rattansi and Westwood, 1994; Small, 1994). Second, in the US and in Britain, the most evident movement in recent years is not the distinction between 'race' and ethnicity but the convergence of both discourses. In Britain this has involved politicising the concept of ethnicity (see Hall, 1992a and b; Cohen, 1999; Rattansi, 1999) and detaching it from an earlier association with anthropology. In the US it has come via an acknowledgement of the need for a greater diversity and flexibility in ideas of ethnic and racial difference (Hollinger, 1995; Song, 2001).

Ethnie, nation and state

So far we have indicated the shared meaning rather than any clear markers between the triad of ethnie-nation-race. In a social constructionist methodology they are all discourses within which people lay claim to commonality or 'identity'. There is one way to turn if we wish to make some differentiation between these terms and it is not in the direction of how peoples lay claim to 'groupness'.[3] Rather, it is in the uses, especially the political uses, to which those claims are put.

Returning, for simplicity, to the nation-ethnie pair, the clearest demarcation is that the term 'nation' becomes distinctive when it is related to the modern state. For it is the word 'nation' which has such a common appearance in the coupling 'nation-state'; frequently the words are used interchangeably. The international body designed to strive for agreement and common action among states is known as the United Nations when it is clearly a 'union' of states. All modernist theories of nationalism situate the emergence, creation or maturity of modern nations within the formation of modern states (see, for example, Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990; Anderson, 1991; Breuilly, 1993). One of the central debates within this literature has been about the extent to which nations are the ideological constructions of modern states, as against states being the modern political form assumed by ancient nations; in short, states before nations or nations before states (cf. Hroch, 1985; Smith, 1998)?

This apparent closeness of meaning of nation and ethnie (or ethnic group) means that 'relationship to the state' becomes a primary mode of distinguishing the two. Theoretically, this is demonstrated by the commonly invoked distinction between ethnicity and nationalism in the academic literature. Anthias and Yuval-Davis provide us with a representative example of this distinction:

> there is no inherent difference (although sometimes there is a difference in scale) between ethnic and national collectivities. What is specific to the nationalist project and discourse is the claim for a separate political representation for the collectivity. This often – but not always – takes the form of a claim for a separate state. (1992: 25)

However, in reality, the distinction drawn here between ethnicity and nationalism is not always so straightforward. As Craig Calhoun observes:

> The relationship between nationalism and ethnicity is complex... Nationalism, in particular, remains the pre-eminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate rule by reference to 'the people' of the country. Ethnic solidarities and identities are claimed most often when groups do not seek 'national' autonomy but rather a recognition internal to or cross-cutting national or state boundaries. The possibility of a closer link to nationalism is seldom altogether absent from such ethnic claims, however, and the two sorts of categorical identities are often invoked in similar ways. (1993: 235)

Be that as it may, the political imperative of attaining statehood – or at the very least, a greater degree of formal civic recognition – still tends to be the primary objective of putative nations (cf. Kymlicka, 1995). Certainly, in

English language usage, no group which had or claimed to have some descent-language-culture commonality, *and* sought to gain or to preserve 'its' state, would ever describe itself as 'merely' an ethnic group. Any elevated political ambition towards statehood would have to be undertaken by people describing themselves as a nation. This in fact is precisely the reason why groups which, inside a larger state, do not have full control of their own territory or public affairs – but who may be suspected of wanting it – are often prevented from describing themselves unequivocally as nations. In decentralised Spain the autonomous areas are described as 'nationalities' and 'regions', falling short of the plain 'nations' (i.e. *nacionalidad e regione* rather than *naciones*). Similarly, the United Nations (UN) has dealt with the claims of indigenous peoples – principally, via the (1993) Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – by recognising some right to revive, retain and preserve their cultural distinctiveness. This includes, controversially, legal distinctions and protections for indigenous peoples within the nation-states in which they have been colonised. However, the UN remains wary of bestowing the word 'nation' – or its equivalent in legal terms, 'peoples' – on indigenous groups. This caution has been amply demonstrated by the subsequent protracted and contested process of ratifying the Draft Declaration through the workings of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) Working Group (see Barsh, 1996; May, 2001, this volume).[4]

The reason for such concerns, from both established nation-states and supranational bodies, is simple enough. The status of nation carries with it the corollary, or at least possibility of claims to self-determination, claims that would be potentially disruptive to the larger states within which national minorities and indigenous peoples are encapsulated (Clark and Williamson, 1996; Scott, 1996; Thornberry, 1991). With the important exception of explicitly multinational states – the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were such, India, Britain and Spain could be said still to be so – states remain suspicious of constituent populations calling themselves 'nations' since it is perceived as a rebuke or threat to the undivided citizenry claiming that title. Conversely, the reasons why ethnies who lack a state of their own will seek to describe themselves as nations are clear enough; these are the accepted grounds for establishing a claim to self-governance, whether this takes the form of a substantial degree of autonomy within a state, or leads down a road to secession and separate statehood. In the wake of Franco's death and subsequent democratisation in Spain, a highly centralised Spain was replaced by a state which conferred autonomy on its regions, partly as a mark of the end of a Francoist centralised state (Conversi, 1997; Guibernau, 1999). In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the path taken by many constituent republics of the former state was to create new states grouped around historical identities in regions whose populations were almost all multiethnic. They nonetheless either

created the idea of new nations or 'recovered' the idea of old nations regaining their proper place – the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania being prime examples (see Brubaker, 1996; Laitin, 1998).

Ethnonations and ethnonationalism

Another way of exploring this shared terrain of ethnicity and nation is to examine the compound term which combines them both – ethnonational, or ethnonationalism. Two writers who have made use of this term, albeit in quite different ways, are Walker Connor (1978, 1993) and Thomas Eriksen (1992, 1993, 1998). In Connor's account of the 'ethnonational bond', any distinction between ethnie and nation is very difficult to ascertain. This is because, for Connor, nation becomes the leading term in a way which is true of few other writers; it is a definition which would certainly embrace or, more accurately perhaps, subsume ethnies or ethnic groups:

> A likely…response to the title of this book [Connor's *Ethnonationalism*] is 'What is it, and how does it differ from just plain nationalism?' The answer is that there is no difference if nationalism is used in its pristine sense…nation connotes a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related. Nationalism connotes identification with and loyalty to one's nation as just defined. It does *not* refer to loyalty to one's country. (1994: xi)

This last reference – to 'one's country' – might seem to allow an exception, that is, where country (read state) and nation exactly coincide, as if one and the other were the same. And yet Connor is also quick to point out that this is very seldom, if ever, the case since all nation-states in the world today comprise more than simply one people group. For example, in 40 per cent of all states there are at least five or more statistically and/or politically significant ethnic groups, while in nearly one-third of all states (31 per cent) the largest national group is not even the majority (Connor, 1993; see also Nielsson, 1985). These groups comprise both national and indigenous minorities (see below) and a wide variety of immigrant groups. The result is that most states are multinational (comprising a number of national minorities) and/or polyethnic (comprising a range of immigrant groups). Indeed, most countries in the world have been historically, and remain today, a combination of the two (Kymlicka, 1995).

But setting this empirical reality aside for a moment, even in a perfectly congruent nation-state, 'nationalism proper', in Connor's terms, would still be that component of national affection and allegiance which comprises 'love of nation' rather than a broader set of civic/citizenship allegiances within and to the state; the latter of which he distinguishes as 'patriotism'. In this formulation, ethnonationalism elevates the 'Kulturnation' over the

'Staatsnation' – what we have is ethnic nationalism at the expense of civic nationalism (cf. Smith, 1998). Connor's argument here is obviously aimed directly at modernist conceptions of nationalism – such as those of Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm – which argue, often vehemently, that Western nations were constructed retrospectively out of the conditions of statehood rather than the other way around. On this basis, the civic nationalisms which are their product are lauded for their inclusiveness and modernity, while the so-called ethnic nationalisms of Eastern Europe, along with contemporary ethnonational movements, are constructed as regressive and reactionary. To some extent, Connor is right to criticise these teleological and rather one-sided accounts of nationalism (see also Hroch, 1985; Greenfeld, 1992; Smith, 1998) but then simply makes the same mistake in the opposite direction.

A more fruitful approach, congruent with our own, is to recognise that the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalisms will continue to be important for a conceptual and political understanding of the framing of nationalist ideas. But at the same time we also need to recognise that 'civic' and 'ethnic' elements will invariably be combined in most nationalisms (see Jenkins, 1997; Smith, 1998: Brown, 2000; May, 2001). That said, we should also bear in mind that the salience of, and balance between, ethnic and civic dimensions within any given nationalism will inevitably vary. This is true in relation to the historical development of particular nationalist movements over time – as, for example, in the development of Québécois nationalism from its origins as a primarily religious/ethnic movement to its current predominantly civic orientation (see Williams, this volume). It is also true of the factions within nationalist movements themselves, with more moderate elements tending to highlight the civic and more militant elements the ethnocultural – the differences between moderate Basque nationalist politicians and the militant Basque ETA organisation being a case in point.

While it is sometimes hard to draw the distinction between ethnies and nations, it is clear that Connor's own position – highlighting the primacy of 'people who believe they are ancestrally related' as the basis of both 'groupness' and political action – is a step too far. It does not simply suggest that there is a widely shared terrain of ethnie, nation and 'race', it virtually obliterates all distinctions altogether. That this is exactly what Connor is doing becomes evident from his subsequent discussion where he treats almost any claim to group ancestral identity, and the emotional charge which he believes accompanies these identities, as nationalisms. The more enlightening way to proceed is to identify the shared terrain – the marking of difference, the claims of descent, the formation of boundaries of language, culture and religion – and then to contextualise these within the arenas of specific states and specific forms of social and political action. Thomas Eriksen tries to do precisely this.

Much of Eriksen's work (see 1992, 1993, 1998) has been marked by his insistence on the quite different contexts in which ethnic sentiments and classificatory systems may be found. On this basis, he has developed a typology of ethnicities in which he distinguishes between 'urban migrants', 'plural societies', 'indigenous peoples' and 'ethnonationalisms'. By this he aims to highlight specific social and historical contexts that create the social space in which particular ethnic identities and a concomitant political discourse may flourish. In practice these identities are intimately linked with historically and regionally specific cases in the modern period (Fenton, 1999).

Thus, for example, the United States is the case par-excellence of the society of in-migration and 'urban migrants'. Those Africans who supplied the labour of the plantations from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth centuries were non-voluntary migrants whose presence in an America dominated by white Europeans was, and still is, understood almost exclusively via a discourse of 'race'. It was to be the predominantly white European migrants who became the voluntary urban migrants of industrialising America to whom the discourse of ethnicity was subsequently applied (Waters, 1990; Cornell and Hartmann, 1998; Song, 2001).

If (voluntary) migrants form ethnic groups, 'natives' form nations – as the common etymology of the two words might suggest. Indigenousness (nativity) is a constant theme of nation in most places, an exception being Mauritius where neither of the pre-eminent ethnie can lay claim to indigenousness, since prior to their arrival it had been an uninhabited island (see Eriksen, 1992, 1998). The historical memory linking people with place is a central theme of ethnie and nation. In some states it is particularly contested in the political sphere, Malaysia and Fiji being clear cases of this (Kahn, 1995; Carens, 2000; Mariappan, this volume). But in both popular and sociological imagination it is the 'natives' of postcolonial settler societies who represent the classic instances of indigenous peoples. In North and South America and the Pacific, indigenous peoples were all but swept aside by invading colonisers (Stannard, 1989). In the postcolonial regimes, their descendants have mobilised politically around attempts to regain the benefits of their lost lands and to restore the dignity of their broken cultures. The (1993) Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, discussed earlier, is a clear example of this at the supranational level, although significant advances have also been made in recent times at a national level in countries such as Canada, Australia, Norway and Aotearoa/New Zealand (see Kymlicka, 1999; Carens, 2000; Ivison, *et al.*, 2000; Levy, 2000; May, 2001, this volume).

By contrast with urban migrants and indigenous peoples, the terrain of the ethnonation is quite different, both in the way Eriksen defines it and via the examples that colour-in the picture. They appear to be of two broad types: 1) postcolonial ethnies, and 2) peoples within European states who

see themselves as nations but who have not been accorded state recognition. Sri Lankan Tamils would be an example of the first, Basque and Québec nationalists (see Williams, this volume) of the second. Both these instances of ethnonations – or, at least, important political factions within them (see below) – do not accept the legitimacy of the larger state within which they have become encapsulated. As Eriksen observes:

> Proto-nations (ethnonational movements) include Kurds, Sikhs, Palestinians, and Sri Lankan Tamils…. By definition, these groups have political leaders who claim that they are entitled to their own nation-state and should not be 'ruled by others'. These groups, short of having a nation-state, may be said to have more substantial characteristics in common with nations than with either urban minorities or indigenous peoples. They are always territorially based; they are differentiated according to class (and) may be described as nations without a state. (1993: 14)

Ethnonations, in this sense, have also been described as 'nations without a state', or variants of the same ('stateless nations' 'smaller nations'), by such writers as Hroch (1985, 1998), Keating (1996, 1997), Conversi (1997), McCrone (1998), and Guibernau (1999). It is clear that few, if any, of these groups would describe themselves as ethnic groups or its equivalent in their languages. This is partly because ethnic groups have come to be associated with 'minority status' and 'outsider [migrant] status' (see also below), both of which are utterly inconsistent with the primarily political claims that the ethnonations wish to make (cf. Kymlicka, 1995). Their claim, rather, is that of an ethnie, a people with a historical claim to be a descent and culture community lodged in a territory which is 'home', but it is of an ethnie which does not accept the legitimacy of the state within which it is enmeshed.

Of course we should remember that within such ethnies the cultural and political claims which are being made are highly contested. What we have said above about ethnonational groups is strictly only true of the 'nationalists' within them; others may wish to secure and affirm their identity via the state (or other means) and so may not fundamentally challenge the legitimacy of the encapsulating state. Indeed, even within the broad nationalist groupings who favour a realignment of state relations, there are significant differences between the degree to which this should be pursued – ranging from an overtly separatist political approach to one that favours more culturalist (and non-secessionist) emphases – and the means – ranging from democratic reforms to violent terrorist actions. Not all Basque nationalists support the separatist terrorist ETA organisation, and not all Northern Irish Catholics support Sinn Fein, let alone the IRA.

Delineating ethnies and nations

What has preceded has cleared some of the ground for exploration of the substantive questions in the field of ethnie and nation. We have not departed greatly from some established framings of our subject. But we have accentuated what appears to us to be a growing tendency – that is, a tendency either to struggle unsuccessfully to make sustainable distinctions, or to admit that frequently the distinctions cannot be sustained. Our strategy has been to 'stretch out' the latter choice. Having reduced the risk of falling prey to 'mere' difficulties of language (i.e. 'What is a nation? What is an ethnic group?'), we should now turn to the rather more demanding task of framing an understanding of ethnie and nation in the contemporary world. We will do this by examining a series of problematics. The first of these is the problematic of majority ethnicities.

Majority ethnicities

The association of ethnic group with minority status is not a necessary one. That is to say, it is not bound into the original meaning of the term, deriving as it does from a Greek term for 'people' or 'tribe'. But in its earliest recorded uses in English it quickly came to acquire a meaning of foreign, alien and non-Christian as applied within a Christian culture. Indeed, the equivalent term for ethnos in English – 'ethnic' – was increasingly used from the mid-fourteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century as a means for describing someone as heathen or pagan (Williams, 1976).[5] This etymological association was an obvious precursor to the pejorative construction of ethnic groups that we often still see today in relation to modern nation-states, where the identification of ethnicity as a salient feature of identity tends to remain collocated with both 'minority' and 'outsider' status (Chapman, *et al.*, 1989; May, 2001). Thus, in Britain, peoples of Chinese or Indian descent and family origin are still regularly termed 'ethnic minorities', despite originating from the two overwhelmingly largest nations on earth (see Barot, this volume).

But if we bring to mind the relational dimension of ethnicity, then minority status must necessarily be situated in relation to majority status. Ironically, the latter is often not so recognised by majority group members who, because of the strong association of ethnicity with minority, assume that ethnicity is a feature of identity that has little or no salience for them. All the more reason, it would seem, to explicate more precisely the notion of 'majority ethnic group'. We can begin by acknowledging that all groups – both minority and majority ones – incorporate an ethnic dimension and the failure of the latter to recognise or acknowledge this has more to do with differential power relations between groups than with anything else. Ethnic majority status is an unaccustomed thought simply because the majority tends to assume, without much reflection, the normalised and

normative status of their identity, and its (unquestioned) place of pre-eminence. In other words, majority group members, being neither 'ethnic' nor a 'minority', simply represent modernity, or the modern (civilised) way of life. By extension, this tacit ethnic status almost certainly includes the equating of an ethnic majority with a (or even, the) nation.

An 'ethnicity' in this context incorporates a loose sense of shared ancestry, and some leading features of language and culture. So in the case of England, a region in the multinational state of Britain, two habits of thought have been observed. One is to assume that English and British are the same thing. This assumption of identity is so powerful that it has certainly been exported: Americans commonly say England when they 'mean' Britain, and in many continental languages – Portuguese would be a clear example – the word for English supplants the word for British. This process of elision has also characterised much academic discourse. So-called 'British' histories were, until relatively recently, largely the histories of England and the English; the so called 'Celtic' nations of Scotland, Wales and Ireland were largely ignored, or where they were directly addressed, were largely problematised (Kearney, 1989; Colley, 1992). Likewise, as David McCrone observes of the early development of British sociology:

> British sociology simply accepted that 'society' was coterminous with the British state, unitary and highly centralised, driven by social change in the political and cultural heartland of southern Britain [i.e., England]. If there was a particular sociology of the 'periphery' – in Wales, Ireland and Scotland – it had to do with analysing a 'traditional', pre-capitalist way of life. It was judged to be the task of the sociologist of these parts merely to chart its decline and ultimate incorporation into 'modern' society, or so it seemed. (1992: 5)

This, of course, simply reminds the Welsh, Scots and other non-English peoples living in Britain that they continue to live in a multinational state dominated by the English (Connor, 1993; Crick, 1989, 1995; Miles, 1996). But it is further problematised by a second set of assumptions, about what it is to be English. The less contested, the more tacit, this identificatory category has been – or, more accurately, has been seen to be – the more it was an assumption that 'the English' were delimited as white, broadly Christian, and whatever was and is meant by 'Anglo Saxon' (perhaps it simply meant 'not Celtic'). Thus, as in many other modern nation-state contexts, the English-British continue to have difficulty in according to members of so-called 'new' or 'visible minorities' – migrants or ethnic minority groups in common parlance – the mantle of 'co-national', irrespective of whether such migrants may have already gained full citizenship and/or whether, as second- or third-generation migrants perhaps, they were actually also born in Britain (cf. Gilroy, 1987; Goulbourne, 1991; Cohen, 1999).

What is most interesting for our purposes here is that the question of 'majority ethnicity' and its equation with nation has come to the surface in Britain-England just as national identity has been publicly contested or debated in new ways (see, for example, Parekh Report, 2000). The reasons for this are several: the loss of empire as a primary association of Britishness, the conflict over British affiliation in Northern Ireland, the growth in numbers of 'visible minorities', the decline of the monarchy, the membership of the European Union, and the reassertion of Wales and Scotland in a devolved assembly and parliament. England, of course, is not Britain, and never has been. But in current conditions it looks more and more like one of several 'regions', and Englishness is asserted by nationalists in an increasingly aggressive and exclusivist way. In this way the question of making the distinction between 'majority ethnicity' and 'nation' comes on to the agenda with new vigour and with a clarity not hitherto seen. It would be simple to say that majority ethnicity is disclosed (or exposed) when its equation with nation is contested by minorities. These few comments about Britain-England suggest that a wider context of contestation of national identity contributes to this disclosure and it is certainly the case that states which have, in the past, prided themselves on their supposed ethnic homogeneity – most often, it must be said, so-called developed Western states like Britain – are increasingly having to address the multiethnicity within their borders that they have traditionally denied.

The situation is perhaps somewhat different in those states where the presence of multiethnicity is inescapably self-evident; a feature most apparent, but not limited to so-called 'non-Western' and/or postcolonial states. India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Brazil would be good examples of multiethnic, multireligious and multilingual states. They are all now, or have been until recently, among the world's poorer countries, and together they form a sizeable proportion of the world's population. Brazil achieved independence from Portugal in the early nineteenth century; the others are relatively recently independent of British or Dutch colonial rule. Brazil's multiethnicity derives from its native peoples who have shrunk to a tiny proportion of the whole; from the descendants of Africans brought as slaves; from Portuguese and other European white settlers; and from an inestimable number of people who are the children of interethnic unions. Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria are all states the existence of which in their present boundaries owes much to the colonial presence and the politics of the immediate independence period. India of course is also multiethnic and multilingual, but its principal divide at independence was along the lines of faith – Muslim and Hindu – with Pakistan becoming almost wholly Muslim, and India predominantly Hindu with significant Muslim, Sikh and other minorities (see Hewitt, this volume; Zavos, this volume).

We cannot speak in a generalising way about all these multiethnic examples for they all have their peculiarities of history and context. Indonesia

and India, as respectively Muslim and Hindu, are both states where a single religious faith predominates, but both with important – and sometimes ill-treated – religious minorities. Brazil is probably the country where the highest percentage speak the majority language, Portuguese, which is also of course the ex-colonial language. This process of adopting the colonial language as lingua franca has been followed by many other postcolonial states, not only in relation to Portuguese (as in Mozambique, for example; see Stroud, 1999), but, of course, English and French as well. However, this is not always the case. Tanzania has deliberately adopted Swahili, a regional majority African language, as the common language of public communication (Blommaert, 1999; Madumulla *et al.*, 1999), while in Malaysia a Malay-oriented government has set out to establish Malay as the common language of Malaysia. In Malaysia the Malays are approximately 55 per cent of the population and in politics and cultural affairs have a place of pre-eminence. But such is the size of the Chinese and other minorities that it is not really possible to equate Malays as a majority ethnicity with Malaysians as constituting the nation. Malays undoubtedly have a place as *primi inter pares* but Malaysia also asserts its identity, in official statements about itself, as a nation which incorporates and respects multiethnicity and multiculturalism, albeit not unproblematically (Pennycook, 1994; Kahn, 1995; Fenton, 1999; Mariappan, this volume). Suffice it to say that context plays a significant part in the historical patterns and current and future trajectories of such states, in relation to questions of ethnic and national identities, and the ways in which these come to be expressed. As such, any academic analysis of these issues must recognise the importance of context, and balance the particular features of a local context against the benefits of applying wider comparative concepts.

On relating to the state

Ethnie and 'race' differ in the ways in which they are discursively constructed; in many, if not all other respects, ethnic groups and racialised groups are similar if not indeed the same – as we saw from the fact that the discourses of ethnicity and race have been changing and interchangeable modes of classifying the same kinds of communities. The difference between both of these and nation lies not in some inherent or essential quality but in the kind of relationship they have, or claim to have to the state.[6] A nation lays claim to a state just as a state seeks to render its citizens as a nation. Prior to the global sweep of the nation-state, itself the recent product of the nationalism of the last few centuries, imperial systems were far more overtly multinational and/or multiethnic. Indeed, as modernist theorists of nationalism such as Gellner (1983) have argued, prior to the age of nationalism, political forms of organisation required neither the demarcation of clear territorial boundaries nor the fostering of internal integration and homogeneity.

Feudal elites, for example, controlled wide territories but exercised little centralised control. Empires, larger in scale again, demanded political loyalty (and taxes) from their diverse people groups but made little, if any demands for cultural and linguistic homogeneity, the principal feature of modern nation-state organisation.

The boundaries of successor states, which although still subject to change are what we have largely come to be familiar with in the modern world, were established by war, compromise, and by secret political deals, rather than by due regard for any coincidence of place and ethnie. They were (and remain) principally distinguished by their quest for homogeneity, a product in turn, as we have already suggested, of the imperative of political nationalism. Even the two most prominent modern multinational states, the USSR and Yugoslavia, have now dissolved into over twenty successor states. In each of these, people face the question of whether they are to construct 'nations' out of multiethnicity by emphasising that citizenship is neither ancestrally defined nor requires exclusive adherence to a particular faith or language, or whether they are to build nationhood out of an ideology of an ancestral or culture community. Weak states are prey to ethnic and national ideologies, hence the apparent fiery adherence to ethnic identities in the former Soviet Union and even more so in the break-up of Yugoslavia, as a consequence of and in the wake of Serbian nationalism.

This is a reminder that both the idea and the substance of place is never far removed from the idea and substance of ethnie, 'race' and nation. Nations commonly define themselves not only by ancestry and culture but also by homeland; the place, its sacred territories, the blood shed into its soil in defence of the land, and the monuments which commemorate these historic or mythic events frequently feature highly in the idea of nation. If nations are people who see themselves as those already 'in place', ethnic minorities are people who may be seen, however begrudgingly, as being in situ, but who still remain, by the exclusivist definitions of nation so often applied, invariably 'out of place'.

At the same time that there is an ideal construction of nation around imagined landscapes, there is a real construction of states inside physical boundaries which are almost literally lines drawn on the earth. One of the first tasks of the newly proclaimed Slovenian state, for example, when it was established in 1991, was to erect new border posts, change the flags and some of the personnel, and put border posts where none had been before – between Slovenia and Croatia as against between Slovenia/ Yugoslavia and Austria. This changing of boundaries cannot be regular and frequent, at least not without the almost permanent threat of war. The only way, therefore, to establish new nations and regulate old ones is to foster an acceptance of both multinationality (where this is applicable) and multiethnicity (where it is now almost always applicable) within the all-embracing nation-state.

Outline

It is the various challenges that the triad of ethnie, 'race' and nation pose to the modern organisation of nation-states, and their social, cultural and political implications, with which this volume is centrally concerned. The importance of context in mediating the genesis, articulation and ongoing development of ethnie, 'race' and nation, and their associated rights' claims, is also a prominent feature in what follows.

Chapters 2 to 4 explore the contexts and claims of particular ethnonational groups which claim greater social, political and economic recognition from the states in which they live. Colin Williams examines the particularities of French Canadian and Québécois nationalist claims, and the central role of, first, religion, and subsequently language as the expression and focus of such claims. In so doing, he also directly addresses the ethnonational and civic nationalism dialectic as it has come to be expressed in the Québec and wider Canadian contexts.

Will Guy discusses the Roma (Gypsies) throughout Central and Eastern Europe, with a particular focus on the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the state of Czechoslovakia which preceded them. He highlights how Roma claims to nationhood, or even simply for greater civic recognition, have been consistently denied them. The result has been their social, political and economic marginalisation, allied with an almost uniformly pejorative construction of their identity by majority ethnicities, and extensive discrimination towards them. Romani political mobilisation as an ongoing response to this historical and contemporary pattern of discrimination and disadvantage is highlighted by Guy, both within the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and also more recently at the supranational level, via the Romani Congress.

Stephen May pursues similar themes in relation to the historical and contemporary circumstances of indigenous peoples. He highlights their consistent marginalisation, derogation, and at times evisceration, as a result of the processes of European colonialism, as well as the recent attempts by a range of indigenous groups, at both national and supranational levels, to address and redress the historical, and ongoing injustices associated with colonialism. His discussion encompasses a wide variety of national contexts, as well as supranational developments at the level of the UN, and related developments in international law. However, by way of example, he also discusses at some length the particular context of indigenous rights' claims by Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Chapters 5 to 7 focus in particular on South Asia and the South Asian diaspora. John Zavos provides us with a historical account of the development of Hindu nationalism as a political movement, and its complex relationship with Hindu communalism. His discussion is located primarily in the period of the British Rule of India, since, as he argues, Hindu nationalism's genesis and development in the early twentieth century is

inextricably linked to its use as a political alternative to the British-dominated Indian state.

Vernon Hewitt charts the complex context of, and contest over the Indian-controlled region of Kashmir. His wide-ranging discussion encompasses the contrasting and competing political (state) claims to Kashmir of India and Pakistan, the central roles of ethnicity and religion in relation to these claims, and the distinctive nationalist movements that have emerged over time as a result.

Rohit Barot's chapter also explores questions and controversies around competing nationalisms within India, but relocates these to the Indian diaspora currently living in Britain. Directly addressing issues of diaspora and transnationalism, he explores the effects of political conflict in the Indian subcontinent, particularly in relation to the Hindu/Sikh conflict in the Punjab, on British-based Indian communities.

Chapters 8 and 9 examine two different multiethnic, postcolonial political contexts – or so-called 'plural societies'. Ralph Premdas focuses on the historical and ongoing interethnic/intercommunal competition between Indians and Africans in Trinidad and Tobago, at all levels of public life. Kntayya Mariappan, likewise, examines the competing interethnic claims within Malaysia where the social, religious and political (but not the economic) domains are dominated by Malays and by Malay nationalism. Both chapters highlight the complex and at times contradictory articulation of interethnic competition at different levels – from the ethnolocal to the trans-Caribbean in Premdas's analysis, and in relation to micro, meso and macro levels of ethnic identification in the discussion by Mariappan.

In Chapter 10, Judith Squires discusses the consequences of ethnic and ethnonational claims for notions of citizenship as these have come to be developed within political theory itself. She explores how political theory has sought to accommodate (and, at times, reject) the notion of group-differentiated rights underpinning most, if not all ethnic and ethnonational claims. She places particular emphasis on the universalism/particularism dualism and the ongoing tension between the institutional recognition of group-based identities, which inevitably requires some degree of fixity, and the usually far more fluid, heterogeneous and contested identities 'on the ground'. In so doing, she also provides us with both a useful counterpoint to, and potential dialectic with the more sociological arguments presented in this current chapter.

Notes

1. For Smith, ethnies are said to comprise:
    - a collective proper name
    - a myth of common ancestry
    - shared historical memories
    - one or more differentiating elements of common culture

- an association with a specific homeland
- a sense of solidarity.

2. There is a sense in which 'race' is commensurate with neither ethnic group nor nation. This is if one is to take seriously the idea of race as a physical type in an anthropology of the human species. Then of course 'race' has a biological or physical anthropological referent. But whilst in the scientific and ideological imagination of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, this 'race' abstraction (Negroes, Caucasians, Asiatics and so on) was frequently advanced, sociologically it was relevant to actual people in actual places in specific social circumstances – e.g. Africans, in the American South, and as slaves. Thus African Americans were a historically and socially specific racialised group even if in the ideological imagination they were an instance of the abstraction, the 'Negro race'.
3. The claim to groupness – or the imposing of designations of groupness – are now frequently expressed in an academic discourse of ethnicity. The discourse of 'race and racism' persists, but, as a discourse disconnected from ethnicity it has either a) a purely historical sense or b) reflects the persistence of a 'race' discourse in the United States. This is notable in Bulmer and Solomos' (1999) volume, where the majority of selected readings are either historical, North American, or by authors who have now combined a discourse of 'race' with a discourse of 'ethnicity, culture' (e.g. Cornell, Castles, Rex, Goldberg).
4. The brief of the UNCHR Working Group is to agree a final (and, by definition, politically acceptable) version of the (1993) Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The first session of the UNCHR Working Group was convened in November 1995 to review the Draft Declaration. Unlike that document, which had been the result of a decade-long dialogue between indigenous peoples and the UN, the UNCHR Working Group is dominated by the interests of states. As a result, many indigenous groups involved in the formulation of the Draft Declaration were excluded while, at least theoretically, any state could veto an objectionable element of the draft under review. In this latter respect, state representatives on the UNCHR did endorse the Draft Declaration as a 'sound basis' for future drafting. However, subsequent proceedings saw many substantive objections raised by states about specific principles outlined in the Draft Declaration. Indeed, some states, notably Japan and the US, contended that the text as a whole was 'not a reasonable evolution of human rights law' (Barsh, 1996: 788). Suffice it to say that these objections mean that the ratification process remains ongoing at the time of writing, some seven years on from its inception.
5. As Fishman (1997) observes, this largely negative semantic association derives from the Biblical Hebrew distinction between goy and 'am, the former denoting an ungodly people and the latter a godly people. In the third-century Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint) the Greek word 'ethnos' was used for 'goy', hence its subsequent association with heathenism.
6. This is not to imply that the state is the only arbiter of ethnic/national relations – supranational organisations also play a part. Thus, indigenous peoples have in recent years pressed their claims for greater self-determination and for reparation directly to supranational bodies such as the UN, precisely because the states in which they are subsumed have historically ignored and/or denied their claims (see Feldman, 2001; May, this volume). Having said that, it is also clear that, despite the twin pressures of globalisation and localisation, and related assertions that the demise of the nation-state is imminent (cf. Soysal, 1994; Held, 1995), (nation)-states still remain, incontrovertibly, the principal institutional actors in the world today, and look likely to for some time to come.

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