Nationalisms

The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century

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and decide how to get there. Thus, we can find nationalist parties following conservative, Marxist, social-democrat or liberal strategies.

Why then is nationalism so important? In my opinion, its significance lies in its capacity to represent the will of the people to be able to decide upon their own political destiny, their will to be respected as a people able to develop their culture and personality. These aspects are functions of a 'need to belong' and a sense of maintaining social and psychological integrity. Nationalism would make little sense in a world where good fellowship between cultures was possible, where powerful states felt no temptation to absorb small ones. When, rather than peaceful multiculturalism, nations feel the constant threat of being annihilated, when underdeveloped countries need to fight foreign exploitation and wage a desperate struggle to halt the starvation of their population or to explain to them why they are starving, nationalism provides a strong and useful tool to preserve culture. This is especially true for an international community of nation-states with strong tendencies to homogenization, and is one aspect of the consequences of globalization processes. The absence of nationalism in a future world can only be either the result of achieving a peaceful international community respecting and encouraging multiculturalism or the sign of a successful process of world cultural homogenization.

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National Identity

Thus far I have presented an analysis of the political dimension of nationalism as a modern phenomenon linked to the rise of the nation-state in the eighteenth century. In what follows, I focus upon the creation of national identity and offer an account of the present day re-emergence of nationalism and its relation to a particular concern with collective, as well as individual, identity in conditions of modernity. This chapter examines three aspects. First, the development of printing and its role in the expansion and consolidation of vernacular languages. I analyse the impact of education and levels of literacy in nineteenth-century Europe and relate them to the advancement of nationalism. Second, the relationship between national identity and culture, arguing that the nation is the socio-historical context within which culture is embedded, and emphasizing the emotional investment of individuals in the elements of their culture as a key factor exploited by nationalism. I also study the role and features of identity and link them to the creation of national consciousness. Finally, in arguing that the power of nationalism stems from its capacity to create a common identity among group members, I consider the role played by symbolism and ritual in establishing and increasing nationalist feelings. My contention is that any attempt to investigate nationalism needs not only to take into account its political dimension, but also to explore less 'rational' but no less important areas concerned with feelings and emotions.

Education, literacy and national consciousness

The development of printing and the expansion of vernacular languages

By the end of the fifteenth century printing presses had been established in the larger centres of Europe, their function being the reproduction of manuscripts for the use of the Church, law, medicine and trade. At the same time, vernaculars achieved particular importance in Germany and England. In England, Gerard Groote (1340–84), the founder of the *Brotherhood of Common Life*, set up schools in which translations into the vernacular were taught as a protest against the formalism of the Church. In Germany, Luther, with the aid of the press, played a decisive role in the development of the German language. Luther 'drew on the popular speech of Middle and Lower Germany, but Thuringia and Saxony gave him his essential vocabulary . . . High German was thus established in a pre-eminent position while printing made more and more works in that language available, so that it came increasingly to seem to be the national literary language.'[1]

According to Febvre, by the seventeenth century languages in Europe had generally assumed their modern forms, and there occurred a process of unification and consolidation which established fairly large territories throughout which a single language was written. The languages which are still today the languages of each nation attained their definitive development on different time scales. The emergence of centralizing national monarchies in the sixteenth century favoured the trend towards a unified national language.[2] Printing helped to render national languages increasingly sophisticated as modes of expression. In the sixteenth century, vernaculars definitively established their claim to be languages with an independent literature. However, before the middle of the fifteenth century the ability to read and write was confined to the more successful merchants, the nobility and the clergy; indeed, primarily to the clergy, for a merchant class was slow in developing and the nobility was devoted to warfare and statecraft rather than to the gentler arts.

Wherein lies the importance of the creation of vernacular literatures and what was the role of the printing press in relation to the rise of nationalism? Anderson argues that print-languages laid the basis for national consciousness in three ways: they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars; they gave a new fixity to language, helping to build an image of antiquity, central to the subjective idea of the nation; and they created languages of power which differed from the older administrative vernaculars.[3]

The crucial factor in this process was that, for the first time, the language in which the people of a discrete area spoke and thought was the same as that in which the ruling strata, the intellectuals and the clergy wrote and read. This was a revolutionary event, since it progressively erased the need to learn Latin if one sought to take the first step into the world of literature or science, have access to the Scriptures, or enter the realms of administration and trade. Although large numbers could not read and write, they could understand what others read in their presence. The image of someone reading, usually a story or an information-sheet, to a group of people who understood and identified the language as their own, despite the many differences between spoken vernaculars and written expressions, became a very common picture in the nineteenth century. This fact emphasized the idea of forming a community in which the members were easily identifiable through their capacity to communicate among themselves.

To be outside the limits of the nation meant, first and foremost, that one was unable to understand and be understood. The main problem of being a 'foreigner' is the inability to communicate. Lack of knowledge of the language translates into isolation and the impossibility of entering a different culture. Yet the development of vernacular languages played a decisive role in creating the image of belonging to a community. National consciousness is derived from sharing values, traditions, memories of the past and plans for the future contained within a particular culture which is thought and spoken in a particular language. I shall argue that the existence of a vernacular language is not an indispensable basis for the creation of national consciousness, although, where it exists, it facilitates that creation.

The French Revolution and education

The French Revolution did not bring about the immediate establishment of a national system of education, but it did set up the basis for its later development. One of the more important effects of revolutionary principles was that the primary control of education passed from church to state.

Education was to fulfil the needs of the newly created modern state: 'French and sciences would be emphasised . . . Civic duties and rights

and loyalty to the government were to be stressed.'[4] In France, compulsory education for both sexes was introduced in 1882, at a time when there were tensions between state and church over the control of schooling, and upper and middle sectors of society hesitated about schooling the masses. In England, the elites were not prominent among those who pushed for literacy: 'Conservatives attacked charity schools, feared an educated lower class, and desired an ignorant workforce.'[5] In Spain, as late as the early twentieth century 'the church opposed the extension of public literacy and the general education of girls; it supported illiteracy on the grounds that ignorant persons could not be exposed to heretical, liberal or socialist doctrines and so would remain in a "state of grace".'[6]

But despite these tensions the growth of a reading public led inevitably to the spread of ideas that contributed to the philosophical and technological innovations that ultimately eroded the power of the clergy and the nobility, leading to new forms of political, economic, social, cultural and religious systems.

The spread of literacy in the nineteenth century

In tracing the impact of printing upon the slow decay of Latin and the emergence of vernacular languages, one should acknowledge the different levels of literacy among European countries. This factor regulated the number of people who had access to written material and therefore to the information – ideas and news – it contained.

There are striking differences among countries. Thus, whereas in France in 1854, according to parish marriage registers, 31 per cent of grooms were illiterate, in 1900 only 5 per cent were unable to sign. The decline in illiteracy was consistent and regular, usually decreasing at one percentage point per year. Rural and urban areas were affected. Women's progress was even more impressive. In 1854 46 per cent of newly-wed women were unable to sign; by 1900 only 6 per cent could not do so. Note how well their rate compared to men's literacy by the end of the century, in sharp contrast to the late eighteenth-century differential of 73 to 53 per cent literacy. Over the entire period, brides' illiteracy decreased from 73 to 6 per cent.[7] In 1854 30 per cent of the Swiss population was illiterate; England had 30 per cent male, and 45 per cent female illiteracy in 1854; Germany, only 10 to 15 per cent in 1871; and Sweden, over 90 per cent literacy in 1900. We find quite different percentages in countries like Ireland: 54 per cent illiteracy in 1841; the Austrian empire: 21 per cent of males and 25 per cent of females illiterate in 1900; not to mention the 69 per cent illiteracy in Italy in 1871. The illiteracy rate in Spain in 1877 was 63 per cent for males and 81 per cent for females. In 1931 50 per cent of Spain's adult population was still illiterate.[8]

I would argue that where we find high levels of literacy in the nineteenth century a nationalism inspired by the state was likely to develop, giving rise to the creation of more or less homogeneous nation-states. Conversely, areas with high rates of illiteracy offered the possibility of keeping alive indigenous language and culture, although these were mainly oral and only a few intellectuals who had not already been assimilated by the state's language could read and write in the vernacular. This was the case in Catalonia and the Basque Country, where, due to the poverty and lack of development of the Spanish state, minority cultures were not threatened in the same way as in France, where the state pursued a successful system of schooling leading to the decline of differences among regions and the generalization of French as the language of the country.

The role of education in 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' states

The different levels of literacy and the expansion of schooling, as I have already mentioned, depended heavily upon the scope and power of the state. Yet as Graff rightly observes:

> The 'greatest function' of the modern school was to teach a 'new patriotism beyond the limits naturally acknowledged by its charges'. The school was first a socialising agent. The message was communicated most effectively together with reading and writing. The school's task included not only *national and patriotic* sentiments but establishing unity in a nation long divided by region, culture, language, and persisting social divisions of class and wealth. Learning to read and write involved the constant repetition of the civic national catechism, in which the child was imbued with all the duties expected of him: from defending the state, to paying taxes, working, and obeying laws. [my italics][9]

From the nineteenth century onwards, the spread of education has played a fundamental role in the configuration of national consciousnesses. The distinction between what I call a 'legitimate' state – where state and nation are coextensive – and an 'illegitimate' state – a state that includes in its territory different nations or parts of other nations – enables me to examine the different role played by education in both cases.

Where nation and state are coextensive, education and the generalization of literacy not only reinforce the possibility of communication among people but help to develop a strong sense of community. But there are very few examples that fit into the category of 'legitimate' state, and very few indeed that have not at some stage managed to absorb and assimilate cultural minorities living inside their territory.

In fact, many of the examples of present coextensivity between nations and states are the result of successful homogenization processes. In French regions where the native tongue was other than French the spread of literacy was retarded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1789 six million people in France relied on 'foreign' languages and dialects: Flemish, Celtic, Basque, German and thirty patois. At first, decrees were translated into the major dialects and languages to make them more accessible to the people. But after 1792 a change in attitude occurred in an attempt to establish 'one people, one nation, one language'. As Graff mentions, with the spirit of national linguistic development and increased intolerance of dialect, class differences in language and literacy were reinforced. Resistance did not prevent linguistic change. The power of the state to impose a language and expand it through a school system was the key to initiating the slow death of minority languages and dialects. French represented the advance of civilization and progress, and its use in 'urban and white-collar work, armed-forces training, and the growing volume of print materials stimulated the increase in French speaking, reading and writing in the countryside'.[10]

Among other attempts at homogenization with different outcomes from that of France, we can refer to nineteenth-century Prussia, where Bismarck expanded the Prussian school system into the Polish regions of Poznan and Silesia and allowed only the German language as a medium of instruction. At the same time the Russians were pursuing a similar policy, centred on the Orthodox Church, and had even embarked on a campaign to eliminate the Polish language and culture by actively impeding the Catholic Church, banning private schools and establishing Russian state schools. In 1869 the Hungarians promoted a policy of compulsory Magyarization; the ability to read and write Magyar being made a precondition for enfranchisement.[11]

When the state manages to impose a culture and a language, and, through this, develop a sentiment of patriotism among its citizens, as was the case in France, we can affirm with Gellner that 'it is nationalism which engenders nations.'[12] The state favours nationalism as a means to increase the links existing among its citizens. If the state is successful and, apart from the mere political connection, manages to develop a combination of several kinds of relations – economic, territorial, religious, linguistic, cultural – the state creates the nation. But we confront a radically different situation when homogenization is only partially or not at all achieved. The nationalism of minorities resisting assimilation, I would argue, presents fundamental differences in origin and purpose compared with the nationalism instilled by the state in order to create the nation, and does not correspond to Gellner's definition. This nationalism is often defined as 'peripheral nationalism' for it emerges not from the state, but rather from nations or parts of nations included in a large state.

The educational demands of the nineteenth century, accentuated by the impact of Romanticism, proved to be significant factors in the advent of nationalisms in nations without a state. It is possible for minorities to maintain their language and culture, even though they have no state to protect them, if they are living in a world characterized by oral traditions. But when, as was progressively the case in the nineteenth century, the state's scope increases and imposes language and culture by means of a well-organized system of education, the existence of minorities is threatened. As a result, in Europe some nations were assimilated into large nation-states, whilst others developed powerful nationalisms that in some cases led to the formation of new states, as was the case after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. But again, when in 1919 and after 1945 there was a redrawing of the map of Europe, the various new nation-states regarded education as the key to national and cultural identity.

Now, as a result of the disintegration of the USSR, we are witnessing a re-emergence of nationalism, especially in Eastern Europe.[13] Each time nationalism comes to the fore, there is a great interest in controlling education, publishing and the use of vernaculars, and in emphasizing the traits and symbols specific to every particular *Volk*. Once more nationalism uses and needs the power of the press and the control of education to reach the masses. Levels of literacy have risen impressively all over Europe and this means that the number of potential readers and writers has grown enormously. In addition, a revolution affecting the media has resulted in the creation of a wide range of intercommunication tools, characterized by their accuracy, their fixity and especially by their instantaneousness. The nationalisms of the twentieth century are able to take advantage of these new devices and use them to diffuse their messages. Changes affecting the media are playing a crucial role in the development of current nationalisms. I shall return to this shortly, since I draw upon it in my own discussion of the interconnection between the local and the global, and the effects of globalization processes upon the present unfolding of nationalism.

National identity and culture

Identity

In the first chapter I argued that there is no systematic treatment of nationalism in the work of Treitschke, Marx, Durkheim and Weber. Their different approaches to nationalism are partial and inadequate because they ignore the dimension of nationalism as a creator of identity for individuals who live and work in modern societies. With this in mind, I shall look at the way in which identity is formed and its relation to nationalism.

Baumeister argues that medieval European attitudes lacked the modern emphasis on individuality since society operated on the basis of lineage, gender, social status and other attributes, all of which were fixed by birth. He points out that 'only with the emergence of modern societies, and in particular, with the differentiation of the division of labour, did the separate individual become a focus of attention.'[14] By the late Middle Ages, people increasingly learned to think in individual terms and slowly solidified concepts of the single human life as an individual totality. Baumeister's analysis recalls that of Durkheim: 'the "individual", in a certain sense, did not exist in traditional cultures, and individuality was not prized.'[15]

Thus, while the eighteenth century's rejection of the Christian models of human potentiality and fulfilment led the Romantics into a passionate search for new, secular substitutes, the rejection of the legitimacy of the traditional, stable political and social order led to a troubled recognition of the pervasive conflict between the individual and society. Yet, in the nineteenth century, the prestige of the individual self reached an all-time high that declined in the early twentieth century when 'new social arrangements and events dramatized the relative powerlessness of the individual leading to a devaluation of the self.'[16] However, a process giving special significance to the 'uniqueness' of each individual led to a particular concern about identity reflecting the individual and collective (group) desire to be 'different'.

The key question with regard to identity is 'Who am I?' Identity is a definition, an interpretation of the self that establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms. When one has identity one is situated; that is, 'cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of [one's] participation or membership in social relations'.[17] Identities exist only in societies, which define and organize them. As Baumeister puts it: 'the search for identity includes

the question of what is the proper relationship of the individual to society as a whole.'[18] This search is also evident at the individual level through the need to belong to a community. In the current era the nation represents one of these communities: national identity is its product.

The defining criteria of identity are: continuity over time, and differentiation from others,[19] both fundamental elements of national identity. Continuity springs from the conception of the nation as a historically rooted entity that projects into the future. Individuals perceive this continuity through a set of experiences that spread out across time and are united by a common meaning, something that only 'insiders' can grasp. Differentiation stems from the consciousness of forming a community with a shared culture, attached to a concrete territory, both elements leading to the distinction between members and 'strangers', 'the rest' and 'the different'.

Identity fulfils three major functions: it helps to make choices, makes possible relationships with others, and gives strength and resilience.[20] First, to be fully expressed and developed national identity requires that the people forming the nation enjoy the right to decide upon their common political destiny. Second, if we consider it at a personal level, national identity obviously makes relationships with others possible, since the nation appears as a common pool where individuals with a common culture live and work creating a world of meaning. But, above and beyond this, the claim of nations to have a state is the claim to be recognized as 'actors' within the global system of nation-states. Finally, national identity gives strength and resilience to individuals in so far as it reflects their own identification with an entity – the nation – that transcends them. Also, nationalist ideologies usually encourage the development of the nation and present it as worthwhile. Although on some occasions they focus upon past splendours, they always promise a better future and advocate regeneration.

But how does the individual experience his or her national identity? I suggest that community of culture and unity of meaning are the main sources that allow the construction and experience of national identity. As a collective sentiment, national identity needs to be upheld and reaffirmed at regular intervals. Ritual plays a crucial role here. As Durkheim argues in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, there is little difference between religious and civil ceremonies in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain these results. Durkheim emphasizes the power of ritual, a theme I have already discussed in Chapter One, and what he writes about religion can easily be applied to national ceremonies:

> Truly religious beliefs are always common to a specific group which professes to adhere to them and to practise the rites connected with them. They are not merely received individually by all members of the group; they are what gives the group its unity. The individuals who compose the group feel themselves bound to each other by the very fact that they have a common faith.[21]

Individuals, through their identification with the nation, can be compared with believers. To paraphrase Durkheim, the believers who have communicated with their god are not merely people who see new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant; they are individuals who are stronger, feel more powerful in enduring the trials of existence or in conquering them: 'It is as though they were raised above the miseries of the world, because they are raised above their condition as mere men.'[22] I shall return to these issues when considering the symbolic content of nationalism.

Melucci defines collective identity as 'an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientations of their actions as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place'.[23] Collective identity considered as a process involves: formulating cognitive frameworks concerning the goals, means and environment of action; activating relationships among the actors, who communicate, negotiate and make decisions; and making emotional investments, which enable individuals to recognize themselves in each other.

I understand the present revival of nationalism as a response to a need for collective as well as individual identity. Parsons suggests the term 'de-differentiation' to explain the need for collective identity among particular groups. He argues that:

> There is a growing plurality of social roles in which the individual is called upon to act. Yet none of these roles is able adequately to offer the individual a stable identity. Selective mechanisms of de-differentiation thus come into being to provide identity via a return to primary memberships. Thus ethnicity is revived as a source of identity because it responds to a collective need which assumes a particular importance in complex societies.[24]

As Melucci points out, national movements bring to light two problems central to more structurally complex societies: they raise questions about the need for new rights for all members of the community, particularly the right to be different; and they claim the right to autonomy, to control a specific living space (which in this case is also a

geographic territory).[25] In terms of political action this means fighting for new channels of representation, access for excluded interests to the political system, and the reform of decision-making processes and the rules of the political game.

The current re-emergence of nationalism not only responds to the gulf between political and cultural processes, but also gains strength as other criteria of group membership (such as class) weaken or recede. National solidarity also responds to a need for identity of an eminently symbolic nature in so far as it provides roots based on culture and a common past and offers a project for the future. As Melucci writes:

> The 'innovative' components of ethno-national movements, albeit a minority issue bound up with their struggle against discrimination and for political rights, also has a predominantly cultural character. The ethnic appeal launches its challenge to complex societies on such fundamental questions as the goals of change and the production of identity and meaning . . . Difference is thereby given a voice which speaks of problems which transverse the whole of society.[26]

Culture

How is identity created? One of the main features of humans is their ability to adapt to different environments. The individual is flexible and contains many possibilities for his or her later development. The biological basis of humans allows their extraordinary capacity for social learning and thus the richness and variety individuals are able to display through the development of a wide range of diverse cultures. Individuals with all their potential are socialized and raised within a group that is located in space and time. Values, beliefs, customs, conventions, habits and practices are transmitted to the new members who receive the culture of a particular society. The process of identification with the elements of a specific culture implies a strong emotional investment. All cultures single out certain parts of a neutral reality and charge them with meaning. Individuals are born within cultures that determine the way in which they view and organize themselves in relation to others and to nature.

Two major implications deriving from this possess a particular significance for the analysis of nationalism. First, a common culture favours the creation of solidarity bonds among the members of a given community and allows them to imagine the community they

belong to as separate and distinct from others. Solidarity is then based upon the consciousness of forming a group, outsiders being considered as strangers and potential 'enemies'. Second, individuals who enter a culture emotionally charge certain symbols, values, beliefs and customs by internalizing them and conceiving them as part of themselves. The emotional charge that individuals invest in their land, language, symbols and beliefs while building up their identity, facilitates the spread of nationalism. Thus while other forms of ideology such as Marxism or liberalism require the indoctrination of their followers, nationalism emanates from this basic emotional attachment to one's land and culture. Social and political theory has tended to place emotions and feelings outside the sphere of its enquiry, considering the irrational inevitably inferior to the rational. My point is that the force of nationalism springs not from rational thought alone, but from the irrational power of emotions that stem from the feelings of belonging to a particular group. The double face of nationalism results from the way in which these emotions are either transformed into a peaceful and democratic movement seeking the recognition and development of one's nation, or turned into xenophobia, the will to put one's nation above others and eradicate the different.

From a symbolic perspective, 'culture is the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs.'[27] A common culture, as I have already stressed, has the ability to create a sentiment of solidarity that derives from the consciousness of forming a group. A common historical past which includes 'having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together',[28] and a future common project, reinforce the links among the members of a given community. As symbolic forms, cultural phenomena are meaningful for those who take part in them and the meaning is something that only 'insiders' know and value.

On Gellner's theory of nationalism

Gellner's writings probably supply the best starting-point for a discussion of the role of culture in the creation of nationalism. Gellner's main emphasis is upon the distinctive character of nationalism as 'rooted in a *certain kind* of division of labour, one which is complex and persistently, cumulatively changing'.[29] According to him, industrial society is based upon perpetual economic growth; the need to

fulfil economic necessities engenders mobility which at the same time produces egalitarianism. Industrialism involves a complex division of labour and this requires a rather different, specialized and universal educational system which provides people with the basic tools for employment, which are a standard language and literacy. To sustain an educational system whose function is the production of a 'standard culture', one needs a centralized state. Gellner points out that the state is charged with the maintenance and supervision of an enormous social infrastructure, and that universal literacy is required of industrial society. However, I would argue that in the early stages of industrialism, which correspond to the first expressions of modern nationalism found in the late eighteenth century, literacy was only important among managers and clerks. Thus, Gellner's description of the role of the state in education only reflects the situation achieved in the mid-twentieth century, though it claims to apply to earlier industrial societies, specifically to late nineteenth-century Europe.[30]

On the other hand, one can accept that a mass education system is a universal product of industrial societies, but, as Breuilly remarks, 'does the answer lie in the generic training such education offers?'[31] Gellner's explanation sounds quite functionalist: education may eventually operate as he envisages, but does that explain its development? Unless one specifies either a deliberate intention on the part of key groups to produce this result, or some feedback mechanism which will 'select' generic training patterns of education against other patterns, this cannot count as an explanation. Besides, it is possible to think of other reasons: the need to train citizens or conscripts for the mass politics and mass armies of the modern age, humanitarianism, or the need to occupy children's time as soon as they began to be excluded from the labour force.

Gellner's assumptions about industrialism can also be subjected to criticism. Yet he pays little attention to the mechanics of state-formation and deliberately turns his attention from capitalism to industrialism. One might respond by saying that nationalism exists and has existed in numerous non-industrial states. At the same time, all nationalisms claim to be historically rooted in traditions formed long before the industrial era. It seems to me that Gellner's description is useful for developing an understanding of events in Western Europe, while having less value in interpreting, for example, the Chinese experience.

Two fundamental questions still need to be posed. The first concerns the power of nationalism; the second refers to the capacity of nationalism to bind together people from very different cultural levels

and social backgrounds. Liberalism and Marxism, two of the most important systems of thought from which social scientists draw, both predicted the decline of national feelings. Liberalism expected the decline of nationalism because 'trade flows across frontiers; the life of the intellect ignores frontiers; and with the progress of learning, wealth and industry, the prejudices and superstitions and fears which engender frontiers would decline.'[32] For a Marxist it appears inexplicable because only abysmal cognitive error could lead the proletariat to identify with the exploitative ruling classes of the society to which they belong against the exploited masses (and ruling classes) of another society.

Gellner, however, attempts to demonstrate that nationalism can best be understood as a necessary consequence of the very forces described by liberals and Marxists. He does so by showing how industrialism's demands for homogeneity lead to the creation of culturally unalloyed nations. To explain nationalism as a consequence of a high division of labour and a common culture seems to me an extremely simple conception when applied to a world in which globalization processes favour constant cultural interconnections. If Gellner is right, we should be witnessing a tendency towards a single uniform world nationalism. But in fact the effect is exactly the opposite. Old nationalisms are recovering strength and very few people wish to give up their original national identity, despite belonging to backward nations, in order to adopt a more 'successful' one. When Gellner writes, referring to individuals living in industrial societies, 'for most of these men, however, the limits of their culture are the limits, not perhaps of the world, but of their own employability and hence dignity'[33], he does not take into consideration that, whenever a nation is oppressed, a considerable number of individuals will sustain their dignity as members of a particular culture even at the cost of seeing their chances of getting a job substantially undermined and, in some extreme cases, even facing exclusion from the labour market.[34]

Furthermore, while Gellner emphasizes how 'ardently' national identification may be felt, he does not provide a satisfactory account of how the functional imperatives he invokes can generate such powerful feelings. Seton-Watson set out to understand 'this force of nationalism which has continued to shake the world in which we have lived'.[35] Carr refers to 'the dynamite of nationalism'.[36] Dunn writes: 'no one could doubt that it has become one of the more ebullient and energising principles.'[37] But does Gellner's theory confer upon nationalism sufficient intellectual strength to sustain such a role? I think not. Gellner does not explain the willingness of modern populations to die in their thousands for their country (and its often repulsive rulers).

Contrary to Gellner, I argue that the power of culture lies in its capacity to create identity, something that individuals cannot live without and that cannot easily be changed. Culture cannot be reduced to the entrance card for a concrete labour market. Culture designs the most intimate parts of humans, mediating the way in which they relate to themselves, others and the exterior world. A common culture presumes some kind of complicity that only individuals socialized within that culture can understand. Individuals do not enter a foreign culture merely by learning the language of that culture. They have the necessary tools, but it takes a long time before they are able to capture the meaning implicit in words, expressions and rituals. This 'complicity' contributes to the creation of a common consciousness and the development of links of solidarity among group members.

The attachment of individuals to their community is a constant that has adopted diverse forms through different historical periods. Loyalty has focused upon various entities: the clan, the tribe, the city, the dominion of a particular lord, the monarch and, from the eighteenth century onwards, the nation. When Gellner argues that: 'Modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture',[38] he fails to contemplate the role of culture in the creation of identity. This, I argue, is the main explanation for the 'loyalty' of individuals to this abstract entity that transcends their lifespan. In my view, the nation, personified through symbols and rituals which symbolically recreate a sense of 'people', has become the focus of a new kind of attachment. The nation represents the socio-historical context within which culture is embedded and by means of which culture is produced, transmitted and received.

Gellner is right in suggesting that: 'The state is, above all, the protector, not of a faith, but of a culture, and the maintainer of the inescapably homogeneous and standardising educational system.'[39] However, he ignores a further dimension of this issue by failing to distinguish between what I call the 'legitimate' and the 'illegitimate' state. In the former, where nation and state are coextensive, Gellner's definition works perfectly. But in the second situation, where several nations or parts of nations are bound together under the rule of a single state, the state must decide which culture is to be given priority and how to implement a successful policy of cultural homogenization. This raises doubts about the viability of a state that compromises itself with the protection and encouragement of different cultures evolving within it. For instance, this would be the case in Spain where, as a

result of the 1978 Constitution, Catalans and Basques, among other national minorities included in Spain, now see their cultures recognized and protected. How far can a state go in acknowledging and encouraging (financing) different cultures within its territory without threatening the cultural homogeneity that Gellner considers necessary if industrial societies wish to prosper? By neglecting this point, Gellner fails to tackle one of the major problems faced by contemporary European societies where political units are mainly characterized by the non-coextensivity of nation and state. To solve this question by means other than the use of force, a detailed and careful analysis of these issues is required, especially since the threat of further fragmentation is increased by the present influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa into Western Europe.

Within a given community a hierarchical division among its members may be seen as a constant factor promoting social tension, social unrest and social change. However, when the integrity of the group is in danger, the solidarity that comes from shared values, beliefs and ways of life proves that the proletarian of a particular nation feels that he or she has more in common with the exploitative ruling classes of the society he or she belongs to than with the exploited masses – and ruling classes – of another society. Dunn states that, 'certainly socialism has never looked the same since the parties of Engels and of Jaurès slunk into line and agreed to defend their fatherlands against the aggression of the largely proletarian armies of their foes.'[40] This same strong sentiment of solidarity is what makes people ready to die for their nation in their thousands. Preservation of the self and the group to which one belongs is the primary concern in time of crisis. Additional weight is added to this by the fact that our global political system is organized into nation-states, these being the only actors recognized at an international level.

The symbolic content of nationalism

On symbols

Symbols and rituals are decisive factors in the creation of national identity. The nation as a form of community implies both similarity among its members and difference from outsiders. As Anthony Cohen puts it, a boundary marks the beginning and end of a community in so far as it encapsulates its identity.[41] Boundaries are called into being

by the exigencies of social interaction. However, not all boundaries and not all components of any boundary are so objectively apparent. They may be thought of, rather, as existing in the minds of their beholders. Boundaries are symbolic in character and imply different meanings for different people. Yet, if we consider the boundary as the community's public face, it appears as symbolically simple, but as the object of internal discourse it is symbolically complex. 'The boundary', Cohen argues, 'symbolises the community to its members in two different ways: it is the sense they have of its perception by people on the other side – the public face and "typical" mode – and it is their sense of the community as refracted through all the complexities of their lives and experiences – the private face and idiosyncratic mode.'[42]

The consciousness of forming a community is created through the use of symbols and the repetition of rituals that give strength to the individual members of the nation. By favouring occasions in which they can feel united and by displaying emblems – symbols – that represent its unity, the nation establishes the boundaries that distinguish it from others. A symbol was originally an object, a sign or a word used for mutual recognition and with an understood meaning that could only be grasped by the initiated. The meaning of a symbol cannot be deduced. Symbols only have value for those who recognize them. Thus they provide a revealing device to distinguish between members and 'outsiders' and heighten people's awareness of, and sensitivity to, their community. The soldier who dies for his flag does so because he identifies the flag with his country. By means of this association he loses sight of the fact that the flag is merely a sign. As a symbol the flag is valuable: it represents the country.

All communities use symbols as markers. Symbols not only stand for or represent something else, they also allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning. Hence if we consider a flag as a symbol of a particular country, its meaning cannot be restricted to the relationship flag–country. Rather, it achieves a special significance for every individual since the flag – as symbol – has the power to evoke particular memories or feelings. Symbols do not represent 'other things' unambiguously. They express 'other things' in ways which allow their common form to be retained and shared among the members of a group, whilst not imposing upon them the constraints of uniform meanings. An example of the malleability of nationalist symbols is that people of radically opposed views can find their own meanings in what nevertheless remain common symbols. The *senyera* – the Catalan flag – for instance, although representing a country, Catalonia, holds different meanings for socialist, nationalist, republican