Nationalism/Internationalism

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Nationalism and internationalism are modern categories which have their roots in the Enlightenment. It was in Western Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century that love of nation and love of mankind came to exist as aspects of the same philosophical movement. Over the next two centuries, however, nationalism was to have the upper hand, spreading in different forms all over the world. In this chapter the main focus will be on the concept of nationalism.

PRELIMINARIES

Nationalism is, along with liberalism and socialism, one of the most powerful ideologies of modernity. I use the word 'ideology' in a minimalist, neutral sense to mean a system of ideas and values prevalent in a given milieu or social environment. In Durkheimian terms, nationalism as an ideology is a set of collective representations which are typical of modern societies. Two main factors explain the salience of nationalism in the world in which we live: first, the sacred character of the nation, borrowed from religion; and second, the will of the people to defend their sense of cultural community. I shall come back to these issues.

Nationalism is an ambiguous word, with a variety of mostly pejorative meanings. In everyday usage, but also often in the scholarly literature, nationalism is preferentially employed as a term of abuse; it refers to an irrational and extreme love of nation, to which everything else is sacrificed.

The emotions involved in nationalism are of the most elementary type (hence the label 'tribalism' often attached to it); people are willing to die, but also to kill, for their nation. I do not have to remind you of the everyday litany of horrors emerging from the former Yugoslavia – a conflict which media and politicians alike relish to present as a consequence of unchecked nationalist rivalries.

There are other ways, of course, of defining nationalism. If we equate nationalism to the love of one's nation – for which the term 'patriotism' is often used – the pejorative dimension may be somewhat neutralized, and a different picture of nationalism emerges. In this conception nationalism would incorporate sentiments which could be channelled in a productive and positive direction, be it at the material level (the economy) or at the spiritual level (the arts and literature), not forgetting the political domain of nation-building.

I would insist, then, that nationalism has no predetermined content; as a container of meaning, nationalism can refer to both the good and the evil realities of the nation. There is a liberal and democratic conception of the nation, just as there is one tainted with totalitarianism (of the communist, fascist or religious fundamentalist varieties). 'The task of a theory of nationalism,' as Tom Nairn reminded us some years ago, 'must be to embrace both horns of the dilemma. It must be to see the phenomena as a whole, in a way that rises above these "positive" and "negative" sides. Only in this fashion can we hope to escape from a moralizing perspective' (1977: 332) and rise to a more scientific one. As social scientists we should 'spend less time decrying it – which is a little like cursing the winds – and more in trying to figure out why it takes the forms it does and how it might be prevented from tearing apart even as it creates the societies in which it arises, and beyond that the fabric of modern civilization' (Geertz 1973: 254).

DEFINITIONS

As a working definition of nationalism I propose the following: 'Nationalism is a doctrine and a movement designed to promote and to safeguard the existence of a nation' (Seton-Watson 1986: 19). This is a rather simple but nonetheless useful definition provided that we are aware of the historical implications of such a statement.

Any attempt at coming to terms with the concept of nationalism requires the clarification of some basic terms, and particularly of the following: state, nation, ethnic community (ethnie) and nation-state. But a word of caution. There is no agreement about how to use these terms – the word 'nation' being especially controversial.

Now, 'state' is perhaps the easiest term to define and the one that creates the least divergence. I define the state as a centralized, territorially defined,

sovereign polity. By 'centralized' I mean the existence of a single centre of power; by 'territorially defined' I refer to the existence of clearly defined physical borders; and by 'sovereign' I simply mean an autonomous, non-dependent entity. Finally, 'polity' is simply another word for political organization. This is, I think, an economical but nonetheless accurate definition of the state.

Now, of course, we could add other features to define the state. Max Weber referred to the monopolization and concentration of the means of coercion, that is, the monopoly of force as a key feature of the state. We could also mention bureaucratization, that is, the existence of a permanent body of officials, what we call in modern terminology a civil service. Again, legitimation is an important characteristic of the modern state, as is, at least ideally, cultural and linguistic homogenization.

When it comes to define the nation the problems begin. The term 'nation' is much more vague and ambiguous than the term 'state', with which it is sometimes confused, both in common parlance and in the scientific literature. Part of the confusion arises from the fact that we have inherited, from the late eighteenth century, two major definitions of the nation: one political and one cultural.

Rousseau was the founder of the political conception of the nation in so far as he equated nationhood with the expression of a people's collective will. In Rousseau's definition, which was adopted by the French Revolution, the emphasis is on the conscious, subjective element. Nationality and citizenship are coterminous, which is why, in the English, American and French traditions, the nation is essentially viewed as the liberal-democratic state.

The German philosopher Herder was the founder of the cultural conception of the nation. Herder equated nationhood with the ethnic characteristics of a people. In this case, the emphasis is on objective criteria, namely common descent, common culture and common language. Other factors can also be brought to bear: history, religion, race, law, territory, character, etc. Nations and ethnies are closely related; for Smith an ethnie is 'a named human population with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity' (1986: 32). While ethnies are ubiquitous historically and spatially, nations are essentially a modern phenomenon.

One of the most popular definitions of the nation to have emerged in the past years is that of Benedict Anderson (1991). He characterizes the nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (1991: 6). By 'imagined' Anderson means the fact that 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1991: 6).

Another feature of Anderson's definition is that nations are finite, have boundaries; in other words, no nation can encompass the whole of

mankind; a nation assumes the existence of a world of nations. The sovereignty of the nation refers to the fact that the nation legitimates itself, without any reference to a divine order (the people are the nation, as the French revolutionaries boldly asserted in 1789, and no divinely ordained monarch could stop them). As to the idea of the nation as a community it points to an essential element of nationhood: the belief in a sense of fraternity or 'horizontal comradeship', with independence from other considerations (class, gender, etc. which may separate individuals) (1991: 7).

We are now in a position to define the commonly found expression 'nation-state'. In theory a nation-state is a state which is a nation; that is, a state which comprises a nation. But since we have two definitions of nation, we also have two definitions of nation-state. Let us take the example of the United Kingdom. According to the 'political nation' principle the UK can be envisaged from the perspective of its citizens, or crown subjects, who have a sense of loyalty towards the monarchy and the British state. In this sense we can say that the UK is a nation-state. However, if we adopt the 'cultural nation' principle, we find in the UK four historically constituted communities which have their own distinct identity expressed in a variety of ways, by reference to a number of ethnic markers (language, culture, history, etc.). In this second sense, we would refer to the UK as a multi-national state. In a well-publicized article (originally published in 1978), Walter Connor suggested that 'a survey of 132 entities generally considered to be states as of 1971', produced the surprising result that 'only 12 states (9.1%) could be justifiably described as nation-states' (1994: 96).

Unfortunately, in real political life things are more complicated, they are never so clear-cut, because historically, after the French Revolution, there has been an interpenetration between the two conceptions of the nation, with two general consequences. On the one hand, so called multinational states have tried to become proper nation-states through a process of nation-building, which essentially consists in an attempt at a cultural and linguistic homogenization and uniformization of the different, usually subordinated cultural nations. A key element in this process of homogenization is the educational system, which promotes the official language and the dominant culture of the state. Surprisingly enough, states have not always been successful in this endeavour, otherwise we would not have the great variety of minority nationalisms that we have in Europe, and elsewhere, today.

On the other hand, nations, that is, cultural nations, have tried to obtain more and more parcels of autonomy, and in the final instance have aimed at constituting themselves as sovereign states, when feasible. The principle of self-determination, so typical of modernity, is one of the consequences of this state of things.

Since the French Revolution, the nation (particularly in the cultural sense of the term) has become the highest value of modernity, and hence a highly desirable thing to have or to boast about. The recent events in Eastern

Europe, particularly since 1989, show that this principle is far from being obsolete. Even the European Community does not herald the end of national identities (in the cultural sense), but the very opposite: the flourishing of the submerged identities of the small, suppressed nations of Europe. I tend to use the word 'nation' mostly in its cultural sense, and reserve the expression 'nation-state' to those cases where state and nation coincide.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALISM IN MODERNITY

1789–1870

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasions heralded and to a great extent triggered off the advent of modern nationalism in Western Europe, putting an end (at least temporarily) to the aristocratic conception of the nation prevailing in the *ancien régime* and modernizing the state, as well as generating sentiments of political independence and cultural autonomy among the affected countries (Greenfeld 1992). In Latin America, the Declaration of Independence of 1776, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic invasions were influential factors in generating successful movements for national independence in the first third of the century.

The post-Napoleonic period had started, however, in a most inauspicious way. The Congress of Vienna, which in 1815 had brought together the leading European states to decide on the future of the continent, resolutely opposed the emerging Italian and German nationalisms (as well as the Polish one). The independence of Greece in 1830 was seen as the first major success of the nationalist principle. There soon followed Belgium's independence. In any case, very few nineteenth-century political thinkers managed to grasp the enormity of the nationalist avalanche, seeing it at most as a passing fad. This also accounts for the paucity and poverty of theoretical statements on the national question. Of the three most powerful ideologies of the nineteenth century – liberalism, socialism and nationalism – identified with the emergence of modernity and the subversion of the *ancien régime*, nationalism is the one which was the least appreciated as an *idée-force* at the time of its appearance. Following ideas expressed a long time ago by Carlton Hayes and Hans Kohn among others, it is customary to see the development of nineteeenth-century and twentieth-century nationalism essentially in dichotomous and moralizing terms. Prior to 1870 there was a nationalism which was democratic, progressive and humanitarian; after 1870 nationalism became imperialist, authoritarian and chauvinist.

The first thing worth mentioning about the German-Italian model of nationalism is that it appears to combine state-building with nationalism. In

a nutshell, the model assumes a unity – an 'Italian' and a 'German' nation – which would have existed since the medieval period and which expressed itself in a language, a culture and a common descent. Owing to a combination of internal factors (disorganization, selfishness, etc.) and external ones (foreign domination), the nation had been unable to flourish adequately in the past. The only way of doing that was for the nation to control its own affairs in the context of a modern, centralized state. This required a process of unification of the different independent or subjected political units which shared the same nationality. However, in both cases we can observe that in the process of national state-building the lead was taken by the most dynamic (either politically or economically) of the existing states in each civilizational area, that is, Prussia in Germany and Piedmont in the Italian case.

The French model of nationalism starts at the very opposite end of the spectrum, with the existence of a state with fixed, stable boundaries and in which the nation is envisaged as a manifestation of the free will of its citizens. In Pflanze's words: 'common sovereignty provided common institutions and a common political tradition from which emerged a sense of nationhood which transcended cultural differences' (1966: 139). Whether by historical accident or not, the French model incorporates two separate elements: popular sovereignty and historical state. And while the former acted as a catalyst in corroding autocratic monarchies, the latter had to face the onslaughts of cultural nationalisms, with varying effects and responses depending on a constellation of factors. The French model, while generally relying on Renan's idea of the nation as a spiritual principle, characterized by a common heritage of memories and a desire and will to live together, involved also the recognition of achieving cultural and linguistic homogeneity. There was a conscious attempt to attain these objectives by state-generated nationalism. Through the compulsory educational system both the medium (language, culture) and the message (civic values) were transmitted.

The third model could perhaps be called the Irish model of nationalism. It involves a culturally defined nation, usually associated with a historical territory within a given state (or states). By choosing Ireland to represent the third model, the case with the utmost complexity in terms of the relations between an oppressed nationality and its oppressor has been selected. The actual independence of Eire and the fact that Northern Ireland remained in the UK was one of the possible solutions to the bitter historical dispute between the Irish and the British government: these solutions ranged from limited autonomy to full territorial independence for Ireland. Although presenting some parallelism with the German-Italian model, the third model refers usually to small national units that try to break away from an existing multinational state or empire, rather than small states coming together to form a larger, nationally based state. The objectives of the nationalisms against the state vary from cultural demands to autonomy,

from federalism to outright independence. In theory all units can progress from cultural demands to demands for independence (Hroch 1985).

That there is a contradiction between the expansionist tendencies of the state and the nationality principle is most obvious. The doctrines of political and cultural nationalism encouraged the creation of true nation-states, that is, states which contained a single nation (whichever way the latter was defined); realities were, however, rather different. Many nationalities never succeeded in creating their own state; many states were nation-states only in appearance. The state did not change its character because of the nationalist onslaught, but had to adapt to the new times and had at least to create the pretence of being a nation.

1870–1918

One area in which practically all Western European states coincided was in enhancing their prestige, their *grandeur*, by the possession of overseas colonies. It is somewhat ironic that at the time when the idea of self-determination was gaining ideological ground, the most intense colonial expansion overseas was taking place. This imperialist phase in European history was often justified in terms of a civilizing mission of superior races over inferior races. Imperialist countries had a 'national mission' to fulfil. The idea that the so-called inferior races could have the right to national emancipation was considered totally ludicrous by Western states.

What in fact predominated after 1870 was the naked power politics of the big states. In this context nationalism means an extreme form of patriotism, with clear jingoistic and chauvinistic characteristics within the overall framework of an imperialist policy. One could say, paraphrasing Lenin, that imperialism became the highest stage of nationalism. For the new breed of state nationalists 'the possession of an empire was an essential precondition for the free development of one's own national culture in time to come' (Mommsen 1974: 126). This is not to disregard the economic reasons for imperialism: the need to export excess capital and excess human resources to other territories. In addition, the vested interests of the colonial bureaucracy helped to perpetuate the system.

The development of imperialism reinforced the determination of Western European states to contain their internal national minorities or emerging nationalisms against the state by engaging ever more actively in policies of national homogenization, as well as in outright repressive measures against the cultural and political manifestations of the awakening nationalities. By 1913 the idea that small nations could achieve independence by insurrectional or any other means was considered improbable. The model of the unitary state was pervasive. Measured in terms of national independence, for example, only Norway was a successful case of self-determination in Western Europe in the period between 1870 and 1914. However, the First

World War changed things again. The collapse of empires in Central and Eastern Europe, and President Wilson's commitment to see national self-determination on the agenda, produced a remarkable flurry of small independent states, even if it did not solve the national question owing to the recalcitrant problem of the disadvantaged minorities in the new states.

1918–1945

Fascism was the culmination of state nationalism. All Western European countries developed radical nationalist movements that could be labelled, following Charles Maurras's felicitous expression, 'integral nationalisms'. They represented reactions against the new bourgeois democratic and liberal order that was emerging, and in which the working classes and the socialist parties were playing an increasingly important role. They were movements which tended to emerge as a result of a major crisis of confidence in the nation-state (international humiliation following military defeat or unsatisfied imperialist appetites). They appeared as movements of renewal, of revitalization of the perceived morbid organism. Both Nazi Germany and fascist Italy fit the case well. Fascism focused on the supremacy of the nation conceived inseparably from the state. Benito Mussolini expressed this thought when he said that fascism considered the state as an absolute. In this conception of the state the individual was seen in a totally subordinated position. As Anthony D. Smith has rightly noted, fascism 'tends to view the nation in instrumental terms, as a "power-house", a repository and weapon for the exercise of will and force' (1976: 56). Some authors, including Carlton Hayes and Anthony D. Smith, have been reluctant to accept that there is a close connection between nationalism and fascism. Although they are right in emphasizing the specificity of fascism, by failing to see a continuity between integral nationalism and the fascist conception of the nation-state they are in danger of ignoring a major dimension of fascism.

In the interwar period the fascist model of nationalism spread in one form or another all over Europe. Whether in power or in opposition, fascist movements were present in most countries. Where it was politically triumphant, fascism pursued to their extreme the policies of nation-building, in an attempt at creating the national homogeneity that was required to keep the masses of the country tuned into the mythical, often mystical, ideas of the nation. Fascism indeed emphasized the myths and symbols of the national community and made sure that the distinction between the public and the private spheres was all but wiped out. Fascism, based on a combination of terror and consensus, insisted on the participation of the masses in cults which would generate a sense of belonging to the nation and which allowed the individuals to feel that they were involved in its affairs. As an extreme form of nationalism, fascism has coloured the perception that the twentieth century has had of nationalism. In the war period some

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minority nationalisms, particularly in German-occupied territories, allowed themselves to fall under the spell or control of fascist ideologies, with predictable consequences for the postwar period.

1945-1989

The collapse of fascism in 1945 seemed to put an end to the era of nationalism in Europe. In its fascist form, nationalism took a totalitarian look which was seen as anathema in the postwar period, which saw Europe essentially divided along ideological lines. The Cold War and the policy of the blocs left no room for nationalist adventures. Between 1945 and 1989 borders were sacrosanct, inviolable.

On the other hand, a different kind of nationalism was developing outside Europe, reflecting the desire of colonial peoples to become independent, even if that represented at times a violent confrontation with the metropolis. Colonial imperialism began to crumble.

It would be Eurocentric to assume that terms like 'nation', 'nationalism', 'national sentiments', 'national consciousness' and so on, which in their modern form originated and developed in Western Europe, can function as universal concepts. There is, of course, a limited way in which they do, but the cultural diversity underlying the different civilizational spaces makes the nationalitarian convergence unlikely.

The burden of the proof is on those who proclaim, for example, that Sinhalese, Kurdish and Scottish nationalisms are essentially the same. Religious beliefs, kinship conceptions and ideas of territory are among the factors that play a fundamental part in the way in which the nation is conceived. Buddhism, Islam and Christianity involve different world views which radically affect the conceptualization of the nation. Bruce Kapferer (1988) shows how, in the the case of Sinhalese nationalism, Buddhism permeates the way in which political realities (including a demonic conception of evil) are perceived.

As John Armstrong (1982) has convincingly shown, sedentary populations tend to have a concept of territorial boundary which is totally absent in nomadic peoples. Finally, the form in which the community is envisaged is often a projection into a wider social space of kinship conceptions, with in some cases a strong emphasis on 'blood' or common descent. While anybody can become a Scot provided that they live in Scotland and identify with the Scottish nation socially and to a certain extent culturally, there is only one way of becoming a Kurd: by being descended from Kurds, that is, by being born a Kurd.

Around the 1960s, and generally speaking since, Third World nationalisms fall into two major categories: those inspired by religious traditions (Islam playing an important role here) and those based on Marxism-Leninism or on a native type of socialism.

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In most cases the borders of the newly emerging states were determined by the colonial powers and reflected the old colonial delineation. In the making of the newly independent states no consideration was given to the issue of whether they were ethnically or linguistically homogeneous. This was particularly the case in Africa. Third World nationalisms, hence, tend to belong to the type in which the state builds up the nation, or to be more precise, they try to do so. It is not surprising to observe that the number of successes has been rather limited; after all, in Western Europe the processes of converting multi-ethnic states into nation-states have taken hundreds of years.

It has been the role of the Westernized elites in the Third World to try to provide the masses with a consciousness of their unity, cohesion and identity in spite of the existing glaring ethnic, linguistic and religious divisions. Hence nations were invented out of thin air, communities were imagined where only diversity and dispersion existed, and narratives were created to sustain the whole wobbly edifice. In addition, this nationalism legitimated also the monopoly of power exerted by the elite.

An important contradiction which existed in Third World nationalisms was that while they presented themselves as anti-European, yet they had to rely on alien concepts such as the nation, the state, the constitution, developmentalism, etc. to realize their objectives. In a word, Third World countries had to come to terms with modernity (either of the liberal-democratic kind or of the socialist kind); in fact they were left with very little space for economic, political and cultural manoeuvring.

In his recent work, aptly subtitled *Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, Basil Davidson remarked that 'the acceptance of the postcolonial nation-state meant acceptance of the legacy of the colonial partition, and of the moral and political practices of colonial rule in its institutional dimensions' (1992: 162).

Furthermore, Third World leaders had often to combine modernity with tradition. This created a rather schizophrenic situation. Because popular support was weak and national integration only very precarious, many Third World countries developed authoritarian patterns in which the cult of the state, which was identified with the nation, was paramount. What emerged out of the post-colonial order, particularly in Africa, was, in the words of Crawford Young (1994: 288), a kind of 'integral state' in which the ruling groups exerted a total domination over the society at large. This state was the mirror image of the colonial one but was often taken to an extreme.

What characterizes the post-colonial state in the Third World is its multi-ethnic nature; within the borders of most states live together populations with different languages, religions, cultures, etc. In many cases the only thing that united the population of a colony was the desire to overthrow alien rule. After independence, the first and foremost task of the state was its feverish attempt to engage in more or less aggressive policies of nation-building, usually favouring the dominant ethnic group.

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However, the results have been rather poor and there have been increasing demands for further autonomy or outright independence from the subordinated regions and ethnies. The fact that the developmental policies of most Third World countries have failed has not been a good omen for legitimizing these states. The growth of ethnic politics reflects, at least in part, the disenchantment with the economic bankrupcy of many Third World states; on the other hand, these states have shown very little inclination to satisfy ethnonational demands. In the long run, violent conflict of a separatist kind has become endemic and in fact very few states can boast of having solved the problem. Nonetheless, a superstitious respect for the internationally agreed borders of colonial times has been a principle to which most states have adhered, no matter how hypocritically.

1989–present

One of the effects of perceiving the Soviet Union as an anti-colonialist state was not only that the making of the Russian Empire up to 1917 was glossed over, but more importantly that the colonial structure of the Soviet Union rarely came under scrutiny. With the collapse of Soviet bloc in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991–2, these issues have come to the forefront. Suddenly, a state which had repeatedly claimed to have solved the national question exploded apparently as a result of nationalist pressures. To account for this cataclysmic event, two main types of explanation have been put forward (Suny 1993):

1 The first type envisages the Soviet Union as a reservoir of frozen nationalities, defrosted by the warmth of Gorbachev's *perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *glasnost* (transparence). In this perspective the emphasis is squarely on the pre-Soviet past, that is, on the formation of the Russian Empire in modernity and its inability to assimilate an array of very different peoples.
2 The second type focuses on the nationality policies of the Soviet Union and considers the extent to which it shaped the future nations of the 1989 Revolution.

In spite of its bad name, and against the predictions of most politicians and social scientists, nationalism made its reappearance in Western Europe in the form of minority nationalisms against the state in the 1960s, and has persisted unabated until the present (Smith 1981; Tyryakian and Rogowski 1985). This has been a source of political destabilization affecting most countries. All ethnonations try to preserve a sense of national identity and rightly believe that this can only be achieved in the framework of a state that provides them with a substantial degree of political autonomy.

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Much has been made of the imitation effect of Third World movements of national liberation on Western European ethnonationalisms. That there was perhaps a rhetorical influence is undeniable, and in some cases organizational forms may have been borrowed. To what extent the anti-colonialist wave may have affected the timing of minority nationalisms in the West is open to debate. In any case, the major cause of ethnonational revival is to be found in the ever growing process of the imposition of the model of an alien nation-state on the everyday life of the subjected nationalities. The two major political objectives of the ethnonationalist movements are: the right of a community (big or small) to be different; and the right of a community to control its own affairs within a given territory. As predictable, ethnonationalist movements tend to occur in areas of high ethnonational potential. Most of these movements are not new. Since 1989 there has been a recrudescence of ethnonationalism in the West which has been often attributed to the 'Baltic effect' (independence of the Baltic countries). In many cases what we simply have is an opportunistic repackaging of long-standing demands.

The postwar period in Western Europe has been characterized by an extreme stability of political borders. Most of the states have come to the conclusion, no matter how reluctantly, that it was in their economic and military interests to create a united Europe, even if some political concessions in terms of state sovereignty had to be made. How far they are prepared to go to construct a politically unified Europe is not yet clear. And can a sense of European identity be created transcending, or maybe superseding in the Hegelian sense, the state and national divisions?

In the aftermath of the ideological thaw in Eastern Europe, the *de facto* Western European monopoly on the idea of Europe was challenged by peoples from this region and will no doubt be challenged by other nations. This brings to the fore the question: what is, then, Europe? A unique civilizational area or just a geographic denomination? An entity of the past, of the present or of the future, or maybe just a utopia? The anarchist dream of a federation of European peoples or a type of Hitlerite nightmare, a federation of European peoples large and small or a centralized, bureaucratic and uniform state? A common economic market or a unified polity? A social-democratic Europe or a free-for-all capitalist Europe? In conclusion, there are four major problems besetting the idea of a European supernation-state: the sovereignty of the states, the nationalism of the peoples, the integration of the non-European ethnic groups and the incorporation of non-Western European countries. As a consequence, its future is problematic; it will have to proceed at a rather slow pace and probably dilute many of the unitary aspirations (Garcia 1993).

The 1960s and the 1990s represent high points in the process of self-determination. The 1960s was the time of political independence for Third World countries freeing themselves from European-style colonialism; the 1990s have seen the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the disintegration of

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the Soviet Union and of other Eastern European states (Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) into a number of successor states. The process of self-determination of nations is far from completed. There are still a large number of extant ethnic and national claims. In the Third World, the post-colonial political structures are far from stable; ethnic/national separatism plagues many African and Asian countries. In the ex-Soviet world fissiparity is likely to continue, and the collapse of the Russian Federation cannot be excluded. Finally, the Western world is not totally impervious to these trends which could affect the Canadian, Belgian and Ukrainian states among others.

CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY AND THE NATION

The reasons for the inability of social scientists to come to terms with the national question have their origins in the cosmopolitanism of the Enlight-enment, but find their specific roots in the intellectual traditions of the recognized nineteenth-century founding parents of the social disciplines. The underlying political philosophies of the social scientific projects of the nineteenth century were based on either liberal or socialist conceptions of the world. No matter how different these conceptions might be, liberalism and socialism are both universalistic in nature, and hence they consider nationalism as a transient phenomenon. Only conservative and romantic thinkers perceived, in all its uncontrollable turbulence, the force of nation-alism in history, but they were interested not in explaining its origins, character and development but rather in asserting its eternal reality.

It is an idle occupation to look for a theory of nationalism among the founders of the social sciences. At best, Marx, Durkheim and Weber made occasional remarks on the nation, but on the strength of these elements it is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to build up a theory of nationalism.

The founders of historical materialism were certainly well aware of the nationalist phenomenon. As politically committed young intellectuals, Marx and Engels lived through the troublesome 1840s – a period in which nationalist struggles ravaged the European arena. In their formative years, then, they had to confront the nationalist demands of a variety of European peoples. To understand their attitude towards nationalism it is essential to know that they subordinated the survival of nations to the progressive march of history: some peoples were fossils from a long-gone past and were therefore objectively counter-revolutionary. These reactionary nations had to be sacrificed to the altar of the mightier national states. In the articles written by Marx and Engels for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848–9), the national question was often present as part of the political scenario, but there was no attempt to explain the phenomenon except perhaps in terms

of crude stereotypes of national character. It is obvious that for Marx and Engels the nation was not a central category of social existence, but rather a transitory institution created by the bourgeoisie; hence the passage in *The Communist Manifesto* to the effect that the 'proletariat has no fatherland'.

At the turn of the century the vindication of the rights of nations changed the political panorama to the extent that to the Marxists of the Second International the national question was central to their political agenda. However, it was only within the Austro-Marxian tradition that a serious attempt was made to come to terms with the theoretical problems of the nation. Otto Bauer's *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (1907) presented a theory of nationalism based on the idea of national character and of national culture, though he also used the dubious idea that nations have a historical destiny to fulfil. A much better known and more influential contribution from this period is, of course, Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* (1913). In his definition of the nation, Stalin required the simultaneous coalescence of four elements (language, territory, economic life and psychic formation) in a historically constituted community of culture. As to Lenin, he adopted a more flexible definition of the nation, and although he was in favour, like most Marxists, of the creation of large political units, he endorsed the principle of self-determination of oppressed nations, at least in theory (Connor 1984; Nimni 1991).

As a whole the Marxist tradition has been extremely suspicious of nationalism, though for tactical reasons it has often made use of national sentiments to achieve socialist objectives. In any case, within Marxist theory the nation is not a significant concept that can help to explain the dynamics of modern history. I would tend to agree with Tom Nairn's sweeping statement that the 'theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure' (1977: 329). The extraordinary developments of the 1960s and 1970s in which socialist countries fought bitterly against each other along nationalist lines opened the eyes of some Marxists to the reality that national interests are, in the final instance, more important than socialist internationalism. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia after 1989 has represented the nail in the coffin of Marxist pretences on nationalism. Whether this is the beginning, within Marxism, of a genuine interest in the theory of nationalism remains to be seen.

Émile Durkheim's silence on the national question is quite intriguing considering that in his formative period, in the 1880s, he was asking the same question that Renan had formulated in 1882: *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* In his early writings, mostly in the form of long book reviews, Durkheim made an inventory of a number of authors (Fouillée, Schäffle, Tönnies, Gumplowitz) who had contributed to the study of how national consciousness was created and maintained. The concepts that Durkheim evolved over this period – especially *conscience collective* and *représentation collective* – cried out to be applied to the study of national consciousness in contemporary societies. But towards the late 1890s Durkheim operated a

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double shift, which led him to an increasing concern with primitive societies and to the *refoulément*, to use B. Lacroix's expression, of the political sphere. The result was that the two basic concepts mentioned above were never put to the test for the study of modern nations.

We have to wait until the publication of a wartime pamphlet – *L'Allemagne au-dessus de tout* (1915) – to find Durkheim expressing an interest in the theory of the nation. The work was basically a tract against Treitschke and other German theorists who had deified the state and were objective accomplices of the expansionist policies of Kaiser Wilhelm. In opposition to Treitschke, Durkheim praised the German tradition of the *Volksgeist* (Savigny, Lazarus, Steinthal) because in their conception of the nation they took into account the impersonal forces of history (myths, legends, etc.). In other words, they assumed that a nation had a 'soul', a character which was independent of the will of the state. It is somewhat surprising, then, that when Durkheim proposed a definition of the nation – as a 'human group whose members, either for ethnic or simply for historical reasons, want to live under the same laws and constitute the same state' (Llobera 1994b: 156) – he was unable to clearly distinguish between nation and state. Could this oversight be a reflection of Durkheim's role as one of the committed ideologists of the Third Republic?

The First World War, with the collapse of socialist internationalism and the rallying of the working-class parties to the interests of their respective national states, was undoubtedly the catalyst that compelled many social scientists to think about the nation. Within the Durkheimian School, this led to a number of discontinued and failed attempts to incorporate the nation into sociological theory. In 1920–1 Marcel Mauss started to write a monograph on the nation, which he never completed (Llobera 1994b). From the scattered fragments that are extant we can conclude that his standpoint was not different from that of Durkheim in that he never solved the antinomy between state and nation. The problem with Durkheim and Mauss is that they had the French historical experience of a national state too much at heart to pay enough attention to alternative conceptions. Another Durkheimian, Maurice Halbwachs, although not directly concerned with articulating a theory of the nation, was nonetheless interested in the study of one of the key elements in any definition of the nation: the idea of collective memory. His work, however, had limited diffusion, and his refined conceptual tools were applied to a variety of groups (family, class, etc.) but not to the nation.

Wolfgang Mommsen (1984) has empirically established for liberal and democratic ears the unpalatable truth not only that Weber was a German nationalist, but that for him the national state was the 'ultimate value'; in other words, that in the final instance, the interests of the national state should prevail over any other interests. Although in *Economy and Society* Weber defined the nation as a community of sentiment based on some objective common factor (language, traditions, customs, social structure,

history, race, etc.) and the belief that this factor generated values which were worth preserving against the encroachment by other communities, he insisted in creating an indissoluble bond between nation and state. To all practical purposes the nation, that is the cultural values of a community, could only be preserved in the framework of a purpose-built state. On the other hand, Weber knew very well that the modern state could not achieve its aims exclusively by brute force. The loyalty of the individual to the state depended on the existence of a national sentiment: hence the centrality of the equation of nation equals state.

There is little doubt that Weber's understanding of the nation was far superior to that of Marx or Durkheim. For one thing, he was well aware that national sentiments were not the creation of the rising bourgeoisie, but were actually rooted in the population of a country as a whole. Because *Kultur* was the distinctive feature of a national community, Weber was very interested in the question of its preservation, transmission and change. In this context he considered crucial the role played by the intellectuals in creating a literary culture. It is unfortunate that Weber did not write, as he had actually planned to do, a history of the national state.

MODERN THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

A comprehensive theory of nationalism should provide us with the following answers:

1   an account of the genesis and evolution of the idea of nation in Western Europe, as well as of its diffusion world-wide;
2   a spatio-temporal explanation of the varying structures, ideologies and movements of nationalism in the modern period;
3   an understanding of the collective feelings or sentiments of national identity along with the concomitant elements of consciousness.

How do different sociological theories approximate these lofty objectives? Generally speaking, most studies of nationalism are superficial descriptions of concrete cases or comparisons *à la* Frazer; as to point 3 it is practically *terra incognita*.

Among the few universalist theories of nationalism one should mention the primordialist and the sociobiological perspectives. Primordialism assumes that group identity is a given – that there exist in all societies certain primordial, irrational attachments based on blood, race, language, religion, region, etc. They are, in the words of Clifford Geertz (1973), ineffable and yet coercive ties, which are the result of a long process of crystallization. Modern states, particularly but not exclusively in the Third

World, are superimposed on the primordial realities which are the ethnic groups or communities.

The sociobiological approach starts with the assumption that nationalism is the result of the extension of kin selection to a wider sphere of individuals who are defined in terms of putative or common descent. Sociobiological explanations are not necessarily articulated in terms of genetic determinism, although it may be heuristically useful to make such an assumption. Most sociobiologists do not suggest that nationalism can be explained solely in terms of genetic mechanisms, that is, without linking them with the results of the human and social sciences. The sociobiological approach insists that nationalism combines both rational and irrational elements, that is a 'primitive mind' with modern techniques. The word 'nationalism' expresses different realities: a love of country, the assertion of national identity and national dignity, but also the xenophobic obsession to obtain these things through violence and sacrificing other nations. Nationalism builds on ethnocentrism towards the in-group and xenophobia towards the out-group.

It has been suggested that nationalism gives rise to a pride and dignity, within the members of a group, which in turn provides a moral and philosophical ground on which to militate for political sovereignty. Nationalism has its roots in the past, but it is a contemporary vehicle to vent out human propensities to war. It is important in this context to emphasize the psychological dimensions of nationalism: a bond is established between the individual and the nation based on the idea that the latter is a family writ large. The individual identifies with the nation and hence tends to prefer it to other nations. The extensive use of kin terms to refer to the nation reflects this psycho-affective reality that Edgar Morin has called 'matri-patriotic', with an associated fraternal/sororal component.

Sociobiologists often fail to account for the formation, evolution and eventual disappearance of nations; in this respect the historical and social sciences have an essential role to play. However, sociobiologists, by identifying certain human propensities for conflict and warfare which have served *Homo sapiens* well as a successful inclusive fitness maximizer, point out that these mechanisms, useful at an early stage of development, today risk the global annihilation of the human species. Recognizing these propensities can be the first step towards their neutralization.

Perhaps the best known and most impressive study of nationalism by a social scientist is that of Ernst Gellner (1983). He has gone a long way in providing a reasoned account for the emergence and pervasiveness of nationalism in modern times. His idea that the roots of nationalism are found in the structural needs of industrial society has appealed to a wide range of social scientists and historians, modernization theorists and Marxists alike.

The Gellnerian model asserts that it was the development of industrial capitalism and its unevenness that triggered off the development of

nationalism. There was nothing prior to the industrial order (what Gellner refers to as agrarian society) that can be equated to nationalism because political units were not defined in terms of cultural boundaries. Besides industrialization Gellner mentions the impact of modernization (population growth, rapid urbanization, labour migration, etc.) on the development of nationalism at the global level.

Gellner's insistence that nations are invented (a position shared with all modernists) has also been widely accepted, perhaps because, among other things, it confirms the generalized perception among social scientists that nationalism is best explained in a reductionist fashion, i.e. subspecies economics. Not surprisingly, Gellner has little to say about national sentiments and consciousness. His sociological structuralism is also oblivious to history. Gellner states that the explanatory power of his theory is comprehensive, but not exhaustive. Among other things, it does not account for the virulence of fascist nationalisms. Nonetheless, he insists that his theory explains why nationalism has emerged and why it has become so pervasive. However, he tends to ignore state-generated nationalism and minimizes the role of the state in general. Nationalism is directed not only against internal low cultures, but also against other established state nationalisms.

Between the generalities of universalism and the limitations of modernism, there is room for a third type of theory which could be called evolutionary. It is true that as a mass phenomenon nationalism is a product of modern times, but in Europe the roots of nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson), of national identity and even of incipient patriotic nationalism are firmly anchored in the medieval period (Llobera 1994a). There is, however, a conceptual gap between the medieval and the modern ideas of the nation; and that is why national identities had to be 're-created' or 'reinvented' in modernity. However, the crucial thing is how to account for the transition from the classical ethnies into modern nations (Smith 1981; 1986; 1991), and why this process took place originally in Western civilization. Only a theoretical framework which incorporates a variety of factors, not only economic (industrial capitalism), social (classes) or political (modern state), but also ideological (nationalist ideas), is likely to approximate the explanation needed given the complexities of the phenomenon (Llobera 1994a).

KEY CONCEPTS

NATIONALISM   This concept describes the burgeoning tendency throughout modernity for states and nations to develop insular and protective identities, to

prescribe geographical and cultural boundaries around themselves and to detach from any wider collective interests except in the names of trade or alliance. Nations also patrol their boundaries jealously.

INTERNATIONALISM Is an ideology that has never really achieved its potential, rather it has become locked in particular political creed such as socialism. It speaks of the idea of cross nation and cross cultural co-operation and integration. Ironically the nearest approximation to an international community is contained in the common market ideal of the European Union, a community forged on international capitalism.