Nations and nationalisms: towards more open models*

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ABSTRACT. Starting from the proposition that nationalism is bound up with ethnicity, Barth's view that ethnicity is defined by actors and that ethnicities are situationally variable is drawn upon to argue that narrow definitions of nationalism – as a specifically modern political ideology which is bound up with the nation-state – overstate their case. Instead of nationalism we should be talking about nationalism*s*, which can only be understood in their local and historical contexts. An open definition of nationalism is offered, which permits abstraction and generalisation while accommodating empirical heterogeneity. Material from Wales, Northern Ireland and Denmark is presented to illustrate some of the differences between local nationalisms.

Recent discussions of nationalism have seen some authors move towards a relativisation of the phenomenon: 'no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible. As the historical record is diverse, so too must be our concepts' (Hall 1993: 1). Or, in Smith's words, 'the complexity of the empirical issues ... rules out the possibility of uncovering law-like regularities or sweeping generalisations in this field' (1994: 392).

Taking such a view does not, however, mean the abandonment of model-building and theorising. Nor can we relativise the notion of nationalism altogether. If the concept is to retain its analytical value, the varieties of whatever it is that we persist in calling 'nationalism' must also have something in common. Although probably not the only common thread – political membership conceived as citizenship might be another (Verdery 1993: 38) – ethnicity, personal and collective identity which draws upon a repertoire of perceived cultural differences, is the most ubiquitous and plausible (cf. Connor 1978; Williams 1989).

Nationalism in this view, therefore, is historically and locally variable, and bound up with ethnicity. Taking these propositions together, the model

of ethnicity which is identified with Fredrik Barth may have something to offer historical and sociological accounts of nationalism. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969), Barth argues that ethnicity is perpetually defined and redefined by social actors in the course of interaction. The membership of ethnic groups, their boundaries and the 'cultural stuff' upon which they draw are, therefore, all variable. This transactional approach starts from the point of view of actors themselves and emphasises the situational contingency of ethnic identity. It has achieved something of the status of conventional wisdom in social anthropology (Eriksen 1993).[1]

In his more recent discussions of ethnic diversity and pluralism (1984; 1989), Barth retains the focus upon interaction and the negotiability of boundaries and identities. Alongside this, however, something else emerges: ongoing 'streams of tradition' or 'universes of discourse' in which individual actors differentially participate, and which, despite a use of imagery which suggests movement and practice, possess a degree of stability over time. History combines with the give-and-take of the moment in the social construction of ethnic boundaries and identities. To paraphrase someone else – from a different tradition – actors may make their own identities, but they do not do so in circumstances of their own choosing.

Ethnicity and nationalism

As I have argued elsewhere (Jenkins 1995), one way to understand nationalism, and other -*isms* such as localism, communalism, regionalism and racism, is as to regard them as ideologies of ethnic identification. They are more-or-less structured bodies of knowledge which make claims about how the social world is, and how it ought to be, organised along ethnic lines. Allotropes of the general phenomenon of ethnicity (or, to be more exact, ethnicism), they are historically and locally specific. There is thus no equation of nationalism with ethnicity: first, not all things ethnic are ideological, and second, nationalism differs from other ethnic ideologies and is defined by the specific historical conditions of its emergence.

As a relatively recent reflection of the gradual move of human societies into self-reflexive history which is a concomitant of literacy (Goody 1977), nationalism is an aspect of the growth of ever more complex political units, based, to some degree, on notions of ethnic and cultural commonality (however much, *pace* Anderson, imagined). As an ethnic identification which, more than most, is explicitly socially constructed and orchestrated as a historical project, nationalism is, in fact, a fine example of Barthian transaction and negotiation at work.

Thus, 'nationalism can be thought of as a specimen of the big family of *we-talks*' (Bauman 1992: 678). Similarly, Smith suggests that ethnicity offers 'a potent model for human association which has been adapted and

transformed, but not obliterated, in the formation of modern nations' (1986: x; see also 1994: 382). Nationalism is rooted in, and is an expression of, ethnic attachments, albeit, perhaps, at a high level of collective abstraction. The 'nation' and 'national identity' or 'nationality' are, respectively, varieties of ethnic collectivity and ethnicity, and are likely to be historically contingent, context-derived and defined and redefined in negotiation and transaction. This proposition applies as much to symbolic or ideological content (nationalism) as it does to group boundaries and membership (national identity, nationality, citizenship).

Not everyone agrees with this. Hobsbawm, for example, argues that nationalism and ethnicity are 'different, and indeed non-comparable, concepts' (1992: 4): nationalism is a recent and programmatic political philosophy, while ethnicity expresses authentic or primordial group identity, rooted in the distinction between insider and outsider. Ethnicity may be 'one way of filling the empty containers of nationalism', but, for Hobsbawm, there is no necessary relationship between the two (see also 1990: 63ff.). Although Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983) each recognises a connection between ethnicity and nationalism, they also share, with each other and with Hobsbawm, an understanding of political modernisation as the triumph of the nation-state and of nationalism as a specific philosophy of political legitimacy with eighteenth and nineteenth-century roots in the cultural homogenisation produced by industrialisation and the bureaucratic state. Thus, nationalism is the product of industrialisation and bureaucratic government (Gellner); of the convergence of capitalism and the information technology of printing (Anderson); of all these things *plus* the French Revolution's recasting of political membership as citizenship (Hobsbawm).

Many more authors could be cited to make the same point. To differing degrees, they offer a similarly functionalist argument: nationalism provided an ideological means, following the collapse of feudalism and absolutism, for the modern incorporation of elites and masses into the same political space, the nation-state. However much it may incorporate a sense of *we-ness*, nationalism for these authors marks a distinctively modern break with a traditional past characterised by ethnic fragmentation and small-scale communalism. It is both a consequence of and a cure for the disenchantment produced by the rationalisation of modern social life.

The functionalism of this argument is not its main weakness. The model of nationalism as a modern replacement for, or supersession of, ethnicity, appropriate to the demands of the industrialised social world of nation-states, depends upon definitions of nationalism and ethnicity which are more constraining than may be defensible. The definition of ethnicity which is implied is certainly more limited and more limiting than Barth's broad notion of 'the social organisation of culture differences' (which, if it *is* what we mean by ethnicity, must include nationalism within its scope). Nor is the difficulty simply definitional: ethnicity is conceptualised, even if only

implicitly, as historically and culturally 'Other', creating in the process two problems. Historically, the argument tends towards tautology: nationalism is what supersedes ethnicity, which is what precedes nationalism. Culturally, we are left with no authentic place within modern nation-states for ethnicity, other than as axiomatic homogeneity, on the one hand, or an immigrant or peripheral presence, on the Other.

A further criticism is that this school of thought takes modernity's view of itself – as radically discontinuous with what went before – too much at face value, overemphasising the centrality to nationalism of the *modern* (nation-)state. If we accept the absolute modernity of nationalism, what are we to make, for example, of the argument (Runciman 1958: 280–1) that the 'nascent spirit of nationalism' was encouraged by the attempts of the late thirteenth century papacy to undermine the power of the Hohenstaufen emperors? Or Moore's characterisation (1987: 136) of European rulers of the same period as a 'new order', proclaiming a 'moral fervour' which found an expression in the emergence of a number of nation-states? And what of Reynolds' view (1984: 252) that nationalism 'resembles the medieval idea of the kingdom as comprising a people with a similarly permanent and objective reality'? To these European examples can be added Duara's recent argument (1993) that the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' are applicable to pre-modern China.

It is impossible to dissent completely from the view that 'nationalism, as ideology and movement, is a wholly modern phenomenon' (Smith 1986: 18). And one should certainly beware of the anachronistic use of words such as 'nation' and 'nationalism', which did not, apparently, achieve common currency in their *modern* usages until the late nineteenth century (Østergård 1992a: 17). However, that nationalism is a *wholly* modern phenomenon is not self-evident. There is a *prima facie* case for arguing that ideologies and politics which are recognisably nationalist, and identities which can be described as national, predate the rise of 'classical' nationalism from the late eighteenth century onwards (Smith 1994). If so, this has implications for the study of modern nationalism.

If nationalism is an ideology of ethnic identification, and therefore approachable via Barth's basic model of ethnicity, we should be as much concerned with how nationalisms and nationalists define themselves – and how they are defined by other actors – as with how we as social scientists should define them. This avoids substituting 'the reality of the model' for 'the model of reality' (Bourdieu 1977: 29) and offers a flexible approach which, instead of fixing the notion too firmly in the post-Enlightenment political landscape of Western Europe – as one might socialism, for example – is catholic in its recognition of ethnic identifications as national(ist) and their ideological and symbolic expressions as nationalism(s). The boundary between 'ethnicism' and 'nationalism' thus becomes indeterminate, lying somewhere along a continuum of gradual change within historically evolving traditions or universes of discourse.

This argument, that nationalism may be less definitively modern than is commonly accepted,[2] differs from Smith's thesis about the ethnic origins of nations (1986) in that I do not draw too sharp a line between ethnicism and nationalism. My argument owes much of its inspiration, however, to Smith.[3] There are two reasons for emphasising the possibility of pre-modern nationalisms. First, I want to loosen the entailment of nationalism in the nation-state. To define a phenomenon wholly in terms of what may, at least arguably, be its historical consequence seems to risk a misunderstanding. Second, and following from this, I want to explore the possibility that the goals of nationalism are not exhausted by the project of the ethnically exclusive or culturally homogeneous nation-state.

The first move in this argument is to offer a minimal heuristic definition of nationalism, thus:

nationalism is an ideology of ethnic identification which (1) is historically and situationally contingent; (2) is characteristic of the politics of complex societies (states but not necessarily nation-states); (3) is concerned with culture and ethnicity as criteria of membership in the polity; and (4) claims a collective historical destiny for the polity and/or its ethnically defined members.

This may appear not only too complex, but also vague – which destiny? historical according to whom? how and by whom are such claims defined and pursued? – but I hope that its utility will become more apparent in the comparative discussion of cases which follows.

The full spectrum of nationalist possibilities is not, therefore, likely to be captured by definitions such as Gellner's: 'a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state ... should not separate the power-holders from the rest' (1983: 1). There are phenomena which are either rhetorically constructed as 'nationalism', or which an observer can ostensibly identify as such, which do not fall within such a model.

The second move is, instead of talking about nationalism – in anything other than the most abstract or general of senses – to talk about nationalisms. This is not a very novel suggestion. Other authors have typologised nationalism (e.g. Alter 1989; Breuilly 1985; Hall 1993; Smith 1991),[4] typically within a framework which distinguishes, whether explicitly or implicitly, between *nationalism-in-general* and specific historical instances of *nationalist movements* (Smith 1991: 79–80). The latter are usually the objects of classification. My proposal is different, its definition of nationalism-in-general is looser, covering a wider range of phenomena. It is as much concerned with similarities between nationalisms and other phenomena as with differences between them. Nor are the historical instances which I am interested in examining and comparing necessarily organised movements.

Nationalism in three countries

This article continues the comparative project of an earlier discussion of
nationalisms in Northern Ireland and Wales (Jenkins 1991). That paper
focused upon language, violence and the history of the integration of each
region into the United Kingdom state. In Northern Ireland the objectives
of contemporary nationalisms are the reunification of Ireland and the
removal of British government. In Wales, by contrast, secession is an
insignificant nationalist project compared to the protection and promotion
of Welsh culture – particularly the Welsh language – and the economic
and social development of the areas in which that culture retains its
vigour.

Northern Ireland and Wales also differ with respect to the kinds of
political action which are perceived as legitimate by nationalists. In each
place a gulf separates constitutional nationalists, who pursue their goals
through electoral means, from those who advocate the use of force. In
Northern Ireland, however, armed struggle has considerable legitimacy in
the eyes of a large number of nationalists, whereas for the great majority of
Welsh nationalists even modestly violent direct action is bitterly controver-
sial. These different nationalist discourses reflect different regional histories
and experiences of incorporation into the British state. As a consequence, it
is possible to argue that the nationalisms of each region are, in some senses,
qualitatively different phenomena (although both can legitimately claim to
be nationalist).

I will return to these issues. For the moment they provide the context for
what follows, and indicate the argument's antecedents. In the present
article, the scope of the comparison has been extended to include Denmark
as well as Northern Ireland and Wales. The choice of cases reflects, in the
first instance, my own experience of these countries, rather than an extrinsic
logic of comparison.[5] But so does my scepticism about existing theories of
nationalism: in their different ways, Wales, Northern Ireland and Denmark
did not seem to 'fit' the analytical models to which I first turned in order to
understand them.

But as case studies they are particularly appropriate for this discussion.
They are integral, if peripheral, elements of modern European industrialised
society, the recognised birthplace of nationalism. Northern Ireland and
Wales are each part of a nation-state political system, while Denmark
constitutes one in its own right. All have long histories of political change
available for inspection. If, therefore, their nationalisms can be shown to
differ significantly from each other and from the 'state modernisation and
industrialisation' model, that will be telling support for my argument.

In the context of these comparative intentions, I want to pose an
apparently simple question: what is the nature of nationalism in each of
these countries? This entails a further, deceptively simple, question – does
nationalism exist in each of these countries? – which requires us to

remember the definitional criteria of nationalism outlined above. Moving from the more to the less straightforward, I will begin with Wales.

Wales

Wales has been an integral part of the British – and before that the English – state since the Act of Union of 1536, but it remains culturally and politically distinct. Having been spared the depopulation of the Highland Clearances or the Great Famine, Wales is linguistically the most 'Celtic' strand in the United Kingdom's 'Celtic Fringe'. Approximately 20 per cent of the population are still Welsh speakers (Coupland and Ball 1989). Although representing a history of decline, this is significantly higher than the equivalent figures for speakers of Scots Gaelic or Irish.

From the late eighteenth century Wales, like other European cultural peripheries, experienced a romanticist 'revival' of 'folk' culture, sponsored and invented by an urban elite brought into being by industrialisation (Morgan 1983). Under the aegis of non-conformist Liberalism, the seeds of nationalism were sown. Medieval classics such as the *Mabinogion* found a new audience as the *eisteddfod* movement campaigned to create a publicly respectable voice for a language which still, at that time, dominated rural and working-class life. Today, despite centuries of immigration the Principality retains a cultural identity which, elusive as its definition might be, can legitimately be called 'Welsh'.

Economically, Wales, particularly south Wales, is part of the metropolitan British economy. Its first industrial revolution, beginning in the eighteenth century, was characterised by the interdependence of coal mining and metal manufacture in the southern valleys. Here there developed a characteristic working-class communal life: culturally and linguistically Welsh, non-conformist in religion and politically socialist. This economic strength eventually turned – with mass unemployment in the 1930s, post-1945 restructuring, and the return of recession in the 1970s – to decline, only partially arrested by inward investment and UK and European subsidies.

Due to the antiquity and nature of its incorporation into the British state, Wales is institutionally less autonomous or distinct than, for example, Scotland. In terms of the politics of party, Wales has been characterised for the last century and a half by movements with strong links to religious non-conformity: first Liberalism and then, from the early 1900s, the socialism of 'the Labour Ascendancy' (Morgan 1981: 272–303). As much as anything, Wales differs from England politically in that Conservatism has always been a minority affiliation.

Although nationalism in Wales can be traced back – in the agitation for the disestablishment of the Anglican state church – into the nineteenth century, not until the twentieth is there a nationalist *movement*. The Welsh

Nationalist Party was founded in 1925, and was renamed *Plaid Cymru* in 1945. It won its first seat in the British parliament in 1966. At the time of writing it returns four members to Westminster. Its support remains strongest in *y fro Gymraeg*, the Welsh-speaking rural west and north. From its beginnings, *y blaid* has emphasised cultural issues (language and education), economic development and political devolution within the United Kingdom as the best way to represent Welsh interests. Secession or independence have always been marginal to the party's platform. Its commitment to non-violent electoral politics increasingly emphasises Europe as the most significant political arena in the 1990s.

Although the dominant political voice of Welsh nationalism, Plaid Cymru remains a minority party in Wales electorally. Its oppositional vision of the political future of Wales has always competed with the articulation of class conflict and communitarianism offered by the Labour Party. It also competes with the other major voice of nationalism in Wales, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society), founded in 1962. Using non-violent direct protest, in judicious combination with lobbying, the latter's achievements include state-funding for Welsh language education and the statutory definition of Welsh as having 'equal validity' in Wales.

Welsh is everywhere: road signs, toilets, train timetables, in the bank and so on. There is a Welsh language television station, Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C), and a modest Welsh-medium cultural production industry. At the time of writing, Cymdeithas is at the forefront of protests about new Welsh language legislation and the continued reluctance of government to grant Welsh full official status. Demographically, the decline in the number of Welsh-speakers may have been arrested. Reflecting the impact of education and job opportunities, increasingly the future of the language appears to lie not in *y fro Gymraeg*, but in the industrialised and urbanised south-east (Davies 1990).

Although there is no room for an account of the gains and losses of Welsh nationalism (see Davies 1989), there are some things to add. First, not all nationalism is non-violent. Separatist organisations such as Meibion Glyndŵr (the Sons of Glyndŵr), and its antecedents such as the Free Wales Army, have engaged in arson, bombing and other attacks on property, particularly holiday homes owned by 'outsiders'. Despite the consistent rejection of violence by mainstream nationalist organisations, opinion in Welsh-speaking areas may be becoming more equivocal on this matter.[6] Although violence has always been on the margins, one can no longer assume the 'natural pacifism' of nationalism in Wales (Thomas 1991: 18).

There is also an anti-nationalist backlash. There have been (unsuccessful) cases in north Wales in which individuals have used the 1976 Race Relations Act in response to their rejection under local authority Welsh-language hiring policies. In Dyfed, national legislation permitting schools to opt out of the state education system has facilitated a campaign by English-speaking parents, many of whom are recent immigrants, against the County Council's

Welsh-language schooling policies. In reflection of this kind of conflict, and the existence of a strand of authoritarian and exclusionary linguistic-nationalist rhetoric, academic analyses have appeared which characterise Welsh nationalism as racist (Borland *et al.* 1992; Denney *et al.* 1991; for a critique, see Williams 1994).

Hostility to nationalism is not, however, confined to 'non-Welsh' immigrants. Many Welsh people feel excluded, patronised and devalued by the language movement. This is compounded by class antagonisms: in the south-east, Welsh has become identified with middle-class speakers, often working in the public sector. A real problem exists – for nationalists not least of all – with respect to the relationship between the language and authentic Welsh identity. Plaid Cymru consistently attempts to construct a vision of Welshness which while inclusive of English-speakers is sufficiently exclusive to serve as a model of national identity. Its recent electoral alliance in Ceredigion with the Green Party is an example of this in practice. Such a vision is vital, if only because a nationalism which is wholly identified with Welsh – and remember that it is with respect to the language that nationalism has had its greatest impact – is, in modern Wales, doomed to minority status: 'The issue of language has ... given rise from the early part of this century down to the present to a crisis in identity ... English-speaking Welshmen spiritedly and justifiably counter that ... they too are a distinctively "Welsh" people' (Howell and Baber 1990: 354). There is thus an everyday problem to do with 'national identity' and the 'nation'. What qualifies people for membership in the nation and an authentic Welsh national identity? And who licenses authenticity? Howell and Baber go on to list the attributes, other than the Welsh language, which distinguish the Welsh: 'their separate history, instinctive radicalism in religion and politics, contempt for social pretentiousness, personal warmth and exuberance, sociability, love of music and near obsession with rugby'. Of this list only one item has analytical potential: the idea of a separate history. But this history is an 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), a 'myth to live by' (Samuel and Thompson 1990). That invention is still underway and still evolving.

Even as a social construct, a separate history is, for Wales, problematic. There cannot be one history (although see Davies 1993). And separate from what? The answer, of course, is England. But Wales has never been isolated. Its history, even as a nationalist mythical charter, is one of engagement with its neighbours and participation in a variety of streams of tradition and universes of discourse (Jenkins 1990). Wales is, and has probably always been, a 'plural society' (Giggs and Pattie 1992). The question for nationalism is how to integrate that plurality of voices into a Welsh national identity.

To describe Wales as a plural society is not actually to say very much. Europe – like most of the rest of the world – has always been a tangled thicket of cultural pluralism. This is one of the things which nationalisms, in

their imagination and invention of consistency, often seek to deny. The irony for Welsh nationalism is that such a denial is only possible at the cost of political success. The public articulation of a narrowly defined Welsh identity is not only the pursuit of a chimera, it is politically unwise. If, as a consequence, Plaid Cymru is attempting to define Welshness in terms of common territorial location, shared economic and social problems, a sense of difference that is not exclusively linguistic, and a 'European future',[7] that need not disqualify it as nationalism.

Northern Ireland

Nationalism in Northern Ireland must, first, be seen within the all-Ireland framework. It claims that context for itself, and it is part of a longer history than the seventy-year life of the six-county northern state. But the history of Ireland is also the history of its relations with England. Irish nationalism evolved as resistance to English rule, and was in the first instance inspired by an English political tradition (Boyce 1991: 388).

The relationship with 'across the water' has changed many times. From the twelfth to the early seventeenth centuries, Ireland was an insecurely possessed English colony, with large areas remaining under Irish control. Subsequently, Ireland in the seventeenth century was a frontier (part colony, part periphery), in the eighteenth century a separate kingdom within a federal polity, and in the nineteenth superficially integrated into the British state. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 partitioned the island into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The northern state was an uneasy product of the refusal of Ulster Protestants to accept government by a Catholic majority. Its membership of the United Kingdom remains insecure, contingent upon the consent of its electorate.

Nationalism in Ireland appears in different guises: the 'embryonic ethnic nationalism' of Gaelic Ireland at the end of the Tudor period; an Anglo-Irish 'national identity based on religion and love of the *patria*', developing into 'intimations of nationalism' by the seventeenth century; nationalism as 'a fully formed and articulated sentiment in the Ireland of the Protestant ascendancy in the last quarter of the eighteenth century'; the revived Catholic national identity of the nineteenth century, forged out of a 'nationalism of the Catholic democracy' and 'the resurgence of Gaelic ethnic nationalism' (Boyce 1991: 19). Although Boyce's view might be contested by historians of a more nationalist bent, it supports my argument about the historical contingency of nationalisms. Apropos the modernity of nationalism, one can point to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century debate about the nature of the Irish nation – although the term found only rare use – and who belonged to it (Connolly 1992: 114–24). As significant as the contested identities to which this debate attests is the fact that, at this relatively early time, it took place at all.

The twentieth century has seen more change. The Republic of Ireland won its independence by violence; the northern Protestants vetoed their inclusion in that independence by the same means. In the south, nationalism is the political common ground: *all* politicians in the Republic are, in some sense, nationalists, and the Irish constitution – pending the fruition of recent developments – still claims the six counties of the north. Nationalism is also an embarrassing irrelevance: there is little evidence that politicians or voters in the south *want* the six counties 'back'. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the recent 'peace process', can in part be read as an attempt to forestall that scenario with some kind of joint sovereignty. In most respects, 'normal politics' are the order of the day.

In Northern Ireland, partition had deep roots in violent conflict between the British (before that the English) state, the Catholic Irish and a population – settled in Ireland for many centuries – identifying itself variously as Irish Protestant, British, Scots-Irish or Anglo-Irish. Cultural and political differences between the Irish and the descendants of the settlers found, and still find, powerful expression in religion. Although essentially political, the Northern Irish conflict is symbolised and reinforced by a religious dimension (Jenkins 1986).

Partition reinforced a further ethnic identification, with the new state of Northern Ireland. This Ulster identity, although claiming an ancient Gaelic province as its own,[8] was Protestant, new – rooted in the north's development as the industrialised region of Ireland and in northern anti-Home Rule agitation during the previous thirty years – and distanced from both the Irish and the English. The latter distance increased over subsequent decades, as successive British governments allowed the internal affairs of the province to slip ever further beyond their oversight and Ulster Unionists were happy to let them.

For most of the period[9] between partition and the present 'troubles' northern nationalists were torn between refusing to recognise the new state and striving to improve the Catholic lot. Nationalist political participation was discouraged by the stance of Unionism, the Protestant party of government in Northern Ireland for an unbroken fifty years. Northern Catholic politicians had to choose between a dangerous and uncertain military strategy (which would attract little Catholic support but would invite a repressive response from the state), remaining aloof from the Unionist state and waiting for history to deliver Irish unity, or attempting, under unfavourable conditions, to improve the socio-economic position of the minority.

These options reflect two political traditions: gradualist constitutional 'nationalism' and physical-force 'republicanism' (Ruane and Todd 1992: 189). In Northern Ireland, republican nationalism was represented by Sinn Féin, allied to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and constitutional nationalism first by the Nationalist Party, until 1969, and subsequently by the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP).[10]

The differences between modern nationalisms re-emerged in the early
1960s in the campaign to redress the electoral, social and economic
grievances of Catholics. The Civil Rights Movement, and Protestant
reaction to it, led to escalating violence, the introduction of the British
army, and the dissolution of the local parliament and the assumption of
direct rule from London in 1972. In 1969 resurgent nationalist violence split
republicanism into the Official and Provisional movements, reflecting a shift
in the centre of gravity of republicanism to the north, a retreat from the
socialism which had been influential within the movement, and a return to
physical force and a Gaelic tradition. These developments were associated
with a new, working-class militant republicanism in Belfast and elsewhere.
The Provisional movement – in its IRA and Sinn Féin branches – is now
the authentic voice of a large constituency of northern Catholics.[11]
Constitutional nationalism, reorganised into the SDLP, absorbed some of
the civil rights activists, and has forged a new strategy under the auspices of
the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, relating directly to Dublin and London.
Although it aspires to Irish unity, the SDLP's nationalism is compromised
these days by its relationship with establishment politics in Dublin.

This account suggests some observations. Irish history, first, is a history
of nationalisms – both Irish and British – rather than nationalism. Nor is it
easily shoehorned into the frameworks proposed by Anderson, Gellner or
Hobsbawm. The problem, for example, with Coakley's argument (1990)
that Irish nationalism in some senses conforms to the European norm and is
in some senses deviant, is its presumption of both a single Irish nationalism
and a typical European model. Furthermore, nationalism of various hues is
of considerable antiquity in Ireland. There are few reasons to confine our
recognition of Irish nationalism to the nineteenth century and since.

Which brings me to 'streams of tradition', *pace* Barth. Notions of shared
history require caution: history is both the circumstances under which men
and women make themselves (and make more history), and the myths and
inventions by which they live. Too little can be made of history, and too
much. If there are today *two* nationalist traditions in Northern Ireland then
we must explain them with reference to more than history.[12] It was despite
the mutual enmities of the past and the present that the leaders of Sinn Féin
and the SDLP, calculating the odds about the future, held the private talks
which produced a joint submission to the Dublin government, the Anglo-
Irish Downing Street Declaration of December 1993, the paramilitary cease-
fires of 1994 and the subsequent 'peace process'.

History, tradition and current politics combine, in Northern Ireland as in
Wales, in questions of identity. Are Protestants, for example, Irish? Leaving
aside the nationalist rhetoric which insists that they are, the answer is
complex. Survey evidence suggests that there has been a change in
identification. In 1968 three identities were important, 'British', 'Irish' and
'Ulster'. By 1978 this had polarised into 'British' (most Protestants) and
'Irish' (most Catholics), and this has apparently changed little since

(Moxon-Browne 1991: 29). However, as Moxon-Browne says, Protestants know what they're *not* better than what they *are*. It depends upon with whom they are contrasted. Do they feel quite as British as the British? How do they identify themselves as against the English? And how do the British identify them? Nor do we know what the difference is between middle-class Unionism and working-class loyalism (analogues of constitutional and republican nationalism). As social anthropology insists, 'it's not as simple as that', particularly in rural districts (McFarlane 1986). Nor is it clear that 'Irishness' is the same in the north as in the south. Etcetera.

It is, however, clear that northern Irish Catholics and Protestants share no common national identity, and that Protestant identity is ambiguous. Witness, for example, the attempts by the Ulster Defence Association[13] and others to invent a new history and mythology of and for the Ulster Irish (Bruce 1992: 233–6; Buckley 1989). Witness the social science disagreement about whether Protestant ethnic chauvinism is racism (Nelson 1975). And if not racism, what? Nationalism? Ethnicism? Does a Protestant nationalism make sense? It made sense, after all, in eighteenth-century Ireland. But if it were to make sense, in what terms, given the Catholic appropriation of nationalist rhetoric, would Protestants make their case?

Although they might see themselves as British nationalists, Protestant Ulster nationalism is an unlikely prospect. At the heart of the problem is the nature of the Protestant claim to a 'historical destiny'. In denying themselves an Irish future in 1921, and accepting a reluctant and conditional incorporation by Britain, they arguably wrote themselves out of history for fifty years. When they re-emerged in the late 1960s, as oppressors of the Catholic minority and an embarrassment to the rest of the United Kingdom, their moment had passed. It shows no sign of returning. They remain, neither fully Irish nor fully British, seeking a destiny as well as an identity.

Denmark

On the face of it, there is no nationalism in Denmark. A lack of nationalist movements has, in fact, been identified as a general characteristic of Nordic societies (Elklit and Tonsgaard 1992). Although this absence may reflect their own tight definition of nationalist movements,[14] for Elklit and Tonsgaard it indicates the solution through other kinds of politics of ethnonational grievances which could otherwise foment movements of this kind. Not everyone, of course, takes this view. Eriksen, for example, suggests (1993: 102–4) that weak nationalism has been influential in the history of the Nordic peoples.

The absence or weakness of nationalist movements is part of a Nordic political style which emphasises conflict avoidance and the promotion of consensus. The most cursory look at Denmark illustrates the point: it is

difficult to find anything that would identify itself, or might be identified by others, as a nationalist political party *per se*. The tiny parties of the right which campaign about immigration and similar issues – Den danske Forening, Nationalpartiet Danmark and De national-liberale – are perceived as neo-fascist or racist rather than specifically nationalist. Yet this is despite Denmark's progressive loss of once-substantial peripheral territories (Borish 1991: 28–37). It is despite invasion and occupation by Germany three times between 1848 and 1945. It is despite incorporation into a European Union of which many Danes, perhaps the majority, are deeply suspicious and fearful. It is despite increased unemployment. It is despite recent immigration from southern Europe and further afield and increased ethnic intolerance (Enoch 1994). And it is despite a contemporary European political climate in which nationalism has regained much of its potency. Any one of these might provide the catalyst for a nationalist political party. But there are none.

Understanding nationalism's apparent absence, no less than its presence, demands recourse to history. The development in Denmark of a characteristically Nordic political style is only part of the explanation (and something which itself requires explanation). Three other themes in recent history are significant (Jones 1986: 59–151; Østergård 1992b: 63–83).

First, contraction and international decline produced a political territory which, with the notable and complicated exception of the southern border region, is a linguistic and cultural unit. Second, the reaction to contraction was rapid and non-violent modernisation, taking Denmark from late absolutism in the early nineteenth century to the foundation of a precocious social-democratic welfare state by the early twentieth. Finally, this process was underwritten not by industrialisation – Denmark remains among the least industrialised of northern European states – but by land reform, the modernisation of agriculture and a corporatist political strategy based on egalitarianism.

Hvad udad tabes, det skal indad vindes (what is lost outwards, shall be won inwards) was the motto of the Danish Heath Society, which in the nineteenth century promoted the cultivation of hitherto infertile land. It is paradigmatic of an acceptance of constraints, and a resolve to overcome them, which was central to modern Danish nation-building. Inward looking and reconstructive, within a culturally homogeneous polity, that process is crucial to understanding why there are no nationalist movements in Denmark today.

But the detail of everyday life suggests a different picture. Take, for example, the white cross on the red field of *Dannebrog*, the Danish flag. Many Danish houses have a flagpole in the garden, from which the flag is flown to mark the whole range of domestic festivals and rites of passage. Those households lacking a flagstaff may display instead a small portable version on a wooden base. At Christmas, miniature paper *Dannebrog*, which are sold in every supermarket, adorn the tree, and a birthday cake is

incomplete without at least one. 'Flying the flag' is central to Danish civic culture and family celebrations become, in the process, more than simply domestic.

A comparative perspective brings this into focus. In Northern Ireland, flags – on the one hand the Union flag or the Ulster flag, on the other the Republic's tricolour – are part of ethnic boundary maintenance and a recognised element in the rituals of confrontation of the annual 'marching season'. In Britain, a private citizen flying the Union flag would be diagnosed as eccentric, at best, or racist and fascist, at worst. The latter is certainly what is symbolised by the Union Jack tee-shirt of the English football fan abroad.

The *Dannebrog* painted on the face of a Danish football supporter, however, symbolises something different; certainly not the xenophobia which informs much British political discourse, even in the mainstream, and from which the English football fan draws a sense of his place in history. But what *does* it signify? And what does it mean when Danes tell you, with unselfconscious pride, that Queen Margreth II's line of descent extends back more than a millennium to Gorm the Old, the oldest royal line in Europe? Or, to return to the flag, what about its myth of origin, which has it dropping from heaven as a gift to King Valdemar II during a battle in 1219? Although Danes acknowledge the invention of this tradition, 'even so it is considered the oldest of present-day European flags' (Jacobsen 1986: 23). Here it is possible to have one's traditional national cake and eat it.

The recipe for that cake is the usual *bricolage* of contradiction and affinity. Insofar as one can generalise, Danes are ferociously understated in their national pride, modesty and restraint being important components of a relatively consensual model of 'proper' Danishness. They celebrate the fact that Denmark is a small country, *et lille land*. Østergård, a perceptive local commentator, calls this 'lilliput-chauvinism' (1992b: 56) or 'humble asser-tiveness': 'We know we are the best, therefore we don't have to brag about it' (1992c: 170). And there is also defensiveness. Although it is 'bad form' to be a nationalist, 'intrinsic nationalism surfaces immediately foreigners start criticising anything Danish' (ibid.: 169). Thus, if it is not too much of a conundrum, a defining feature of Danish nationalism may be a refusal to acknowledge itself as nationalism.

If there *is* something which can be called Danish nationalism what are its other distinguishing features? Much depends on context. In the Scandina-vian or Nordic context a distancing rhetoric comes into play: ethnic jokes and stereotypes are common, touching upon the most mundane areas of daily life (Linde-Laursen 1993). These only make sense, however, within a commonly recognised cultural, linguistic and political affinity, particularly with Sweden and Norway. Important as national-ethnic boundaries and identities are, a shared *Scandinavian* identity (Gerholm and Gerholm 1990; Gullestad 1989) is a resource which can be drawn upon to make sense of similarity and difference. Greater differences of language and culture, and

more distant histories, suggest that a shared *Nordic* identity remains an as yet unrealised project.

The broader European context is more ambiguous. The distinction between Scandinavia and Europe is one of the fault lines which structures that ambiguity: is Denmark European or Scandinavian?[15] This ambiguity came to a recent head in the prolonged political struggle within Denmark over ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and European economic and political unification. After two referenda, and only by a very narrow margin, the Danish political establishment achieved the 'yes' vote that it wanted. Of the reasons which informed the uncertain and the opposed, two stand out: a distrust of centralisation *per se*, and a desire to preserve the Danish welfare state. These come together in a fear of reduced sovereignty (Lyck 1992; Sørensen and Væver 1992) which must be understood in the historical context outlined above.

There is, however, another European context. Europe begins in Germany. Denmark has been invaded by Germany three times in modern times; the last time is a living memory. Influential in the modern construction of Danish identity was the question of Slesvig and Holstein, resolved by plebiscite in 1920 after a campaign in which Danes and Germans used stereotypes of the other to define themselves (Adriansen 1992).[16] In the south, a substantial minority of *hjemme tyskere* (home Germans), Danish citizens who are linguistically German, ensures the continuing vitality of the issue, as does the presence of a linguistically Danish minority in Germany. The differences between the two countries in terms of size and affluence further feeds Danish distrust. If Danish nationalism exists, it is for many Danes, depending perhaps upon generation and geography, articulated as much in opposition to Germany as anything else.[17]

And there are many other things against which it can be defined: immigrants, Americanisation, etc. What is most striking is the level of recent collective scrutiny within Denmark of the nature of *danskhed* (Danishness). A range of issues have problematised what has previously been taken for granted, if not consensual (Harbsmeier 1986; Østergård 1992d). Among the most interesting epiphenomena of this debate are specifications of the qualities of Danish national character, whether by Danes – 'individualism, solidarity, faith in authority and discipline' (Østergård 1992b: 21) – or, more controversially within Denmark, by outsiders: privatised, individualised, suppressed and collectivised, according to Reddy (1993: 130–56).

As well as EU referenda campaigns and local perceptions of the residential presence of 'foreigners', this debate reflects other issues. The most important concerns the future of the *danske vej*, the 'Danish way' (Østergård 1992b: 63), the social experiment which since the mid-nineteenth century has attempted to blend capitalism with equality into a historical destiny which Denmark has chosen for its own: the nation as 'a social

laboratory' (Manniche 1969). Rooted within an agrarian populist political tradition which is both egalitarian and libertarian, 'This is the ultimate Danish discourse: Everyone is in the same boat' (Østergård 1992e: 14). As this core component of national identity has come under pressure, not least from consumerism, affluence and increasing social stratification within Denmark, so too has *danskhed* come into question.

There remains, however, a question mark about Danish nationalism. Returning to my own definition of nationalism, the difficulty lies with the word 'ideology', implying structure and organisation as a body of knowledge of how the world *is* and how it *should* be. This is the '-ism' in nationalism. Is what I have been talking about sufficiently organised to qualify? The answer is 'yes' and 'no'. 'No', in the relative absence of nationalist *movements* or *parties*. 'Yes', in the existence of a universe of discourse, a stream of tradition, which identifies, and identifies *with*, Denmark in terms of national character and historical destiny. This is the weak ideology of Danish nationalism, which is showing signs of weakening further. The debate about *danskhed*, and the concern about threats to the *danske vej*, reveal a dissensus about how the world is and how it should be which is antagonistic to the certainties of nationalism. In the resolution of this uncertainty, Danish nationalism will be redefined.

Closing remarks

These case studies suggest that there is more to nationalism than is allowed by the 'state modernisation and industrialisation' model. Although comparison of this kind cannot 'prove' or 'disprove' anything, it does support the view that we should move beyond that relatively unitary model, towards a more flexible theoretical framework which is concerned with nationalisms rather than nationalism.

Of course, the reader may doubt whether the case studies actually represent comparable phenomena. Certainly, they document very different histories and situations. In part, this is precisely my point. While each can be legitimately described as referring to 'nationalism', the differences between them are sufficiently significant to suggest that nationalism is a broad church with many mansions under its roof.

In Wales the nationalist tradition is recent and more or less unified, focusing upon culture and language within a pragmatic acceptance of an existing constitutional status quo. Although it has its roots in nineteenth-century romanticism, Wales during that period was already an integral part of a centralised state. Processes of economic or political modernisation do not seem to have been central to the formation of Welsh nationalism.

In Northern Ireland, by contrast, constitutional and republican nationalisms, divided against themselves, are aspects of a tradition of resistance to rule from and by Britain which extends back to the early modern period

and beyond. That tradition, however, has been discontinuous, adopted by different groups at different times in the pursuit of different ends. Taking account of the various historical expressions in Ireland of British nationalisms complicates the situation even further.

Danish nationalism is different again: an elusive low-key ideology of everyday discourse rather than a structured nationalist movement. Existing in a political context which in many senses does not legitimate nationalist *movements*, it reflects Denmark's history of relationships with its neighbours and is an expression of faith in the Danish experiment in welfare state capitalism and social democracy. The complexities of the Danish case stem not only from the variability of nationalism but also from its subtleties and relationships to other locally dominant political ideologies.

Yet, allowing for these differences – in degree of organisation, strength or weakness of ideology, political goals and objectives, and practical strategies and tactics – these are all nationalisms. But in what senses? First, they are all, in some respect, identified as nationalism by the locals. Even in Denmark, where it is undoubtedly a contested description, it can be found sufficiently often to be credible.

Second, it is possible to offer a definition of nationalism which is broad enough to include them, but sufficiently focused to exclude cognate ideologies of ethnic identification (although the boundaries between such things will always be continua of degrees of differentiation and distance). In each case it is possible to identify the conditions for and components of nationalism which I defined earlier: an ideology or ideologies of ethnic identification, historical contingency and variation, a state context, ethnic criteria of political membership and a claim to a collective historical destiny.

Historical destiny may seem an odd notion -- even dated or anachronistic – to introduce into the argument. To some, mindful of the terrible ends to which notions of history and destiny can be bent, its use may appear irresponsible. But it is crucial. One distinguishing feature of nationalisms is their appeal to the past, an ethnic/national history embodied in such things as myths of origin, royal genealogies or cultural romanticism, in the construction of a collective project for the future. This is the inspiration for Anderson's evocation (1983: 147) of Walter Benjamin's imagery of the 'angel of history': looking back, in nostalgia and anger, but irresistibly propelled forward at the mercy of progress. Nationalism differs from Benjamin's angel, however, in that it does not present its back to the future in futile resistance to change. It is, rather, actively in the business of moving forward. Perhaps a more appropriate image is Anderson's other description of nationalism, as Janus-headed (1983: 144), simultaneously looking ahead and behind.

The future towards which nationalism looks is not, however, as circumscribed as is often assumed. The collective project need not be independence, secession, or any of the other political goals that may come to mind most readily under the sign of nationalism. It may be cultural

preservation and promotion, as in Wales, or the creation of a particular kind of society, as in Denmark. And, as in both cases and in Northern Ireland, there may be important subsidiary concerns too.

If literacy gave people, in history, a different kind of past, it also created for them the possibility of the future as a project. Nationalism was among the results. And as social scientists we can continue to talk about nationalism in the most abstract of ideal-typical senses. We can only do so, however, in full recognition of the limitations of such a discourse. The 'real' world is full of nationalisms.

Notes

1 It is a tribute to the solidity of intellectual boundaries that, 'The remarkable congruence between theories of nationalism and anthropological theories of ethnicity' is overlooked to the extent that, 'the two bodies of theory have largely developed independently of each other' (Eriksen 1993: 100).

2 Another way of putting this – and arguably a better one – might be to suggest that our notions of where modernity starts might require some revision (along with our ideas about the medieval). So also might our concepts of 'the state'.

3 I do disagree with other aspects of Smith's work, however. I would not, for example, wish to accept his distinction between 'ethnic nationalism' and 'territorial nationalism' (1991: 82), because, from my perspective, all nationalisms are, in some sense, 'ethnic'. I appreciate the point he is trying to make and its importance; I would choose, however, to distinguish between nationalisms which claim territory on the basis of putative ethnic commonality and those which attempt to construct ethnic commonality within an already occupied territory.

4 Although Horowitz (1985) is concerned with ethnic conflict, rather than nationalism *per se*, his work is also important in this respect.

5 Brought up and educated in Northern Ireland, I undertook my Ph.D. research there and have since maintained an active research interest in the province. I lived, taught and researched in Wales between 1983 and 1995. My interest in Denmark has accelerated since my period as a visiting professor at the University of Århus in 1992 and during subsequent visits in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

6 This claim was made in a BBC Cymru-Wales documentary in the *Week In – Week Out* series broadcast on 25 May 1993, on the basis of an opinion poll undertaken for the programme by Beaufort Research, Cardiff, in the counties of Dyfed and Gwynedd. I am grateful to both these organisations for making available to me the survey findings.

7 For a clear articulation of one view of what that alternative might be, see D. E. Thomas (1991).

8 Albeit minus the three Ulster counties of Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan which, in reflection of the demography of ethnicity (and political loyalties), became part of the Free State.

9 Leaving aside sectarian riots, there were two minor northern campaigns by the Irish Republican Army, a clandestine nationalist organisation, illegal on both sides of the border, during World War Two and in the 1950s (Bardon 1992: 581–6, 604–12).

10 In reflection of the old conflicts of the post-independence Civil War, the same distinctions can be observed in the politics of the Republic of Ireland, although the official legitimacy of nationalism there makes for more complexity. The poles of republican and constitutional nationalism are represented by Sinn Féin and Fine Gael, respectively, with Fianna Fail occupying a shifting position which is usually towards the constitutional end of the spectrum.

11 Although much support for the Provisional IRA, however definite and 'genuine', appears to be both situational and conditional (Sluka 1989).

12 Unless one regards what happened every yesterday as history, in which case all social science is history.

13 A now illegal Protestant paramilitary organisation.

14 National movements are defined as: 'the efforts of ethnonational groups which cannot be identified with the state to restructure or reshape existing state arrangements' (Elklit and Tonsgaard 1992: 83). Although this is, as the authors admit, a restrictive definition, it is probably less so than Gellner's.

15 The conventional answer to this question, 'something of each', leaves unasked the even more interesting question of why Scandinavia might not be considered part of Europe.

16 And here the difference between Northern Ireland and Denmark becomes most obvious. The 1920 campaign about partition in southern Denmark was fought with posters and speeches; in Ireland in 1920 the matter was settled by guns and bloodshed.

17 In this context, one wonders what the basis might be for Mann's confident assertion about the European Union that, 'the polls show that negative national stereotypes have almost vanished' (1993: 131).

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