

Ethnocentricity of the nationalist discourse

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ABSTRACT. Nationalism is a theory about the nature, purposes, boundaries and the basis of the legitimacy and the unity of the state. It maintains that the state should ideally be constituted as a nation. This means that a nation has a right to form a state of its own, as also that every state should endeavour to become a nation. The nationalist discourse rests on several assumptions, such as that nationalism is a universal phenomenon, that nationalist movements have identical structures, that all nations aim to become independent states, that non-Western nationalism is derivative in nature and that nationalism is an unmitigated evil. The author elucidates the distinctive nature of nationalism and criticises these and related assumptions.

The first three decades of the nineteenth century marked the emergence of a new mode of political discourse, and gave rise to such political doctrines as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism, communism and nationalism. Of these doctrines nationalism, which is logically different from the others, has proved the most elusive and difficult to define. We have reasonably clear ideas as to who is a liberal, a conservative or a socialist, or at least what their minimum moral and political commitments are. We are not sure what nationalism stands for and strongly disagree about its origins, paradigmatic examples, nature, varieties and content.

For some commentators, such nineteenth-century German writers as Fichte, Herder and Schleiermacher are the true nationalists (Kedourie 1960; Snyder 1952, 1954); for some others France is the birthplace of nationalism and Rousseau is its first theorist (Cobban 1957 and 1964); for yet others, nationalism is a universal phenomenon to be found in every settled community (Kellas 1991). Again, sometimes, nationalism is seen as a political doctrine about how states should be organised (Kedourie 1960; Minogue 1969); on other occasions it is equated with collective egoism, as is evident in such expressions as economic, Muslim or Hindu nationalism (Tagore 1917); on yet other occasions it refers to a determined attempt by a group to assert and to guard against external influences what it regards as its distinctive features, as is evident in such ambiguous expressions as cultural, religious and linguistic nationalism, where the adjective refers either to the way nationalism is articulated or to the area of life to which

nation-like properties are attributed. Again, for some commentators, nationalism refers to love of the country and its way of life and is synonymous with patriotism (Barry 1991: 177–84); for some others, it is an exclusive and aggressive form of patriotism (Gellner 1983: 138); for yet others it is a wholly different kind of sentiment (Dietz 1989: 191). Again, for some, nationalism consists in glorifying the nation and taking it to be both the ultimate ontological basis of social life and the highest moral unit (Kedourie 1960); for some others, anyone who views the state in this way is a nationalist (Hayes 1948; Burr 1961); for yet others anyone who glorifies the wider cultural community merits the description (Cobban 1964).

Thanks to these and related disagreements, the discussion of nationalism lacks clarity and focus and leads to the blurring of important distinctions. We forget that one may glorify the state but not the nation (Hegel), the nation but not the state (Herder), both at different levels (Fichte), the community but neither the state nor the nation (Rousseau), race but none of the other three (Gobineau), or none (Hobbes). We also promiscuously combine the term nationalism with several others as in such expressions as cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic, civil and territorial nationalism, without asking if they are all nationalism in the same sense or indeed if they are forms of nationalism at all, and how nationalism is articulated and structured in each of them. Since much of the nationalist discourse originates in and concentrates on the West especially Europe, there is also a tendency to universalise the European experience, and to imagine that nationalism outside the West has basically the same structure or ‘takes’ the same form as, or is only an immature and pathological corruption of its European original.

In this article I intend to do two things.¹ First, I explore the specificity of nationalism and distinguish it from doctrines that look like it but are really quite different. I shall do this by locating nationalism in a historical context and identifying the problem to which it claims to provide an answer. Second, I shall question some of the ethnocentric assumptions that inform much of the literature on nationalism. The assumptions on which I concentrate are five: first, nationalism is a potentially universal phenomenon and can in principle occur in every country; second, all nationalist movements have an identical structure; third, every nation aims to become an independent state; fourth, nationalist ideas were first developed in the West and later exported to the intellectually parasitic rest of the world; and finally, nationalism is inherently tribal and chauvinistic and hence an unmitigated evil.²

I

The state as we know it today is a distinctly modern institution going back no further than the sixteenth century, and differing from the earlier forms of

polity in several significant respects, of which three deserve particular mention, namely territoriality, the socially abstracted and autonomous character of the state, and its monopoly of the right to use force.

In pre-modern Western and non-Western polities, territory played a marginal and largely instrumental role in the life of the community. A community was distinguished by its way of life, and the latter not the territory was the primary object of loyalty. African tribes moved from one place to another with their gods, and used them to ensure continuity of identity. Traditional Muslim societies defined themselves in terms of their way of life not their territory, and carried their 'personal' laws with them, these laws and practices being regarded as an integral part of their identity just as much as their bodily features. This was why such minorities as the Jews and Christians enjoyed the right to lead their traditional ways of life without interference by the ruler under the Millet system established by the Ottoman Empire (Goitein, 1967–83). This was also broadly the case in traditional Hindu societies and, with some variations, under the Roman Empire and in Medieval Europe.

In the modern state territory enjoys unprecedented moral, political and ontological significance. It is the material basis of the state and unambiguously marks it off from its neighbours so that one knows where the boundaries of a state begin and end. The state is internally unified, freed of physical and legal barriers to the movement of people and goods, and forms a homogenous and clearly bounded unit of physical and legal space. To enter its territory *is* to enter its jurisdiction and to be subject to its authority. The individual does not carry his *professio juris* and laws with him wherever he goes. Law is *lex terrae* and binds all coming under its jurisdiction, irrespective of their consent or volition. In one form or another the state derives its authority from the people, transmutes it into jurisdiction over a territorial unit, and exercises the authority over all those residing within it. Few political theorists have explored let alone explained this strange process of transmutation in which authority is *derived* from individuals taken singly or collectively, and *exercised* not just over them but over the territory (including those parts of it which even the Lockean individuals cannot own in the state of nature).

Full membership of the modern state or citizenship is generally granted to those born within it, and outsiders are required to satisfy a minimum period of physical presence before qualifying for it. Unlike almost all the earlier polities, the protection of the state is offered to all who happen to be within its territory, irrespective of whether or not they are its full members. In Athens such protection was a political privilege available only to the citizens, and the outsider required a citizen patron in order to qualify for it. In the feudal polity the protection and the right to claim indemnity against attack or harm were limited to those owing fealty to the lord. The minimum and legally guaranteed physical protection to all within its territorial bounds is almost unique to the modern state.

The territory defines the corporate identity of its members. Britain is not where the British live, rather the British are those who live in Britain. This is why the modern state can accommodate immigrants, and might even be exclusively composed of them. Territory is also the basis of political representation. Earlier polities were either innocent of representative institutions or defined these in non-territorial terms. Even the feudal assembly which comes moderately close to modern representative institutions consisted of individuals who were *potentates* standing at the centre of networks of linkages involving vassals at various removes. In the modern state the representative assembly consists of men and women who represent not clusters of relations or functions but territorially demarcated constituencies.

In many earlier polities individuals had such multiple identities as the ethnic, religious, social and territorial, and they saw themselves as belonging to several collectivities, some of which were extra-territorial or common to several territorial units. These identities and the concomitant loyalties were accepted as a necessary feature of communal life and limited the ruler's claim to obedience. By contrast, the modern state privileges the territorial identity. Its members do, of course, have multiple identities, affiliations and allegiances, but the territorial identity is overarching and dominant. When a state is at war with another, *all* ties between their citizens are suspended. Scientists, scholars and artists are not at liberty to claim that since they belong to the universal community of writers and are not at war with their counterparts in the enemy country, they should remain free to travel and hold conferences there. Nor are the ordinary citizens permitted to insist that the estrangement between their two states should not prevent them from crossing the border to meet their relations, visit holy places, or to attend important religious or social functions. In the modern state the territorial identity and its attendant loyalties and allegiances enjoy supreme importance. The modern state is a compulsory association in the threefold sense that every individual belongs to some state, that no one may leave or enter it without its permission, and that everyone within its boundary is subject to its jurisdiction unless granted exemption. Unlike its earlier counterparts, it territorialises and totalises human relations and activities, and gives them a wholly new dimension.

The second distinguishing feature of the modern state is that it splits the unity of society and government characteristic of the earlier polities, inserts itself in the space so created, and reconstitutes and relates the two in a novel manner. The state is separate from both society and government and enjoys a unique mode of existence. It mediates between the two but, like all mediating entities, it first deconstitutes and then reconstitutes them on its terms. As Hobbes and at a different level Rousseau emphasised, the state is only possible when members of a society 'renounce' or dissolve their traditional forms of life and set up or 'generate' a new collectivity capable of conferring on them a new identity. The creation of the state involves a

qualitative transformation in the relations between its members and the concomitant supersession of one set of ties by another.

The socially abstracted and impersonal modern state speaks in its own distinct language, the language of law. And being self-contained, it relies on its own self-generated sanctions for the enforcement of the law. In the modern state law is abstracted from all other forms of social control, given a distinct and uniquely privileged status, and is *enacted or made*. As Bodin, one of the earliest theorists of the modern state, pointed out, it is the only polity in history to regard legislation as its primary function, and the legislature as its central institution. Not surprisingly it is historically unique in defining supreme power or sovereignty in legislative terms, and in insisting that its citizens should be subject to no other laws than those made, acquiesced in or endorsed by it. The power to make laws therefore became the subject of the most intense political battles, and its history *is* for all practical purposes the history of the modern state. The modern state's primary task is to establish and maintain not order *per se* but law-based order, that is, order brought about by and arising out of obedience to laws. Since it is primarily a legal and impersonal institution and articulated in terms of law, it is expected not only to require its citizens to obey its laws but also to respect and obey them itself.

The socially abstracted modern state requires socially abstracted individuals as its necessary counterpart. It strips away such 'contingent' individual characteristics as social status, ethnic, regional, religious and other identities and economic circumstances, and defines him in the barest possible manner as a self-determining agent capable of choice and will. Since all human beings possess these capabilities, they are deemed to be equal. There is 'one law' for all, none is 'above' or 'outside' it, and all enjoy equal formal rights. Since equality is defined in abstract terms, the modern state feels deeply uneasy in the presence of well-organised ethnic, religious and other communities lest they should introduce differences, subvert the principle of equality, and set up rival foci of loyalty. Unless it is compelled to do so, as is the case in many plural societies, it rarely invests such communities with rights, gives them a legal and political status, or allows the citizens to place their loyalties to them above or even on a par with their allegiance to the state (Dyson, 1980).

The third feature of the modern state springs from the first two. Whatever else the state may do, it must ensure law-based order by using appropriate sanctions. Since it has the right to the obedience of its citizens, it can appeal to their sense of obligation, and that is sometimes enough. It can also argue with and persuade them, and appeal to their reason. And it can also use its power to manipulate and influence their will. When all these fail, it may use force. Its right to use force is inherent in its legal authority to speak and act in the collective name of its citizens and to demand their obedience. Unlike in most earlier polities, the authority to use force is centralised and concentrated in the modern state. Max Weber was wrong to

call this monopoly of violence. Since the state's use of force is expected to be law-governed, its force needs to be distinguished from unlawful force or violence. And since its so-called 'monopoly' is not just *de facto* but also and primarily *de jure*, it is better conceptualised as centralisation of authority.

The modern state then is a territorially based, socially abstracted, impersonal, sovereign and autonomous institution enjoying the authority to speak and act in the name of the society as a whole and to maintain law-based order. All European states began as miscellaneous collections of people precariously held together, and have in their search for unity suppressed communities with eccentric cultures, periodically expelled such 'alien' populations as the Jews and the Moriscos, and banned paganism, religious heresies, minority languages and extra-territorial affiliations. Reflecting on the disorder caused by the civil and external wars provoked by all this, different writers explored how the state should be constituted so that it can enjoy the willing obedience of its citizens and remain stable and united. They advanced different theories of the state, that is, theories about the nature, purposes, and the basis of the authority, legitimacy and unity of the state. I shall sketch some of these to highlight the distinctive features of the nationalist theory of the state.

Hobbes advanced what I shall call the minimalist or the *proceduralist* view of the state. He contended that the state required, and should ask for, nothing more than that its subjects acknowledge and respect a collectively agreed common structure of authority. As long as they did so and abided by the laws, the unity of the state was secured and the climate of civility and order ensured. They did not need to share a common culture, practise a common religion, belong to the same ethnic group, love or feel emotionally committed to the state, or even feel a sense of personal loyalty to the ruler. Since such a formal state took no cognisance of how its subjects chose to lead their personal and social lives, Hobbes thought that it guaranteed them the maximum possible degree of liberty. By demanding the least from them, it not only increased their *liberty* but also avoided potential sources of tension and maximised its own *unity*.

Other writers such as Locke, Benjamin Constant and Kant took a different view, and advanced what I might call a *constitutional* theory of state. Despite their obvious and often deep differences, they were all agreed that Hobbes' formal state suffered from serious defects. It privileged order over basic human rights and liberties, and did not adequately protect the latter against the state's own transgressions. It also lacked the capacity to generate the kind of emotional commitment and loyalty that every state needed to hold itself together, especially during difficult times. The state also needed to make laws relating to property, marriage, the economy, education and so forth, and that presupposed a shared body of values among its citizens. Indeed a society could not set up a common structure of authority unless it was agreed on the basis of its legitimacy and its proper role, functions and mode of organisation, and that too presupposed a shared

body of values and self-understanding. Since Hobbes took no account of a shared public culture, his state was fatally flawed.

The proponents of the constitutional theory of the state therefore argued that a polity constituted along the Hobbesian lines was inherently unstable and even implausible. A well-constituted state required a shared political culture, including a shared body of values, an agreed framework of rights and liberties, common political institutions and structure of authority, and a shared mode of political discourse. The state dealt with the collective affairs of the community, guaranteed basic rights and was accountable to its citizens. It was a public institution and shared by its citizens not as they share their bodily features but as they share public parks and streets. It encompassed what was common to them all as members of the community, and did not extend to other areas of life. A properly constituted polity therefore required a limited government in the twofold sense that it pursued a specific set of collectively agreed objectives, and did so in a manner prescribed by the constitution. Its members were related to each other not directly but indirectly by virtue of their common commitment and loyalty to their polity.

The third, what I might call a *participatory or civic republican* theory of the state, was advocated by such writers as J. S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville. In their view the unity of the state needed to be built up from bottom upwards and based on the active participation of its citizens. The state remained distant, remote and formal unless it formed an integral part of their way of life. And it failed to engage their minds and hearts unless they were able to appropriate and internalise it by actively engaging in the conduct of its affairs. The state should therefore create territorially based local centres of participation, build up its unity on their bases, become a union of such active and vibrant units, encourage a sense of solidarity, and remain open to the constant influence of public opinion.

While the three theories mentioned above accepted the abstract modern state and located its unity within it, other writers such as Burke, Hegel, T. H. Green and Bernard Bosanquet sought to overcome its abstract character by reintegrating it into society. They advanced what might be called an *associational or communal* theory of the state. For Burke citizenship was not just a legal and political but a social or *civic* status, referring not just to one's membership of the state but of the wider community and extending to all social relations including the family, the neighbourhood, clubs, voluntary associations and work-places. They mediated between the individual and the state, and provided vital channels through which the socially embedded individual became integrated into the state. A good citizen did not just obey the laws but was also a good neighbour, father or mother, colleague, worker and so on, and was mindful of his civic duties and responsibilities. Burke's distinctively English view of the socially mediated unity of the state including his equation of the political with the civic was adopted with minor changes by the English idealists. Although

Hegel differed from Burke in several important respects, he too sought to transcend the abstract state by assigning a mediating role to the *civil society*. Unlike Burke, Hegel articulated the latter into corporations, which were both socio-economic and political units and formed the organic communal basis of the state.

The nationalist theory of the state differed from the earlier ones, of which the four sketched above were illustrative. It disagreed with them about the nature and purposes of the state as well as the basis of its legitimacy, authority and unity. It did, of course, borrow some of their main ideas, but gave them different meanings and moral weight and combined them with others that were uniquely its own. In its simplest form it insisted that a properly constituted state should be organised as a nation. Different nationalist writers defined the nation differently, some taking a strong and others a weak view of it, some conceiving it in biological and others in spiritual terms, and so on. However, they were all broadly agreed that the nation had the following features.³

First, the nation was a homogeneous cultural unit, characterised by distinct customs, social practices, moral values, modes of interpersonal relationships, language, rituals, myths, traits of temperament, a common system of meanings, a pool of tacit understanding and unspoken sympathies, etc. As such it had a distinct 'identity' or 'individuality' that unambiguously marked it off from others.

Secondly, the nation deeply shaped and moulded its members into specific kinds of persons. It endowed them with a specific identity, structured their personality and gave their lives a meaning. Although it existed in and through them, it was ontologically prior to and transcended them such that it was possible to say that they belonged to 'it'. For the nationalist writers, the national identity was the ultimate basis of and higher than other identities. The individual was primarily a member of a specific nation and, through that, of the human species. Nationalist thought contained a tension. Nationalist writers often justified each nation's right and indeed duty to preserve its identity on the ground that that was the only way it could contribute to the enrichment and all-round development of mankind. This meant that all nations were morally equal and that mankind was a higher moral unit than them. Some nationalist writers such as Herder and Renan accepted both conclusions, and advanced what is sometimes called moderate nationalism. Most writers found the conclusions uncomfortable and sought to circumvent them in various ways. They rejected the idea of the equality of nations by calling some of them true or real nations and others ethnic groups or nationalities, or by distinguishing between 'historical', 'noble' or 'great' and 'unhistorical', 'base' or 'small' nations. And they rejected the moral superiority of mankind by arguing that since it was articulated into nations and did not exist independently of them, it was an abstraction without a moral status and claims.

Thirdly, for the nationalist writers a nation was deeply attached to a

specific territory, its earthly home, and was related to it in more or less the same way that the human person is related to his or her body. The nation and its territory were intimately linked and belonged to each other. To deprive it of even an inch of its territory was to violate its physical and cultural integrity.

Fourthly, members of a nation were united by the ties of blood, intermarriage, kinship and common descent. The nation was basically like an extended family whose members belonged to the same ethnic or cultural 'stock' and were bound by deep bonds of mutual loyalty and solidarity. Their predecessors were their 'forefathers' or 'ancestors' to whom they owed a deep debt of 'piety' and reverence and whose 'inheritance' or 'patrimony' they had a duty to preserve. Their country was their 'fatherland' or 'motherland' and they owed it their highest loyalty. Some nationalist writers did not favour this biological language, but even they saw the nation as a tightly-knit spiritual family.

Fifthly, thanks to all this, members of a nation had a shared understanding of who they were and how they originated and developed in history as well as a strong sense of collective belonging. They constituted a homogeneous and cohesive 'we', wished to live together as a distinct community, 'instinctively' knew who did and did not belong to them, were drawn to one and indifferent or hostile to the other and shared a substantive conception of the good life.

As the nationalist writers understand it, the nation is a culturally and linguistically (and for some ethnically) homogeneous, easily distinguishable and solidaristic self-conscious social group bound together by familial sentiments and deeply attached to a specific territorial homeland. For them these features are all interrelated and collectively define its identity. Some of these features might be and indeed often are shared by long-established polities, but that is not enough to make the latter nations. Members of a community that has lasted a long time tend to develop a fellow-feeling and a sense of solidarity.⁴ However, that does not by itself make the community a nation, for it may lack the other features, and the fellow-feeling might be non-familial in nature and seen as an artificial product of education and social conditioning rather than an inborn or 'natural' sentiment arising out of the membership of a group. Again, a community might be culturally homogeneous, but it is not a nation if it lacks the other features or is hospitable to or willing to accommodate deep cultural diversities. Conversely a nation might admit outsiders, but it does not cease to be one if it only admits them under economic and other compulsions, resents their differences, and vigorously assimilates them into the dominant culture.

The nationalist writers insisted that the state should be constituted as a nation; that is, that a properly constituted state should be culturally and linguistically homogeneous, solidaristic, like an extended spiritual family, protector of the collective way of life and settled in its territorial homeland. In their view only such a state had deep roots in the minds and hearts of its

citizens, was morally and emotionally 'their' state, and no longer formal, abstract and impersonal. It was not just a legal and political contrivance but a spiritual whole promoting not only their material interests but also their moral and spiritual well-being. Its authority was derived not from the individualised and fluctuating consent of its atomised citizens but from the organic and collective will of the community, the sole source of legitimacy and authority in the nationalist view. And since its members shared a common spiritual substance or life, and thought and felt as one, its unity rested on the strongest foundation possible. Some writers such as Fichte and Schleiermacher argued that a deep emotional, moral and spiritual unity was only possible when all the members of a state belonged to a common racial or ethnic group. Others such as Ernest Renan saw no need for such a biological basis and thought that common historical experiences, collective memories of glory and especially tragedy and a sense of shared destiny were enough.⁵ Both, however, were agreed that the unity of the state had to be based on the unity of the nation, and that state and the nation should coincide. Nationalism is basically a foundational doctrine seeking to ground the state in an allegedly self-sufficient and self-authenticating nation.

Given his view of the state, the nationalist sees social and political institutions quite differently to the way other theorists of the state do. For them a common language is little more than a means of effective public communication which every citizen can and should master; for the nationalist it is a vehicle of expressing the national soul, spirit, identity, *volkstum*, or what the Japanese nationalists call *kokutai* (meaning substance of the nation), and requires to be diligently guarded against the corrupting influence of alien words and forms of thought, of what the German nationalist F. D. Jahn called *Undeutschheit und Ausländerei*. For the non-nationalist theories of the state, the shared culture is limited to the public realm and is subject to political contestation and change; in the nationalist view it covers all areas of life and is ontologically grounded in and reflects the national soul or way of life. In the non-nationalist view the state is a legal or at best a moral community, separated from its citizens by a decent moral space and expected to respect their moral freedom; in the nationalist view, it is spiritual, almost religious, in nature, penetrates the very being of its citizens, is a source of their identity and sense of meaningfulness, and generally exempt from the ordinary moral constraints. In the non-nationalist view, the state is not a family writ large, has nothing to do with the ties of blood and common descent, and is in principle open to outsiders; the nationalist familialises the state, invests it with sentiments and emotions characteristic of the family, and is determined to eliminate its impersonal and autonomous nature. Since the nationalist views the nation as a deeply bonded and exclusive spiritual whole, he is anxious to define and delimit its boundary, to determine who does and does not belong to it, to highlight the obligations they owe each other, and to show how these are incurred by virtue of their membership of his nation. It is hardly surprising that every

nationalist obsessively traces the history and origins of the nation, demarcates it in time and space, and stresses its uniqueness or identity. Since he is concerned to preserve the integrity of the national family, he is anxious to define who is a 'true' Indian or German, and expects all involved to conform to the officially prescribed norms of Indianness or Germanness. His conception of who is a true Indian or German becomes the basis of collective morality, and shapes his views on how the family, the relations between the sexes, the schools, civil and political life, etc. should be constituted.

Nationalism then is a theory about the nature of and the proper mode of constituting the state. Contrary to what some writers have maintained, it advances a double thesis. First, when a group of people are already constituted as a nation and form a spiritual whole of the kind described earlier, they are morally entitled to form an independent state of their own. Not that they should or will necessarily ask for independent statehood, but that if they do, their demands are fully justified. And when they do set up a state of their own, its primary task is to express and preserve the unity of the nation against internal and external threats. Second, when a state consists of a miscellaneous collection of people and is not a nation, it should strive to become one by suitably homogenising its citizens and kneading them into an indivisible spiritual whole.

Several writers such as Carleton Hayes, Hans Kohn and especially Elie Kedourie have concentrated on the first nationalist thesis. They rightly expose both the absurdity of some of the nationalist arguments for statehood and the horrendous deeds committed in the course of the nationalist struggle, but ignore the similar absurdity of the state's desire to become a nation and the massive cultural and political repression that this often entails. Their mistaken concentration on the first nationalist thesis and the implied assertion that this is *all* that nationalism is about contains a deep ideological bias. It enables them to condemn a nation's struggle to become a state, while approving of or at least remaining silent about the state's attempt to become a nation. It also allows them to assert that nationalism only occurs in 'immature' countries and that the mature and 'civilised' countries of the West are largely free of the virus. As we saw, nationalism has two faces. The state's desire to become a nation is only an obverse of, and neither morally superior to nor politically less harmful than the nation's desire to become a state.

The first nationalist thesis justifies a nation's struggle to become an independent state; the second justifies a state's attempt to turn itself into a nation. In the first case where the pre-existing nation forms the state, we may call it a *national state*. In the second case where the state consciously moulds its citizens according to a specific model of nationhood and follows a systematic nationalist programme, we may call it a *nationalist state*. The two types of state represent two different ways of forming the *nation-state*. In history it is difficult to think of pure examples of either, for there is no

nation in the creation of which the state or the ruler has not played a crucial role, and there are few states that did not begin their historical journey with a relatively homogeneous ethnic community as its basis. The two routes to the nation-state are therefore ideal types rather than descriptions of historical reality (Smith 1986b). By and large Israel is a good example of a nation becoming a state, and with some qualifications Poland and Germany too fall within this category. France is a good example of a state systematically setting out to turn itself into a nation.⁶

In each case nationalism has a different structure and texture, and the nation-state has a different logic and thrust. When a self-conscious nation acquires statehood either by internal consolidation (as in Germany) or through a struggle for national independence (as in the case of Israel), the nation precedes the state. Since it is prepolitical, it stresses its racial, ethnic or ethnocultural basis as the Zionist and German nationalists did. When such a nation becomes a state, it subjects itself to the logic of *state-building*. A hitherto closed and exclusive collectivity is now required to find ways of becoming open and inclusive, of turning fellow nationals into fellow citizens, and creating a secure public space in which the abstract, impersonal and rule-governed institutions of the state can take root. Israel's struggle to create a secular political space in which the secular and religious and the oriental and occidental Jews can resolve their divergent visions of its future, its attempt to establish the state as a final arbiter in all collective matters, and its politics of alignment, accommodation and cooption indicate how this might be done.

When a state seeks to become a nation, the dialectic is reversed. It is now subject to the logic of *nation-building* and needs to explore ways of turning its more or less heterogeneous people into a nation. A hitherto open and inclusive group, it now needs to define the bounds of nationhood, and seek suitably to mould all its members in the image of the nation. Since the nation is created by the state or the ruler and is a product of the political process, it is predictably defined not in ethnic or racial but political terms, as was done by Ernest Renan and other French writers. The ways in which successive French governments set about destroying local languages, uniting provinces and turning peasants into Frenchmen in the pursuit of one language, one law, one culture and one nation are a good example of how a state creates a nation.

Although every nation-state fears outsiders lest they should damage or dilute its nationhood, the two kinds of nation-state outlined above fear it for different reasons and in different degrees. In the case of a national state whose identity is defined in ethnic terms, outsiders cannot belong to the nation and are rarely admitted to its membership as in the case of Israel. If they were to be admitted because the country needs their labour or has a generous asylum policy, it would deny them equal citizenship as in the case of Germany. Since the nation shapes the dominant ethos and the public symbols, rituals, imageries and discourse of the state, in none of which the

immigrants can participate, they remain relative outsiders not only to the nation but also to the state.

The nationalist state faces the problem at a different level. Since its nationalism is not ethnic but largely political and cultural in its content, it can in principle admit outsiders not only into the state but also into the nation. However, it demands a price, namely that they give up their ways of life and get integrated into the nation by fully accepting its culture and way of life. Every difference in custom and belief is perceived as a challenge to the nationhood of the country and is deeply feared. It is striking that the stable and powerful French state felt deeply threatened by such apparently trivial incidents as a Muslim girl's insistence on wearing the traditional Muslim head-dress. For the French her insistence was a profoundly significant political gesture, symbolically defying the French nation's unity and history of the past two centuries, and subverting the prevailing definition of French national identity. Open and tolerant at one level, the French state, like all other nationalist states, proved intolerant at another.

In the light of our discussion nationalism is basically a theory about the proper mode of constituting the state. As such it is concerned to offer not just a theory of legitimacy as Kedourie and others argue (Kedourie 1960: 9; Gellner 1983: 1-5), but also a theory of the nature, boundary, functions, rationale and the proper basis of the authority and the unity of the state. For it the nation-state represents the only coherent and truly satisfactory way to constitute the state. One who glorifies the state and subordinates the individual citizen to it, as Nietzsche, Stalin and others did, is a statist not a nationalist, for he might not advocate that the state should be constituted as a tightly knit spiritual whole. Similarly a person who argues that the individual is deeply shaped by and has no meaning outside his community and that he should therefore subordinate his interests to the state's interests, is a collectivist or a strong communitarian but not a nationalist, for he may not share the nationalist ideas about the nature, boundaries, purposes and proper mode of constituting the state. A state that ruthlessly pursues its interests at the expense of those of other states is selfish and predatory but not nationalist, for it might not be or may not even wish to be constituted as a nation. A person who deeply cherishes his community's way of live and wants to preserve it is not a nationalist either, for the way of life that he cherishes may be plural and open and not constituted along nationalist lines. As we saw earlier a polity characterised by a strong sense of solidarity, fellow-feeling or commitment to cultural homogeneity exhibits some nation-like features but is not a nation, any more than organisations which share some features of the state can properly be called states. Since nationalism is a political doctrine about the proper mode of constituting the state, such terms as cultural, economic and linguistic 'nationalism' are misleading metaphors that are made less confusing if the term nationalism is replaced by such terms as chauvinism or parochialism.

II

Although all modern states are not nation-states, they are constantly tempted to become so. There are powerful groups in every state who believe that only a nation-state is stable and cohesive and worthy of moral allegiance. Even those who reject this view often find nationalism a useful resource for overcoming acute internal differences and conflicts, mobilising popular energies in times of war or for economic development, and enhancing the government's precarious political authority by claiming to derive it from the deepest yearnings of the national soul. Almost every modern state has gone through such nationalist phases, and continues to be shadowed by an overt or covert nationalism. It would therefore be wrong to divide states neatly into those that have succumbed to and those that are completely free of nationalism. The important distinction is whether or not they are constituted as nation-states and possess the capacity to restrain and contain their nationalist impulses.

Many states have resisted the temptation to become nation-states either because they found the latter culturally oppressive and politically illiberal or because their social composition and history made it impossible for them to move in that direction. They either radically modified the traditional model of the nation-state or discarded it in favour of a non-nation state. The United Kingdom is a good example of the first, and India of the second.

The United Kingdom is not a nation-state. Scotland has its own legal and educational systems with which the British parliament does not interfere, and its own distinct way of life. It also has its own established church, just as England has, and the British government has a separate department in charge of Scottish affairs. Scotland also enjoys greater representation in the House of Commons than its population warrants and is justified by the traditional including Rawlsian principles of justice, and the British parliament is now committed to giving Scotland an even greater range of powers. The Scots have a distinct *cultural* identity which they prize just as highly as their British *political* identity, and they see themselves as a distinct people. Scotland enjoys its autonomy not because of a constitutional division of powers within a unified federal state but because of the Act of Union between it and England, which is one of the reasons why Britain is not a federal but a multinational state. Although not as autonomous, Wales and Northern Ireland too enjoy many of these privileges, and the three island dependencies – the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey – enjoy considerable autonomy. For decades Britain has had thousands of state-funded Anglican, Catholic and Jewish religious schools, and has seen no difficulty in living with the cultural diversity fostered by them. Since it also recognises the rabbinical courts to which Jews may take their disputes if they so wish and whose verdicts are binding on the parties involved, Britain does not think it necessary that all its citizens must be subject to the same civil laws. Britain has a shared political culture but not an all-encompassing

'national' culture, its common law tradition accommodates regional diversities and many a premodern practice and custom, and it has had no difficulty accommodating the kinds of Muslim demands that have led to a most agonised public debate in France.⁷

India is an example of a country that self-consciously chose not to become a nation-state (Parekh 1989a, ch. 7, 1989b, ch. 2). During the course of its struggle for independence, many an Indian leader realised that their country was not and could never become a nation in the European sense. It was highly uncentralised, deeply divided, had a long and chequered history, and consisted of different and not fully integrated ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural groups. Since it was not united in terms of religion, language, race, way of life, common historical memories of oppression and any of the other factors stressed by the European nationalist writers, European nationalist ideas either could not be applied to it without a great deal of casuistry, or united one or more groups by alienating the rest. Most Indian leaders instinctively knew that the language of nationalism not only did not make sense in India but was bound to have disastrous consequences. They were acutely aware of the fact that when the Hindus flirted with nationalism during the first two decades of the twentieth century, they frightened away not only the Muslims and other minorities but also some of their own lower castes. And they hardly needed to be reminded of the confusion and mischief caused by Jinnah's introduction of the nationalist language into Indian politics that eventually broke up the country. That Gandhi and most other Indian leaders preferred the relaxed, even chaotic, plurality of the traditional Indian life to the rigidity and homogeneity of the European nation-state was a further factor pulling them away from European nationalism.

Accordingly, under Gandhi's influence Indian leaders turned to the vaguer but politically more relevant and, to them, morally more acceptable concept of civilisation, and argued that not race, ethnicity, language, religion or customs but the diffused, plural and relatively heterogenous traditional Indian civilisation best united the Indians. Foreign rule was unacceptable not for the conventional nationalist reasons but because it choked and distorted India's growth and prevented it from undertaking the long and painful task of revitalising its civilisation, regenerating its people and creating the conditions for its autonomous moral growth. Gandhi's political thought thus more or less completely bypassed the characteristic vocabulary of European nationalism, and conceptualised the Indian struggle for independence in a non-nationalist and non-national language. He rarely used the term 'nation' except when forced to do so by such antagonists as Jinnah, and then largely to refer to the fact that Indians were not a motley collection of groups but shared common aspirations and interests and a deep commitment to the historical Indian civilisation. When he occasionally used the term 'nationalism', he largely meant 'love of one's country'. For the most part he preferred to speak of '*swadeshi* spirit', which captured the

interrelated ideas of collective pride, ancestral loyalty and communal integrity. Thanks to the non-nationalist philosophical framework within which he conceptualised the independence movement, the latter did not throw up a Hindu nationalism to match that of the Muslim League, guaranteed full protection to Muslims even under the gravest provocation, bore no hostility to the British, and gave the country the confidence to invite Mountbatten to stay on as the governor-general of independent India and help stabilise the new state.

There was also another reason why the Indian independence movement under Gandhi was inhospitable to nationalism. Since, as we saw earlier, nationalism involves defining the boundaries of the nation in space and time and constructing a coherent historical narrative, history is crucial to it. And since history is organised public memory, nationalism presupposes a culture in which memory enjoys epistemological dignity. This is not the case in India, where traditionally memory has been accorded a low epistemological status. In the Indian view memory 'burdens' or 'weighs down' the intellect and prevents it from perceiving the ever-changing reality with the required degree of freshness. Being emotionally charged, it also imprisons the individual in a web of past likes and hatreds, sympathies and antipathies, and distorts intellectual understanding and moral conduct. Being largely concerned with contingent and trivial details, memory is considered irrelevant to the pursuit of truth which is deemed to be constant and always the same. Memories, however carefully recorded, are also regarded as invariably selective, subjective and biased, and never to be trusted. Since Indian thought does not assign much importance to memory, a large body of Indians took a low view both of the discipline of history first introduced into India by the British and of the cultural and political significance given to it (Parekh, 1989b: 163–5). Although some modernists took it seriously and sought to construct a coherent historical narrative, Gandhi and others dismissed it as uninteresting and pointless. It did not matter to them what their past was like, where they had come from, whether they had always lived in the land which they now occupied, who was a true Indian and so on. Since they had no interest in the questions central to European nationalist thought, they found the latter strange and irrelevant to their condition.⁸

Independent India continued to pursue the earlier ideal of a non-nation-state. Having created India, its leaders said that they now wanted to create Indians, but there was nothing nationalist in their vision of Indians. All that they hoped and strove for was a body of people sharing loyalty to the constitution, subscribing to the legal and political values embodied in it, and developing the public spirit and civic virtues of responsible citizenship. The Indian leaders' desire that their country should not become a nation-state is inscribed in the very design of the state. India has a uniform body of criminal but not civil laws. Muslims continue to be governed by their personal laws, which the state enforces but with which it does not interfere.

The tribals too are governed by their separate laws, and the state has committed itself to making no changes in the practices and laws of Christians without their explicit consent and approval. Minority educational institutions enjoy many legal privileges and receive generous state assistance. The Indian state is thus both an association of individuals and a community of communities, recognising both individuals and communities as bearers of rights. The Indian constitution also leaves primary and secondary education in the care of the constituent states, and the central government has neither thought it necessary nor possesses the constitutional authority to use education to create a common national culture. By and large the Indian state is too hospitable to deep diversity to constitute a nation, and barring a strange alliance of the Westernised elite and the Hindu militants, few Indians desire that it should become one.

Like India the United States too is a non-nation-state. Its very origin as a voluntary confederation of self-governing communities militated against the idea of its being conceived as an organic whole or a spiritual substance shaping its citizens. Being a country of immigrants, the ideas of common descent, shared ethnicity and kinship never became part of its political discourse either. Although hyphenated identities were initially resented, they are now accepted and the ethnic identity is freely asserted in the spaces provided by shared citizenship. Not being a nation-state, the United States had no difficulty welcoming and accommodating several streams of outsiders. As we saw, no state is free from the temptation to use the nationalist resources in times of crisis, and every state contains groups who advocate nationalism as the only reliable basis of its unity. The United States is no exception, but it has generally managed to restrain and contain its national impulses. The United States can be extremely selfish in the pursuit of its national interests. And faced with the problem of integrating immigrants, it has often appealed to intense and morbid patriotism, including using schools for cultural indoctrination, ritual flag-waving and singing national anthems. However its patriotism is centred on the American ideals and way of life, cherishes the autonomous and vibrant civil society, welcomes deep diversity and external cultural influence, does not familialise the state, and even acknowledges the constitutional right to burn the national flag.

In the light of what I have said so far, several important conclusions follow. Not all modern states are or wish to be nation-states. Since nationalism plays only a limited if any role in their political life, the concept has only a limited theoretical relevance and explanatory value in relation to them. Given the fact that the term state has thrown up neither a widely accepted adjective nor an evocative emotional vocabulary, and given the understandable political tendency to use fashionable idioms without regard for their conceptual accuracy, leaders of these countries do often use the nationalist vocabulary. But we should not be fooled by their rhetoric, and need to probe deeper to ascertain if they mean what they say. Perhaps they do, perhaps they don't. But we won't know the truth if we started with the

uncritical belief that nationalism *is* a universal phenomenon, that it *must* occur in every organised polity, and that everyone who uses the term is a nationalist. Non-nation-states can be just as aggressive and selfish in the pursuit of their collective interests, and just as collectivist in their structure and policies, as nation-states often are, and sometimes even more so. But that does not obliterate the vital difference in their modes of organisation. As we saw, nationalism refers to a specific manner of conceptualising and constituting the state and relating its members, not to the way it behaves.

There is therefore no warrant for calling every independence movement *national*, for not every country wishing to be free of foreign rule conceives itself as a nation in the sense of a more or less homogeneous, solidarist, spiritual and self-conscious ethnic, cultural or ethnocultural unit. There is even less reason for calling it *nationalist*, for where there is no consciousness of nation, there can be no nationalism either. What is more, nationalism refers to a specific way of justifying a nation's demand for independence, namely that groups of people who form spiritual wholes and share a homogeneous and long-established collective identity have a natural or historical right to self-determination. Since Europe has been divided into long-established, territorially concentrated, internally cohesive and politically self-conscious communities for centuries, such modes of thinking come easily to it. The historical experiences, the modes of social organisation and the forms of self-conceptualisation of other parts of the world have often been very different, and not surprisingly they articulated their demands for independence differently. They generally argued that they wished to be free in order to preserve the integrity of their traditional way of life, to avoid being exploited by foreign rulers, as a matter of loyalty to their ancestors, because they had lived long without external interference and saw no reason why they should not continue to do so, or simply that their desire to be left alone needed no more justification than a human being's desire not to be a slave. In short, although many of these movements resemble nationalism as outlined above, they were and are quite different in their nature and assumptions.

III

Different nationalisms are structured differently and differ greatly in the importance they assign to such things as ethnicity, territory, language and history. The concept of ethnicity with its associated ideas of common descent, kinship, emphasis on shared physical features and homeland is largely though not exclusively European, and has only a limited relevance to most of the rest of the world. The Arabs tend to see themselves not as an ethnic group but as a community sharing a common culture, history, religion and language. The Indians define their identity in terms of castes and linguistic groups, and neither is an ethnic group. Indeed, since Hindu

society is divided into relatively autonomous castes, it lacks the capacity to transcend them and form the wider concept of ethnicity. This means that in Europe ethnic groups provided the ready basis for nationalism, which therefore could be easily activated and given an ethnic dimension or basis. As Anthony Smith has shown, ethnic identity was central to or played a vital role in the development of most European nations (Smith 1986a). This has not been the case outside Europe. Since the Indian, Middle Eastern and other nationalisms often had only a limited ethnic basis, they could only be based on religion, culture or language. By their very nature, the latter lacked the cohesion and the quasi-natural character of ethnicity, and hence nationalism in these countries had a very different structure and dynamics. Nationalism has a different logic depending on whether it is articulated in linguistic, ethnic, cultural or other terms. Language and culture can be acquired but ethnicity cannot be, and therefore a nationalism based on the first two cannot be as exclusive and closed as that based on ethnicity. A religiously based nationalism, again, takes different forms depending on the nature of the religion. Such communal and non-proselytising religions as Judaism and Hinduism generate a very different kind of nationalism to such universalist and open but also more assertive and missionary religions as Christianity and Islam.⁹ As the recent Indian experience shows, the Hindu nationalists cannot even define a Hindu and they tie themselves into knots, which the Indian Muslims are easily able to avoid (Parekh 1994a: 124–6; 1994b).

Many non-Western nationalisms also have a 'pan' element built into them, which shapes their internal structure and limits their aggressive potential. In Arab countries nationalism cannot be based on race, ethnicity, religion or language, for these are shared alike by almost all Arab countries (Karpát 1982; Haim 1962). In the Arabic language, the nearest equivalent for the term nation is *qawm*, meaning community, and only the Arabs as a whole qualify for that description. They may live in different countries or *watan*, but the latter is morally subordinate to *qawm* in Arab thought, carries none of the paternal or ancestral connotations of *patria*, and is a focus of affection and attachment but not of loyalty or even identity (Lewis 1992: 170–2). Since no Arab nationalist is able to exclude the pan-Arab dimension, hardly anyone has developed a nationalist ideology of the European variety. Territory and history remain the only available bases of nationalism in Arab countries, but they create their own problems. Territorial boundaries are often arbitrary and lack continuity. And as for history, it is both discontinuous and rendered messy by the constant migrations of people. With the exception of Egypt, which has a clearly defined geography and history, no Arab country can claim historical continuity from remote antiquity to the present day. A coherent nationalism therefore becomes extremely difficult to develop. Not that Arab nationalists have not tried, but their attempts have proved futile. They had to skip over centuries to appropriate classical periods, only to find that they could not

integrate these into a continuous historical narrative. What is worse, these classical periods either occurred within the existing *territory* of the state but involved different *groups* of people, or vice versa. Arab responses to their predicament have varied greatly. Some writers advocate pan-Arab but not state-based 'nationalism'. Some advocate state-based nationalism against the background of and subject to the constraints of pan-Arab 'nationalism'. Yet others abandon the very language of nationalism as unsuited to their circumstances, and sometimes opt for different varieties of statism.

The 'pan' element also occurs in other parts of the world, and has in each case a different character and thrust. The 'pan' element in Africa is largely racial (Kedourie 1971; Emerson 1960; Kohn and Sokolsky 1965). It excludes not only the whites but also the North African Arabs, with the result that the geographical and cultural definitions of Africa do not coincide. Since African languages and religions differ greatly, pan-Africanism leaves some space for narrower linguistic and religious nationalisms and is far more heterogenous than its Arab counterpart. Thanks to the history of slavery, it also has a strong diasporic dimension lacking in the latter, and that adds a new geographical and cultural dimension to pan-Africanism. In Latin America the 'pan' element has either a Spanish or a Latin American basis, both derived from colonial history and culture (Snyder 1968; Alexander 1961; Burr 1961). After the struggle for independence began in Latin America in the nineteenth century, leaders of many of the eighteen Spanish American countries argued that they were only a 'people' and that only the *Hispanidad* was a 'nation'. The pan-'nationalism' in Latin America is culturally not ethnically articulated, is heavily European in its definition of Latin American identity, and is at once both culturally colonial and politically anti-colonial. The political pressures of the native people have complicated the situation yet further, challenging not only the European content but also the very idea of a pan-Latin American identity. Although the 'pan' element in these and other cases has often succumbed to narrow state interests, it nevertheless remains a potent emotional and rhetorical weapon which no nationalist leader can afford to ignore. As a result nationalism in these parts of the world remains somewhat open, inclusive and accountable to a larger continental constituency. The pan-'nationalism' occurs in Europe as well, but its aspiration to reclaim the dispersed diasporic communities of Germans, Serbs and others for their national homelands finds no echo outside Europe.

If what I have said is correct, no two nationalisms are alike. They do, of course, share some elements in common, but define and relate these differently. Some are territorially, some ethnically, yet others civilisationally, and some others are religiously articulated, and are in each case subject to the differing inner logic of their mode of articulation. Most of them emerged as responses to colonialism, and developed different strategies and idioms as required by the different modes of self-justification of the colonial rule. Some nationalisms have a wider 'pan' dimension, and have a broad

historical, geographical and cultural basis. But since they cannot be coherently formulated in self-contained and statist terms, they also display much diffidence, frustration and virulence. In short, it is a grave methodological mistake to talk of nationalism 'taking' different 'forms' in different countries as if it had an identical 'essence' relentlessly unfolding its 'potentialities' in different places. What really happens is that different countries come under the influence of a specific manner of thinking about the state. They then deconstruct the conceptual package, select its specific components, add new ones of their own, and generate distinct ideas and movements that at best bear only a family resemblance to each other, and that too of an extended rather than a nuclear family. To treat non-Western nationalisms as if they were nothing more than imitations of the European original is to display not only an ethnocentric bias but also an unacceptable degree of intellectual ignorance.

IV

It is often argued that all nations aim to become states. This is sometimes asserted as a statement either about how nations have generally behaved in the past, or about their 'inherent' nature. The first assertion is largely though not universally true; the second is false. Nations do cherish their ways of life and wish to govern their own affairs. But that does not mean that they want to become independent states. At least some national leaders realised that nation and state have very different structures and are created and preserved in very different ways, and that if their nations were to become independent, they would have to centralise their ways of life, set up a rigid bureaucracy, build up large armies, create a large industrial infrastructure, suppress diversity, and in general to subject themselves to the alien demands of the state. The wiser and more sensitive among them therefore eschewed statehood lest it should distort and corrupt their way of life.

The case of *Plaid Cymru* is a good example of this (Lewis 1975; Daniel 1937). Founded in 1925 by J. Saunders Lewis, it has strictly adhered to his insistence that their movement was 'not a fight for Wales's independence but for Wales's civilisation'. Lewis, who was influenced by the *Action Française*, thought highly of the medieval world in which different cultures flourished freely within a loose and relatively undemanding political framework, and believed that the rise of the homogenising nation-state froze and rigidified the constituent cultures, subjected them to bureaucratic constraints, and arrested their natural development. Lewis was convinced that the Welsh state would destroy the Welsh nation, and objected to Welsh independence on cultural and moral grounds.

The views of *Plaid Cymru* are also shared by several Scottish, Basque, Catalan, Flemish and other nationalist leaders. Gandhi too felt the same way. Since the Welsh option was not available to him, he argued that rather

than opt for the 'hard' modern state which was bound to destroy the Indian way of life by shaping it in its own image, India should evolve a more relaxed and less centralised form of polity suited to the traditional Indian civilisation. He thought that both the nation and the state had a collectivist and homogenising thrust, and wanted his country to be neither. Whether his non-nation non-state civilisational polity was viable is debatable, but it showed that one could deeply love one's way of life and yet remain hostile to the nationalist and statist modes of thought. Since most modern states are unwilling to provide secure spaces of growth for their cultural minorities and often tend to oppress them, the latter sometimes see no alternative to demanding states of their own. The twofold fact that much glamour is associated with the symbols of statehood, and that other states and international institutions do not accord respect or pay much attention to the needs of non-states, also tends to reinforce the national demand for independence.

If states were to become more open and plural, and if the statist international political culture were to change such that politically subordinate national groups have rights against their states under international law, are able to participate more or less as equals in shaping the new world order and to enjoy access across international boundaries to their scattered fellow-nationals, nations *might* prefer to remain autonomous units within a larger hospitable whole rather than risk losing their 'souls' in the course of violently fighting for and later running their own states. Some dampening influence exercised on the nationalist movements within the European Union by the provisions for regional autonomy, a generous policy of regional aid, and direct regional access to the major European institutions seems to support this view. It is also further confirmed by the fact that within the former Soviet Union, those ethnic groups which enjoyed the considerable cultural autonomy offered by their union republic status have tended to be less sympathetic to the nascent ethnonationalist movements than those who did not. Nations do not 'necessarily' seek to become states but do so only under certain circumstances, and can be weaned away if handled with understanding and generosity. To think that all nations necessarily seek independent statehood and that they should be allowed to follow the 'inner logic' of nationalism is to be fooled into inaction by, and to *prove*, the nationalist propaganda. Once state sovereignty is defined in less exclusive terms, the excessive importance of territoriality is reduced, and international boundaries are made more porous, much of the fear and frustration that fuels nationalism can be eliminated.

V

It is commonly argued that nationalism was first invented in Europe and then exported to the rest of the world. This is a half-truth. It is, of course,

true that nationalist ideas were first developed in Europe and that many non-Western leaders were deeply influenced by them. But it is wrong to conclude that these were the only ideas available to them and that their nationalist discourse was entirely derivative and heteronomous. Many non-Western societies had their own traditions of political thought, some of these fairly rich and well developed. Besides, they knew the difference between independence and subjugation as also why they preferred the former, and did not need the Europeans to tell them these simple truths. They also had rich precolonial religious traditions with their distinct ideas on what constituted a right social order and how different communities should treat each other. They suitably reinterpreted these traditions in political terms and used them against their colonial rulers. Since their nationalist ideas were often conveyed in religious idioms, Western commentators, used to a secular mode of political discourse, tended to overlook them altogether or to miss their significance. It is also worth noting that the German nationalist ideas, which many writers regard as paradigmatic of nationalism, were often not available outside of Europe. They were either not translated into local languages or even English, and were conceptually opaque and inaccessible.

What is more, even when colonial leaders drew inspiration from European nationalism, they indigenised the latter by discovering or inventing indigenous equivalents and investing these with additional meanings and nuances. This is what the Arab leaders did with the traditional and evocative concepts of *qawm*, *qawmiyyah*, *watan* and *wataniyyah* and the Indians with the concepts of *rashtra* and *swadeshi*. Besides, colonial leaders had to address their own masses and the colonial masters, and obviously they could not speak to the two audiences in the same language. The colonial rulers only understood and responded to the language of European nationalism, and were naturally addressed in that language. But it would be wrong to conclude that this 'official' and necessarily loud language of European nationalism was the only or even the most important language in which the nationalist thought was articulated. Its real and far more important language of communication was the vernacular or unofficial language in which the colonial leaders addressed the masses. Someone like Gandhi went even further and deliberately spoke to the British rulers in the *native* conceptual language, partly to confuse them, partly to highlight their alien origins, and partly as a way of demonstrating that the Indians had sufficient traditional resources not to have to fight their rulers with weapons borrowed from them.

All this means that when non-Western countries used the language of nationalism, which not all of them did, their nationalist discourse had an extremely complex structure (Parekh 1989a, ch. 7; Karpal 1982, chs. 1, 2). It borrowed some European ideas, but both indigenised and combined them with those derived from their own traditions. Colonial leaders spoke to their rulers in European idioms, to the masses in native idioms, and to each other

in a mixture of the two. Sometimes they used a strident nationalist vocabulary in their dealings with their rulers. But knowing that it would alienate the minorities and create problems after independence, they quietly and rightly advised the masses not to take their language too seriously. Again, since their situation was volatile and subject to conflicting demands, colonial leaders often had to keep improvising their political language. A combination of native, nativised and European ideas that worked in one context either did not work or had unexpected adverse consequences in another, and then it had to be suitably revised. As the struggle for independence entered a new phase, or as independence appeared imminent, the earlier discourse proved irrelevant and had to be reconstituted once again. Until 1946 Jinnah was a strident Muslim nationalist. As Pakistan became a reality, he realised that the new state would have to accommodate the minorities and avoid religious fundamentalism. Not surprisingly he more or less completely changed his tune and located Muslim nationalism within a secular statist framework.

The colonial nationalist discourse then was necessarily multistranded, multilayered, multilingual, partly autonomous and partly heteronomous, eclectic and provisional, and the post-independence nationalist discourse could hardly be otherwise. If we wish to appreciate its specificity, creative power and moral pathos, we need to study each nationalist movement in its own terms and in its own local language. To start with the assumption that *all* nationalist thought is European in origin is not only to praise and blame Europe too much, but also wholly to misunderstand non-Western political history and thought. Every time a colonial leader made an interesting remark or launched a powerful movement, Elie Kedourie looked for its European inspiration. Not surprisingly the neo-Hegelian B. C. Pal became an Indian *avatar* of Robespierre, and all that was unique and interesting about him and the Indian 'nationalist' thought was dissolved in irrelevant analogues and superficial comparisons (Kedourie 1971: 106). Several other writers on non-Western nationalisms have been even more cavalier and callous.

VI

It is often argued that nationalism is inherently 'tribal' and 'chauvinistic', and an evil to be studiously avoided. The truth is far more complex. The dangers of nationalism are all too well known to need elaboration. It is exclusive and chauvinistic, whether it is the nation defending its claim to be a state or vice versa. It is suspicious of differences between individuals and groups, postulates a non-existent national soul or spirit, privileges national identity, denies the role of mediating agencies, has a collectivist thrust, fears outsiders, and rules out intercultural borrowing. It requires the state to serve purposes for which it is inherently unsuited, endows it with an

undeserved moral dignity, and corrupts education by using it as a tool of cultural engineering. It also encourages some form of ethnic or cultural cleansing, and leads to much misery and violence.

However we must not judge nationalism in abstract and ahistorical terms. Nationalism insists on the unity of the nation, and hence on the equality of all its members. Whatever their economic, social and other inequalities and differences, they are all accepted as members of a single community and deemed to be entitled to a basic equality. Historically speaking almost every nationalist movement has attacked the tribal, regional, caste-based and sometimes even class-based hierarchies, and generated a spirit of equality and mutual help. Tribal when viewed externally, it is deeply anti-tribal when seen from within. It asserts the dignity of the oppressed and marginalised groups, and gives them both the confidence to take pride in their ways of life and the courage to stand up to the cultural and political hegemony of the dominant states. The dominant Western states are often no less nationalist, though their self-confidence and maturity usually moderate its expression, and can sometimes be checked only by the rival nationalisms of their victims. Since the latter upset the prevailing balance of power, Western states have a vested interest in condemning them, but such politically motivated condemnation is easily seen through and convinces nobody. Nationalism sometimes releases great emotional and moral energies which, when wisely channelled, can be used for the economic development and the moral and social regeneration of backward and stagnant societies. It gives the society a sense of purpose, a basis of unity, and the opportunity to attend to its affairs at its own pace and in its own way. Sometimes the nationalist appeal is needed to unite and hold together a deeply divided or atomised society until such time as the latter is stable, mature and confident enough to dispense with these ideological and addictive crutches. Indeed it is difficult to think of any Western state that has not periodically relied on crude or subtle nationalist appeals to consolidate itself and contain its fissiparous tendencies.

All political doctrines have an ambiguous historical logic and both good and bad consequences. Liberalism spawned individual rights, responsible government, critical rationality and so on, but it also led to capitalism, social atomism, an irresponsible obsession with choice, and the destruction of a shared communal life. This is true also of socialism, communism and nationalism. Nationalism *is* an intellectually incoherent doctrine with a considerable potential for evil, irrespective of whether it is Western or Eastern, civil or ethnic, old or new, and should ideally be avoided. However in political life intellectually and morally suspect beliefs sometimes play a valuable political and historical role. Rather than condemn nationalism in abstract and moralistic terms, we should locate it in a historical context, appreciate the complex nature of political good and evil, and devise institutions capable of accommodating and regulating the legitimate aspirations that find a pathological expression in nationalism.

Notes

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1. For some parts of this article, I have relied on my 'Nationalism in a comparative perspective', in *Politisches Denken*, 1994c.
2. All or most of these assumptions are to be found in Kedourie 1960, Hayes 1948, Kohn 1944, Shafer 1972 and Gellner 1983. Smith 1971 and 1991 are two of the few books to be free of most, though not all, of these assumptions.
3. For good discussions, see Kedourie 1960, Hayes 1948 and Shafer 1938 and 1972. For German nationalist thought see Kedourie 1960, Fichte 1922, Reiss 1955 and Snyder 1952. For a critique of contemporary nationalist thought see Parekh 1995a, 1995b, 1995c.
4. J. S. Mill created much confusion when he called this 'national feeling', 'sentiment of nationality' and 'feeling of common nationality', both because he meant by these nothing more than common sympathies and a desire to live together, and because he found it difficult to distinguish this feeling from nationalism which he strongly condemned. Lord Acton's (Himmelfarb 1952) and even Mazzini's analogous distinctions between two 'forms' of nationalism created similar confusions. Since 'national' and 'nationalist' feelings or sentiments are *qualitatively* distinct as was admitted by these writers themselves, they were wrong to describe them in an identical language, or to see them as two forms of the same basic sentiment and different only in degree. Brian Barry and David Miller seem to me to make a similar mistake. They are closer to the civic republican or the participatory rather than to the nationalist theory of the state. A strong communitarianism is logically not the same as and considerably falls short of nationalism. Smith (1991: 11–15) distinguishes between Western or civic and non-Western or ethnic conceptions of nationalism, but goes on to argue that all nationalisms contain both civic and ethnic elements and differ largely in their forms. This blurs important distinctions. What is more, the concept of nationalism of which they are supposed to be forms becomes nebulous and is no more than a strong sense of community and historical identity. Civic or moderate 'nationalism' is best understood not as nationalism but as patriotism or as a strong sense of collective belonging that entails no commitment to a shared substantive conception of the good life.
5. Renan was a philosopher of religion and tended to see the nation in quasi-religious terms. He was also a liberal and did not find it easy to reconcile nationalism with liberalism. In his *Vie de Jesus* (1863), he explained the rise of Christianity along the same lines as nationalism and was denounced by the church! If liberalism and nationalism are defined sufficiently loosely, they can be combined, but only by taking undue liberties with their historical and conceptual integrity. Even then deep tensions are bound to remain at the ontological, epistemological, moral and political levels. The liberal takes the individual to be the ontological unit of social life, cherishes critical rationality, values choice, self-determination and autonomy, and derives political authority from uncoerced individual consent. All these are at odds with the central theses of nationalism. Barry 1991 and Yael Tamir 1993 offer ingenious but unconvincing ways of reconciling the two. In Barry liberalism dominates and reduces nationalism to little more than a strong sense of collective belonging; in Tamir liberalism is deprived of its moral and philosophical depth and largely defined in institutional and procedural terms. Barry, and Miller 1993 seem to think that when nationalism is filtered through liberalism, it loses its sting and emerges as a relatively innocuous sense of 'nationality'. As I have argued their optimism is unjustified. The so-called civic nationalism runs into similar difficulties, and is either civic or nationalist but not both.
6. 'The Republic under which Renan formulated his idea had inherited a territorial unit but a cultural jigsaw ... The fact is, the French fuss so much about the nation because it is a living problem, became one when they set up the nation as an ideal, remained one because they found they could not realise the ideal.' Weber 1977, pp. 112 and 485. For a good discussion of France, see Hayward 1991: chs. 1, 2 and 9.

7. The place of England in the UK offers interesting insights in the process of creating a broad-based national identity.
8. Even as memory is central to nationalism, so is imagination in the sense stressed by Anderson 1983 and Bhabha 1990. A careful account of non-Western nationalisms would need to explore if imagination enjoys epistemological dignity in these cultures, and if it has the kind of structure and power required to generate and sustain nationalism. Since neither Anderson nor Bhabha undertakes such an inquiry, they uncritically universalise the modern Western conception of imagination. As a result their accounts of nationalism remain flawed. Nationalism is a cultural phenomenon, and a comparative study of it requires a culturally sensitive analysis of the epistemological structures of different societies. We need to investigate not only the economic and sociological but also the epistemological preconditions of nationalism.
9. For a discussion of the specificity of contemporary Jewish nationalism, see Mosse 1992.

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