SAGE books

Banal Nationalism

Nations and Languages

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It was an insignificant item, tucked away on an inside page of a British daily paper, the *Guardian*. It was not even that page's main story. 'Flemish leader calls for split' was the headline. The item, written by the paper's correspondent in Brussels, reported that the leaders of the main Flemish parties had issued a declaration which "has stunned the French-speaking political parties". They had declared that Belgium should be split into a loose confederation of two independent states – Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia. Special arrangements should be made for "the small German-speaking community in the east of Belgium". Hitherto, reported the paper, Flemish demands for separation have "been restricted to small nationalist and far-right groups". The Belgian government had hoped that the existing arrangements for devolution would have enabled "Belgium to survive more or less intact" (*Guardian*, 14 July 1994).

The item is revealing both for what it reported, and for what it left unsaid. The possible break-up of Belgium as a nation-state was not sufficiently important to merit the front page of this 'serious' British newspaper. This, in itself, says something about the climate of the times. Although the story was presented as a sudden, stunning declaration, no background explanation was offered to say why Flemish-speakers might wish to establish their own state. By the omission, the paper was indicating that readers could be expected to understand such national aspirations. Other days, the paper might carry stories about French-speaking separatists in Canada, Basque-speakers in Spain or even Welsh-speakers in the United Kingdom. Language groups wanting their own state are not mysterious for newspaper readers today.

Such a story bears two messages. The overt message tells British readers something about 'them', the Belgians, who might soon not be known as 'Belgians'. There is also an implicit message about 'us', the British readers and what 'we' are expected to know. We do not need to be told why communities speaking a particular language might wish to establish their own nation-state. We do not need to be told what a state is; nor what a language is. All this is common sense, or, rather, 'we' are assumed to possess such common-sense ideas about nations.

This sort of common sense is to be found in academic writings, as much as daily newspapers. Social scientists often assume that it is natural that speakers of the same language should seek their own political identity. The author of a book entitled *Varieties of Nationalism* has written, "in the search for security, people who speak the same language are irresistibly drawn together" (Snyder, 1976, p. 21). The word 'irresistibly' suggests that this is an inevitable part of human nature. Thus, if the Flemish-speakers are feeling insecure, then it is little surprise that they are wishing to stick together and to establish a state, in which all citizens speak the same language. John Edwards has observed that "language is still commonly taken to be *the* central pillar of ethnic identity" (1991, p. 269, emphasis in original; see also, Edwards, 1985; Fishman, 1972; Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1990). Indeed, it is sometimes assumed that nations, comprising different linguistic groups, are fragile compromises, which might be torn apart by the next set of crises and insecurities (Connor, 1978, 1993). This way of thinking is not new. In the eighteenth century, Herder and Fichte were declaring that the basis of a nation, and indeed its genius, lay in its language. According to this view, a Belgium, cobbled together out of Flemish speakers and French speakers, not to mention the small community of German speakers, cannot be a 'real' nation. The Flemish separatists, therefore, are seeking to redraw the map of nationhood in a way which accords better with natural human inclinations: little wonder, then, that their demands can seem so comprehensible.

There is a reason for mentioning this. Nationalism is simultaneously obvious and obscure. It appears obvious that the Flemings and the Walloons might wish to have their own separate nation-states. After all, if they can hardly communicate with each other, how can they share a common identity, sense of heritage or feeling of community? The reaction of the Flemish-speakers is understandable; and so is the concern of the French-speaking Prime Minister, who might suddenly find his country cut in half. There is a further question: where does this sense of obviousness come from? Is it 'natural' to think about community, nationhood and language in this way? Or is this sense of naturalness itself the issue?

Eric Hobsbawm (1992), at the beginning of *Nations and Nationalism*, writes that historians of nationalism should distance themselves from nationalist myths, for "no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist" (p. 12). Hobsbawm was referring to the sorts of myths which Herder was formulating about the German nation and language. Analogous myths are today being circulated by Flemish nationalists who talk about the inalienable and historic Flemish *volk* (Husbands, 1992). These are the sorts of myth which, according to Hobsbawm, must be discounted. But there is more distancing to be done by the social scientist wishing to study nationalism as an ideology. Certainly, the social scientist should put into brackets the claims of those who, like the Flemish-speaking politicians, wish to create new national units, claiming that these units correspond to natural or age-old facts. In addition, 'our' common sense about nations must be bracketed. This is harder than distancing ourselves from 'them', the Flemings or Walloons and their particular conflict. Something more universal has to be placed in metaphorical brackets.

To achieve this bracketing, we must distance ourselves from ourselves and from that which we routinely accept as obvious or 'natural'. The obviousness must be questioned, if nationalism is to be seen as an ideology, which deeply affects contemporary consciousness – 'our' consciousness, as much as 'theirs'. Ideologies are patterns of belief and practice, which make existing social arrangements appear 'natural' or inevitable (Eagleton, 1991). Thus, patriarchal ideology makes it appear 'natural' (or in accord with the unquestioned, biological way of things) that men rule and that women serve; racist ideology made it seem 'natural' and 'common sense' to Europeans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the white man was superior in the arts of government to the 'child-like native'. We, who live in nation-states, paying taxes to support the armaments of our nations, do we not, too, have a common sense which makes this world of nation-states seem natural?

If we are to understand this part of ourselves, we have to attempt to stand back from our common-sense assumptions. We cannot rest content that it is actually 'natural' that those who speak the same language will wish to form national groupings. It is not a matter of empirically testing the belief to discover its validity. The analyst of ideology must ask where this belief – our belief – originated from and what it assumes. We must question – or put into ideological brackets – the very concepts which seem so solidly real to us and which enable us to understand the assumptions of the daily news. These include concepts such 'a nation', even 'a language'. Such concepts should not be used uncritically to analyse nationalism, because they do not stand outside the topic which is to be analysed. Instead, the history of nationalism continues to run through the meanings which such concepts routinely bear.

Studying Nationalism as an Ideology

In general, liberal Western academics today find it easier to recognize nationalism in 'others' than in themselves. Nationalists can be identified as extremists who, impelled by a violently emotional psychology, seek irrational ends; or they can be painted as heroic figures who, in particular, are to be found overseas, battling against repressive colonialists. Nationalism can be seen almost everywhere but 'here'. If nationalism is a widespread ideology, then a different perspective is in order. This would take nationalism to include the patterns of belief and practice which reproduce the world – 'our' world – as a world of nation-states, in which 'we' live as citizens of nation-states. In consequence, nationalism is not merely the ideology which is impelling Flemish speakers to resist the Belgian state. It is also the ideology which permits the states, including the Belgian state, to exist. In the absence of an overt political challenge, like that mounted by the Flemish speakers, this ideology might appear banal, routine, almost invisible.

It is always possible to insist that the term 'nationalism' should be restricted to the beliefs of 'others'. When talking of 'our' beliefs, one might prefer other different words such as 'patriotism', 'loyalty', or 'societal identification'. Such terms banish the word 'nation', and with it the spectre of nationalism, at least in regard to 'our' attachments and identities. The problem is that such terms overlook the object to which the 'loyalty' or 'identification' is being shown: the nation-state. The present approach does not restrict the term 'nationalism' to the ideology of 'others', for, as will be suggested, such a restriction carries ideological implications. Instead, nationalism is broadened as a concept to cover the ways that established nation-states are routinely reproduced. This frequently involves a 'banal' nationalism, in contrast with the overt, articulated and often fiercely

expressed nationalism of those who battle to form new nations.

There is another reason for using the term 'nationalism' to describe what is familiar and 'here, at home'. 'Our' common sense about nationhood and 'our' psychology of national attachments should be located within the history of nationalism. By putting 'our' common sense in its historical context, 'our' beliefs about nationhood, and about the naturalness of belonging to a nation, are seen to be the products of a particular historical age. The obviousness of such beliefs is, thereby, questioned. Indeed, they can be made to appear as eccentric as the beliefs of other ages.

Many social scientists, especially sociologists and social psychologists, have not treated the topic of nationalism in this way. They have tended to ignore what is here being called 'banal nationalism'. In using the term 'nationalism' in a limited way, such theorists have often projected nationalism onto others and naturalized 'our' nationalism out of existence. This occurs in two types of theorizing, which often, as will be seen in later chapters, accompany each other.

1 **Projecting theories of nationalism.** These approaches tend to define nationalism in a restricted way, as an extreme/surplus phenomenon. Nationalism is equated with the outlook of nationalist movements and, when there are no such movements, nationalism is not seen to be an issue. By and large, the authors of such theories are not themselves partisans of nationalist movements – although there are exceptions. Such theorists often claim that nationalism is impelled by irrational emotions. Since the theorists are claiming to produce a rational account of something, which they see as being inherently irrational, they are distancing themselves from nationalism. The theorists themselves live in a world of nations: they carry passports and pay their taxes to nation-states. Their theories tend to take this world of nations for granted as the 'natural' environment, in which the dramas of nationalism periodically erupt. Since the nationalism which routinely reproduces the world of nations is theoretically ignored, and nationalism is seen as a condition of 'others', then such theories can be seen as rhetorical projections. Nationalism as a condition is projected on to 'others'; 'ours' is overlooked, forgotten, even theoretically denied.

2 **Naturalizing theories of nationalism.** Some theorists tend to depict contemporary loyalties to nation-states as instances of something which is psychologically general, or endemic to the human condition. Thus, such loyalties might be theoretically transmuted into 'needs for identity', 'attachments to society' or 'primordial ties', which are theoretically posited to be universal psychological states, and not peculiar to the age of nation-states. As such, 'banal nationalism' not only ceases to be nationalism, but it ceases to be a problem for investigation. Indeed, the lack of such identities (the lack of patriotism in established nations) can be seen as the problem for concern. In this way, such theories make existing conditions of consciousness appear natural, taking for granted the world of nations.

Later chapters will provide examples of the ways in which social scientists have projected and naturalized nationalism. Some do both simultaneously: 'our patriotism' is made to appear 'natural', and thereby invisible, while 'nationalism' is seen as a property of 'others'. Such theories may have the merit of drawing attention to the particular psychological conditions of overtly nationalist movements. However, in so doing, they tend to overlook the nationalist aspects of 'our' common sense. By contrast, the present approach puts the psychological focus back on 'us'. If the world of nations is to be reproduced, then nationhood has to be imagined, communicated, believed in, remembered and so on. An infinite variety of psychological acts is required for the reproduction of nation-states. These psychological acts should not be analysed purely in terms of the motives of the individual actors. An ideological analysis of psychological states stresses that the acts, and, indeed, the motives of the individuals, are constituted through socio-historical processes, rather than vice versa. This necessitates reversing the theoretical frameworks of many conventional theories of social psychology, which presume that psychological variables are universal, rather than historically created (for criticisms of the indi-

vidualism in most orthodox approaches to social psychology, see, for example: Gergen, 1982, 1985, 1989; Moscovici, 1983; Sampson, 1993; Shotter 1993a and 1993b).

Language plays a vital role in the operation of ideology and in the framing of ideological consciousness. This was stressed over 60 years ago by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, the book he wrote under the name of Voloshinov (Holquist, 1990). Bakhtin argued that "objective psychology must be grounded in the study of ideology", and that forms of consciousness were constituted through language (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 13). Therefore, the social psychological study of ideology should examine the concrete operations of language: "social psychology is first and foremost an atmosphere made up of multifarious *speech performances* that engulf and wash over all persistent kinds of ideological creativity" (p. 19, emphasis in original). Similar points have recently been made by discursive psychologists, who argue that many of the psychological phenomena, that psychologists have assumed to exist internally within the person, are socially and discursively created (Billig, 1987a, 1991; Edwards and Potter, 1992, 1993; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al., 1993). Gillett and Harré, (1994) have suggested that emotions, such as anger, fear or happiness, involve judgements as well as outward social acts. This would include so-called emotions of national loyalty or xenophobia (Scheff, 1995; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). These emotions depend upon judgements, shared beliefs, or representations, about nationhood, about 'us' and 'them'. Such emotions are expressed by, and within, complex patterns of discourse, which themselves are part of wider historical processes.

Boswell, in his *Life of Johnson*, recounts how the great doctor used to wander through London at night with Richard Savage, the vagrant poet and convicted murderer. Usually, the two companions were cast down by the misery of those sleeping rough in doorways. But one night, walking around St James's Square, the strange couple were "in high spirits and brimful of patriotism". They traversed the square for several hours, and "inveighed against the minister and 'resolved they would *stand by their country*'" (Boswell, 1906, vol. I, p. 95, emphasis in original).

The words spoken on that evening cannot now be known. The high spirits, which were evident to both, were manifested within the conversation. Each animated the other, until both declared their patriotic resolution, condemning the relevant government minister. Through words, gestures and tones, they created the mood. Similarly, the patriotic spirit, of which they were 'brimful', consisted in declarations, resolutions and judgements. Johnson, in retelling the story to Boswell, could classify the conversation as being 'patriotic' and his biographer could recognize the categorization as appropriate. The patriotism was not something strange lurking beyond the conversation, like the dark figures in the doorways of the Square. But both speakers could recognize this spirit in themselves and in the other.

No doubt, the poet and the future lexicographer uttered commonplace judgements as they displayed their patriotic resolution. To be recognizably brimful of patriotism one must have discourses of patriotism – that is, the phrases and stances which can be conventionally identifiable as 'patriotic'. Johnson and Savage may have repeated stereotypes and uttered declarations of personal feeling. "I am willing to love all mankind, *except an American*", declared Johnson many years later during a conversation at Mr Dilly's house. Johnson's highly charged nature was, to quote Boswell again, bursting "into horrid fire" (vol. II, p. 209, emphasis in original).

Johnson was, of course, expressing his own views and emotions. But he was doing more than that: he was repeating commonplace themes of his times: the virtues of loving all mankind and being brimful with patriotism; and the naughtiness of enjoying an explosive hatred of Americans. All these matters stretch beyond Johnson, the individual; they reach into the ideological history of nations and nationalism. He was speaking patriotically, at a time when the British nation-state was being established politically, with its government exercising rule over the country in the name of all 'the people', including vagrants and criminals (Colley, 1992). When Johnson was excepting Americans from his love of mankind, the colony was engaged in the violent process of establishing itself as a nation-state, independent from British sovereignty. In other, epochs, in other places, people might talk differently about loyalties and hatreds. But Johnson's ways of talking – and his emotions – were part of the ideological consciousness attending the rise of modern nationhood. This ideology

accompanied his night-time stroll around London; it strode into Mr Dilly's house, and sat down at his table, as the conversation turned from cookery and religion. Nationalism was filling banal moments of eighteenth-century English life.

Nationalism and the Nation-State

If nationalism is identified as the ideology that creates and maintains nation-states, then it has a specific socio-historical location. Not all group loyalties are instances of nationalism, but, as Ernest Gellner has argued, nationalism belongs to the era of nation-states. There can be no nationalism without nation-states; and, thus, nationalism, as a way of depicting community, is a historically specific form of consciousness. On the first page of *Nations and Nationalism*, Gellner asserts that "nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (1983, p. 1). According to Gellner, nationalism emerges only when the existence of the state "is already very much taken for granted" (1983, p. 4); nationalism's core tenet is the belief that "the national state, identified with a national culture and committed to its protection, is the natural political unit" (Gellner, 1993, p. 409). Not only does Gellner's definition link nationalism to the nation-state but also, as Gellner suggests, in these circumstances the political principles of nationalism appear as if they were 'natural'.

The milieu of the nation-state is, broadly speaking, the modern world, for, as Hobsbawm asserts, "the basic characteristic of the modern nation and everything associated with it is its modernity" (1992, p. 14). Historians have disputed exactly when the nation-state first made its appearance in European history. Some historians, such as Hugh Seton-Watson (1977) and Douglas Johnson (1993), have claimed that feelings or patriotic loyalty emerged in England and France as early as the seventeenth century. Other scholars, such as Elie Kedourie (1966), put the date later, claiming that nation-states and nationalist attachments cannot be found until the eighteenth century. Elshtain even argues that the notion of 'La France', the female fatherland, "is a rather recent historic development, one of this century" (1987, p. 66). Both camps, however, agree that mediaeval Europe knew no such nation-states.

Anthony Giddens has attempted to specify what new forms of governance were brought into being with the creation of the nation-state. He defines the nation-state as "a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries, its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence". Boundedness and possession of the means of violence are key components, for the modern nation-state is "a bounded power-container" (Giddens, 1985, p. 120). Most importantly, nation-states do not exist in isolation, but "in a complex of other nation-states" (Giddens, 1987, p. 171). Nationalism embraces ways of thinking – patterns of common-sense discourse – which make this boundedness and monopolization of violence seem natural to 'us', who inhabit the world of nation-states. This world – 'our' world – is a place where nations have their official armies, police forces and executioners; where boundaries are rigorously drawn; and where citizens, and male citizens in particular, might expect to be called upon to kill and die in defence of the national border-post.

A glance at mediaeval and modern maps shows the novelty of the bounded state. Not only are European mediaeval maps less precise; not only do they tend to depict Jerusalem at the centre of things; not only do they typically indicate an incomplete world, with distant lands shading off into nothingness; but there is also a further difference. Mediaeval maps represent a world unobsessed with boundaries (Roberts, 1985). General areas are indicated for kingdoms and empires, without the compulsion to represent the precise place where one kingdom ends and another starts. The modern map of nations is quite different in this respect. It depicts a completed world, divided up by precisely drawn boundaries. This is the sort of map which is familiar to 'us'.

In mediaeval Europe there were few clear territorial boundaries. As Mann (1988) points out, mediaeval Europe comprised small cross-cutting networks; no single power agency controlled a clear-cut territory or the people within it. In any case, territories kept changing shape from generation to generation, as early medi-

aeval monarchs frequently divided their estates between their heirs. Peasantry might feel an obligation to a local lord, rather than a distant monarch. Even if the local lord actually lived in the locality, almost certainly he would not speak the language of his peasantry. If kings raised armies, they did so through the major lords, who in turn might sub-contract the job to lesser nobility. There was a whole pyramidal structure of rights and obligations. Armies were continually being raised, since politics, on all levels, tended to be conducted through warfare. These wars were seldom announced with official declarations like the outbreaks of modern inter-state hostility; nor were they brought to formal end-points.

In so many respects, the mediaeval world of Europe looks to modern eyes as an unbelievably messy, disor-ganized place. Throughout the Middle Ages, the mass of inhabitants, living in what is now known as France or England, did not think of themselves as 'French' or 'English' (Braudel, 1988; Seton-Watson, 1977). They had little conception of a territorial nation (a 'country') to which they owed an allegiance stronger than life itself. Community was imagined, and lived, in different ways from now. And this, in part, makes the mediaeval world seem so foreign today.

It is easy for 'us', who accept the naturalness of a 'boundary-consciousness', to think that the nation-state system introduced order and organization into a world of disorder and inefficient chaos. The state, whether represented by monarch or president, now claims the direct and total loyalty of its citizenry. When it comes to war, the rulers of the state do not depend upon the cooperation of feudal barons. Armies are raised directly from the people, who are urged to fight for their 'nation'. Of course, many, who have been so recruited, have been bribed, coerced or compelled through force of law. But also the modern world has seen mass, voluntary recruitment of young men, willingly, even enthusiastically, going to battle in the cause of the nation (Reader, 1988).

As the nation-state established a monopoly on the right to the means of violence within its boundaries, so the era of 'unofficial wars' ended (Hinsley, 1986). Henceforth 'Britain' would fight against 'France' in the Napoleon-ic wars; 'Russia' would be invaded; the 'United States of America' would watch closely. In this new world of nations-at-war, there was little room for a Duke of Burgundy or an Earl of Warwick to march into the fray at the head of a private retinue. Today, local 'warlords' tend to emerge in places where the state's authority has collapsed, such as Beirut or Somalia. The other states of the world look with horror on the emergence of 'un-official armies', dreading such forces within their own borders. With the rise of official wars comes, naturally, the rise of official peace. For the past 200 years, the end of wars has been marked by conferences to affirm precisely where state boundaries were to be drawn. The Congress of Vienna, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, set an example, which has been much repeated. The 'new world order', which President Bush claimed might be established with the military defeat of Iraq, is nothing new. Since the birth of nation-states, powerful states, who have proved their power in war, have sought to impose their own vision of a settled order of well-drawn international boundaries. In this respect, the modern nation-state is the product of an international age.

The International World of Nations

Giddens has described the nation-state system as having "no precedent in history" (1987, p. 166). Why the system should have emerged in Europe and then spread through the rest of the world is one of the major puzzles of modern history. Analysts have suggested how the new form of state provided a series of solu-tions to problems in a modernizing world. Gellner (1983, 1987) has claimed that industrialization brought a demand for standardized skills, which could best be dealt with through centrally controlled systems of edu-cation. Thus, economic advantage was given to a centrally organized state, which imposed uniform levels of literacy. Kennedy (1988) emphasizes the military advantage of the nation-state. It could recruit professional armies directly from populations who were willing to fight with patriotic fervour and who would not disappear seasonally to gather in their feudal lord's harvest. Other writers have directly linked the rise of nation-states with the rise of capitalism. Anderson (1983) connects the rise of the nation-state with the importance of print-ing, the replacement of Latin by vernacular languages, and the spread of discursive literacy, all of which were

necessary for capitalist development. Mann (1992) agrees but stresses the role of commercial, rather than industrial, capitalism in the formation of the state: in the eighteenth century, the imperialist conquests, which were to finance the industrial revolutions of western Europe, required state support for their continuing success. Nairn (1977) pointed to the uneven spread of capitalism, suggesting that the state became a means by which peripheral regions could haul themselves into capitalist modernity. Hroch (1985), developing this point, claims that capitalist economies needed the sort of central direction, especially in relation to educational and commercial policy, which could only be provided by the modern sort of nation-state.

Whatever may have been the reasons for the emergence of the nation-state, there is no doubting its success. Nationhood, spreading from Europe to the Americas and elsewhere, was established as the universal form of sovereignty. The world's entire land surface, with the exception of Antarctica, is "now divided between nations and states" (Birch, 1989, p. 3). If nationalism is the ideology which maintains these nation-states as nation-states, then nationalism is "the most successful ideology in human history" (p. 3). Liberalism and Marxism have been territorially limited, as was Christendom or Islam in the Middle Ages, but nationalism is an international ideology. The nation-state system abhors a territorial vacuum; every space must be corralled behind official national boundaries. Thus, the boundary-consciousness of nationalism has itself known no boundaries in its historical triumph.

Nationalism, in its triumphant march, has swept aside rival ideologies. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Marxists were predicting the end of national division: the imminent collapse of capitalism would herald a world of universal class consciousness, joining together the working classes from different states. In the event, Marxist revolutions accommodated themselves to national boundaries. One of the first tasks for the leaders of the 1917 Revolution in Russia was to secure the borders of the socialist state. The treaty with Germany and its allies at Brest-Litovsk signed away territory to Turkey. In the ensuing struggles to defend the revolution from outside attack, the Bolsheviks actually extended the borders of the old Russian empire by annexing Bokhara and Khiva and tightening Russian control over Outer Mongolia (Seton-Watson, 1977). Thus, the Bolshevik regime from the outset represented a nation-state among nation-states. First, Lenin, and then Stalin, played the parts of national leader, planning for 'socialism within one country' and willing to defend the nation against foreign invaders. So it has continued. As Benedict Anderson (1983) points out, in the late 1970s the Marxist regimes of Vietnam, Cambodia and China fought nationalist wars with each other, underlining the fact that "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms" (p. 12, emphasis in original).

There is something decidedly odd about the nation-state system. Nation-states come in all shapes and sizes. They include entities such as the Republic of China, with its population numbering more than 100 million, as well as Tuvalo with its 10,000 citizens. The idea of the nation-state has not come with a model of ideal size, like the Renaissance city-state. Some land masses, like North America, have few national boundaries, most of which tend to follow straight lines, lakes or rivers. By contrast, Europe is dense with boundaries which whirl and loop across mountains, plains and rivers. Some groups of islands form a single nation, such as Japan, whilst in the Caribbean each island seems to boast its own state (with Haiti and the Dominican Republic sharing the same island). Why Liechtenstein? Why Nauru? Why the United States of America? But no United States of South America? And no national state of Corsica nor of Hawaii? In short, one could not find a set of 'objective' geographical principles, which, if expressed in a computer program, would produce the present crop of jealously guarded, national boundaries. Instead, the world of nations has been divided into a hotchpotch of bizarrely shaped and sized entities, lodging tightly, sometimes uncomfortably, up against one another.

Nor does the hotchpotch reflect some underlying logic of language or religion. There are monoglot states, and there are polyglot states. There is a state like Iceland with comparative cultural and linguistic homogeneity, and a state like India with its mass of religions and languages. Sometimes, different religious groups have nationalist struggles, such as in Northern Ireland, and sometimes the same groups do not, as in Scotland. Sometimes language is a symbol of nationalist aspirations, as in Quebec. Sometimes it is not: there appear

to be few nationalist rumblings by linguistic minorities in Scandinavian countries (Elklit and Tonsgaard, 1992). The balance between religion and language can change. When the Belgian state was founded in 1830, religious affinities seemed stronger than linguistic differences, but, apparently, the position is now reversed (Vos, 1993). In Switzerland, a sense of Swiss nationality holds together a state which does not threaten to fragment along linguistic lines. The so-called 'Jura question' concerns the issue of seceding from the Berne canton, in order to form a new canton within Switzerland (Voutat, 1992). And what computer program – let alone what theory of objective historical development – would have predicted that the vast Spanish-speaking, Catholic areas of Central and Southern America would be criss-crossed by national boundaries? Why should Venezuela, Costa Rica and Bolivia boast their independence, raise their own armies and patrol their own borders?

The system of nation-states does not seem to follow a neat pattern for global division. Historical forces may have combined to produce the nation-state as modernity's logical form of governance. Yet, a wilful anarchy seems to have accompanied the way that the logical principle has been established in practice.

Making States and Peoples

If so-called 'objective' variables, such as those of language, religion or geography, cannot predict where the state boundaries are to be drawn, then one might presume that 'subjective', or psychological, variables are the decisive ones. Nations are not 'objective communities', in the sense that they are constructed around clear, 'objective' criteria, which are possessed, and seen to be possessed, by all national members: instead, they are, to use Benedict Anderson's term, 'imagined communities'. Because there are infinite ways of imagining communities, then one should expect the world map of nations to be somewhat higgledy-piggledy, as the boundaries between states follow the boundaries of subjective identity. As will be suggested, there is a grain of truth in this 'subjective' way of conceiving nationhood. Nevertheless, it is an oversimplification. Psychological identity, on its own, is not the driving force of history, pushing nation-states into their present shapes. National identities are forms of social life, rather than internal psychological states; as such, they are ideological creations, caught up in the historical processes of nationhood.

The term 'nation' carries two interrelated meanings. There is the 'nation' as the nation-state, and there is the 'nation' as the people living within the state. The linkage of the two meanings reflects the general ideology of nationalism. As Gellner implies, nationalism is based upon a principle which is "very widely held and even more commonly taken for granted in the modern world" (1993, p. 409). This is the principle that any nation-as-people should have their nation-as-state. Obviously, the principle assumes that there are such entities as national peoples. In this respect, nationalism involves the construction of the sense of national identity for those who are said to inhabit, or deserve to inhabit, their own nation-state. However, nationalism involves more than the construction of a particular identity (a particular national 'us'), for it includes the general principle: it is right that 'we' possess 'our' own state, because peoples (nations) should have their states (nations).

In this regard, nationalism combines particular and universal features. This combination could be seen in the way the victors of the French Revolution proclaimed their triumph. They declared their victory to be a triumph of universal principles, such as 'liberty, freedom and equality', which would apply, in theory, to all men – but not necessarily to all women (see Capitan, 1988). They also claimed this to be a general victory of reason over prejudice, enlightenment over darkness, the people over despotism. Yet, at the moment of triumph, 'the people' were not left dangling as an abstract concept, nor as a universal possibility. The great, universal principles were being limited to one particular people, situated in a specific place (Dumont, 1992; Freeman, 1992). The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen asserted that "the principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation: no body of men, no individual, can express authority that does not emanate from it" (quoted in Kedourie, 1966, p. 12). The Nation was, of course, the French nation. Some sort of indissoluble, ineffable tie was being asserted between state, people and territory.

In claiming that sovereignty rests with the nation, the revolutionaries were speaking as if the idea of the 'na-

tion' was unproblematic. In reading their words today, it is easy to assume that the term 'nation' had a clear, concrete signification. At the time of the Revolution, the conventional symbols of nationhood, which are so taken for granted today, were not yet in place. Under the *ancien régime*, there was no national flag, only regional ones (Johnson, 1993). The language in which the Declaration had been written was only spoken by a minority of the population as their first tongue. North of the Loire, but excluding Britanny and Flanders, it might have been understood by most people, but to the south it was generally incomprehensible (Braudel, 1988). When the Declaration was announced, only a small percentage of those who lived in the territory, now recognized as being France, thought of themselves as being 'French'. As such, 'the nation' was not a concrete entity, whose existence all citizens could take for granted. It was a project to be attained. Because the project was being pursued in its own name (policies were to be justified in the name of 'the nation'), it had to assume its own reality before being effected in practice.

These considerations raise the question 'which comes first: the nation-as-people or the nation-as-state?' There has been much debate between those who claim that nation-states have created national identities and those who trace the genealogy of national identities back to times before the rise of the nation-state. Those who take the former view claim that, as nation-states were being formed, so national identities were often invented. Sometimes, the founders of the state were aware of what they were doing. After the Risorgimento, the nineteenth-century Italian nationalist Massimo d'Azeglio declared: "We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians" (quoted in Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 44). To make 'Italians' it was necessary to present the creation as a revival, as if something ancient were being continued. During the heyday of nation-making in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many seemingly ancient traditions were invented. New artefacts, such as Scottish kilts or Coronation rituals, were created, but they were presented as if age-old traditions. 'Ancient' epic poems, extolling the nation, were occasionally forged (Cannadine, 1983; Trevor-Roper, 1983).

Through the invention of traditions, national identities were being created as if they were 'natural', even eternal, features of human existence. As Gellner argues, nationalism presents "itself as the affirmation of each and every 'nationality', and these alleged entities are supposed just to be there, like Mount Everest, since long ago, antedating the age of nationalism" (1983, p. 49). The Victorian journalist Walter Bagehot asserted in *Physics and Politics* that nations "are as old as history". He was suggesting that the particular nations, "which are so familiar to us", have always existed throughout history (1873, p. 83). Bagehot's compatriots might have wished to believe that there had always been Englishmen – a whole trail of bearded Alfreds and Arthurs – stumping off into misty dawns of time, carrying their swords and English sense of play like Dr Grace and his cricket bat. Whether these Alfreds and Arthurs actually nourished a sense of 'Englishness' *qua* Englishness (let alone 'Britishness'), in ways which Bagehot would have recognized in himself, is very much a moot point: and ditto for the 'French' ancient heroes and heroines, who were being rediscovered across the Channel at about the same time.

Even more problematic is the case of some former colonies. No prior sense of peoplehood could explain why a United States of America developed to the north of Mexico, but not to its south. The thirteen colonies, which under George Washington's leadership overthrew colonial rule, developed into a single nation, while the five colonies liberated from Spain by Simon Bolivar went their own national ways. In both cases, the sense of nationhood was to be created after the various declarations of independence, whether it was the sense of 'Americanness' (the 'one nation under God'), or the separate senses of being Bolivian, Peruvian, Venezuelan, Ecuadorian and Colombian.

On the other hand, as Anthony Smith (1981, 1986, 1994) has repeatedly argued, not all nations-as-people have been entirely created *de novo*. Some identities must have existed previously and a general sense of community was not entirely invented in the eighteenth century. 'Ethnies' – or peoples claiming a sense of their own unique history, culture and loyalties – are to be found in most ages. Often, nation-states were created out of older loyalties. The 'ancient' Highland kilt may have been as much a modern invention as the Coronation mug, but both mug and kilt were celebrating the much older traditions of the Highland clan system and the English Coronation oath respectively. Neither of these were entirely invented, at least in the era of the

state-making. The peoples whom nation-states were claiming to represent often had nurtured a sense of peoplehood before the age of nationhood, even if this sense was not co-extensive with the peoplehood, claimed by the state. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen did not itself invent the identity of being 'French', and certainly not the identity of being Frankish or Gallic. And the new French nation, in developing its sense of Frenchness, adapted, as well as invented, much older traditions, stereotypes and myths. Similarly, Massimo d'Azeglio did not invent the term 'Italia'. If nationhood provided the outward political form for states, then this form often took root within, and adapted, older senses of peoplehood. And, so the argument goes, it is not surprising that the results were at once both uniform and variegated.

The creation of the nation-as-people added something to the pre-existing identities. Seldom has the creation of nation-states been a harmonious process, in which a traditional 'ethnie' grows from small shoot into the full flower of nationality, as if following a process of 'natural' maturation. The process typically is attended by conflict and violence. A particular form of identity has to be imposed. One way of thinking of the self, of community and, indeed, of the world has to replace other conceptions, other forms of life. Italians have to be made: individuals have to stop thinking of themselves merely as Lombardians or Sicilians, or members of this or that village. If only a minority of those living in France at the time of the Revolution thought of themselves as French, then it was this minority's outlook, which was to prevail. Paris was to speak metonymically and literally for the whole of France. The Parisian style of speech was to be imposed, legally and culturally, as 'French'.

The battle for nationhood is a battle for hegemony, by which a part claims to speak for the whole nation and to represent the national essence. Sometimes, metonymically the name of the part comes to stand for the national whole. For example, in Thailand and Burma the identity of the nation has come to be associated with the values and culture of the dominant group, the Thais and Burmese respectively (Brown, 1989). Few nations are so homogeneous that they do not contain sub-sections, which fall under Smith's definition of *ethnie*: namely a group which maintains a sense of its own historic uniqueness and origins. Connor (1993) estimates that only 15 of the current 180 nations are not 'multinational' in this sense. This estimate ignores the long-buried senses of peoplehood cluttering the cemeteries of history.

The achievement of national hegemony is well illustrated by the triumph of official national languages and the suppression of rivals – a triumph which has so often accompanied the construction of statehood. The Rights of Man and the Citizen did not spread to the rights of Bretons and Occitans to use their own tongue in the schoolrooms of France: the northern *langue d'oïl* was enforced, with the backing of legal statutes, over *la langue d'oc*. In the nineteenth century, Welsh and Lowland Scottish were officially banned in British schools (Kiernan, 1993). The Argentinian government, in a curious by-way of national history, discouraged the use of Welsh in Patagonia (Williams, 1991). Sometimes when hegemony is assured, or when it is later threatened, this legal suppression of language is relaxed, either in the interests of recapturing a harmless heritage, or to ward off demands from separatist or irredentist groups. The suppression of minority languages is not confined to nationalism's early history. Even in the late twentieth century such policies are pursued, in the name of the people, by governing groups seeking to consolidate their hold on state power. The 1982 Constitution of Turkey specifically forbids any political party from concerning itself "with the defence, development or diffusion of any non-Turkish language or culture" (quoted in Entessar, 1989). After the Indonesian government occupied East Timor, it officially banned the teaching of Timorese in schools, proclaiming that it was bringing 'Indonesian civilization' to the island (Pilger, 1994).

With historical hindsight, it might seem inevitable that the nation-state system emerged, but it is hard to see an inevitability about the particular nations themselves. After each major European war, the political map changes: the map drawn by the Treaty of Berlin differs from that of Versailles and certainly from that of today. Some nation-states, like Poland, change their shape, size and location. Others in the Balkans seem to come and go, sometimes reappearing, sometimes not. Wallerstein (1991) points out that very few states today can boast a continuous administrative entity and geographical location from 1450. Hypothetical possibilities abound. Had forces been deployed otherwise on particular battlegrounds, would there today be other

nations and other national identities? Had the Confederate forces not been defeated in the American Civil War, might the territory, currently filled by the USA, now provide the locus for two independent states, each nurturing its own separate culture and historical myths? It is possible to take a longer historical perspective. Seton-Watson (1977) suggests that the defeat of the Albigensians in 1213 was of decisive importance. Had fortunes gone the other way, then, when it came to the making of states several centuries later, a powerful, united Mediterranean sea-power, stretching from Catalonia to Rome, might have emerged. One can predict that the loyalty to this state – perhaps to be known as *Mediterranea* – would have been as fierce and as 'naturally age-old' as that shown to any emerging European state. And *la langue d'oc* might now be established as one of the great languages of the world, instead of languishing in its present state of decay (Touraine, 1985).

If it seems that too much is being made to hinge on the outcome of battles, then it should be remembered that violence is seldom far from the surface of nationalism's history. The struggle to create the nation-state is a struggle for the monopoly of the means of violence. What is being created – a nation-state – is itself a means of violence. The triumph of a particular nationalism is seldom achieved without the defeat of alternative nationalisms and other ways of imagining peoplehood. France might appear to have emerged in its historic place with a sense of French identity nourished over centuries (Smith, 1994). The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen implies as much. However, the achievement of this nationhood not only entailed the historical failure of hypothetical nationalisms – of potential Mediterraneas – but the actual defeat of rival senses of people-hood. The Bretons and the Occitans needed to be coerced into being French: any national aspirations which they might have entertained had to be forcefully cropped.

All this is to be done in the name of the people (all the people), the nation (the whole nation) or the father/motherland (the whole country). This has become a commonplace characteristic of the times. Today, rulers, however tyrannical their rule, justify their sovereignty as an expression of their nation's will. Even those who seize power through a minority *coup d'état* feel the need to declare to the world that their power carries national legitimacy. Familiar clichés will be employed. For example, when Ernest Shonekan seized power in Nigeria with the aid of the army and in the face of electoral victory being accorded to rivals, he declared that he was acting "in the greater interests of the fatherland" (*Guardian*, 1 September 1993). Shonekan is another figure, who himself possesses little lasting historical significance, but who follows the modern courtly protocol: political leaders must claim to act in the interests of the nation, variously described as 'the people', 'the motherland' or 'the fatherland'. Mediaeval monarchs would have found these evocations of parent-lands strangely mystical. Their sovereignty was claimed to be derived from God; the monarch's possession of a magic, healing touch was taken as evidence of the divine calling (Bloch, 1973). Modern rulers, by contrast, must claim, as evidence of their calling, a common touch. In the modern state the claim to sovereignty has descended from heaven to earth, from the clouds to the soil of the homeland and to the collectively invoked bodies of its inhabitants.

Nationhood and the Development of Language

As the ideology of nationalism has spread across the globe, so it has shaped contemporary common sense. Notions, which seem to us so solidly banal, turn out to be ideological constructions of nationalism. They are 'invented permanencies', which have been created historically in the age of modernity, but which feel as if they have always existed. This is one reason why it is so difficult to offer explanations for nationalism. Concepts, which an analyst might use to describe the causal factors, may themselves be historical constructs of nationalism. A prime example is the idea of languages. As was mentioned earlier, many analysts have claimed that language is a prime determinant of nationalist identity: those speaking the same language are liable to claim a sense of national bond. Also, as was mentioned in the previous section, the creation of a national hegemony often involves a hegemony of language. It would not be difficult to construct a model of nationalism around the importance of speaking the same or different languages.

To do so would be to treat language itself as an unproblematic concept. It seems so obvious that there are dif-

ferent languages, and that everyone who speaks must speak an identifiable language. How could the matter be questioned? Bagehot might have thought that there have always been nations. Perhaps he exaggerated; or perhaps he was misled by the apparent solidity of invented national permanencies. But surely languages are different: they have always existed. Yet, a caution should be issued.

Humans might have spoken from the dawn of history, with mutually unintelligible ways of talking being developed in different places, but this does not mean that people have thought of themselves as speaking 'a language'. The concept of 'a language' – at least in the sense which appears so banally obvious to 'us' – may itself be an invented permanency, developed during the age of the nation-state. If this is the case, then language does not create nationalism, so much as nationalism creates language; or rather nationalism creates 'our' common-sense, unquestioned view that there are, 'naturally' and unproblematically, things called different 'languages', which we speak.

Mediaeval Europe, in contrast with today's world, was not a place of official vernacular languages. By and large written communication was in Latin. The grammar, which was taught as a basic subject in the curriculum of the trivium, was Latin grammar (Murphy, 1974). The vernacular tongues, even when used in written form, were not considered grammatical, nor was the spelling of their vocabularies standardized. In this context, there were no right and wrong ways to write the vernacular; and in most cases it simply was not written. The pressures to standardize spelling, to establish correct grammars and to teach an approved form of the native tongue were to come much later. Michel Foucault (1972) has compared the emergence of grammar as an academic discipline in the eighteenth century with the development of medicine and economics at the same time. In each case, the academic study was developing in the context of the emerging modern state, which was imposing uniformity and order on its citizenry and which, according to Foucault, was "a disciplinary society" (1986, p. 206).

In the Middle Ages, according to Douglas Johnson, "it was undoubtedly difficult for the ordinary person in one part of France to be understood in another part of France" (1993, p. 41). Indeed, the situation persisted well into the nineteenth century in France (Braudel, 1988). One can imagine mediaeval peasants' relation to their patterns of speaking. They would share ways of talking with fellow members of their village. They would recognize these patterns – and perhaps distinctive words – especially when encountering fellow villagers away from home. The documents of Montail-lou recount one villager, Arnaud Sicre, a shoemaker working in San Mateo, overhearing a woman entering the workshop and speaking "the tongue of Montaillou" (Ladurie, 1978, p. 286). He put down his tools to ask whether she did indeed come from Montaillou. The 'tongue' may have been distinctive, yet it was also comprehensible to those living in neighbouring regions, which would also have their own recognizable ways of speaking. Some words would be unfamiliar to outsiders, whilst others would not be. As one travelled further from one's home village, the ratio of unfamiliar phrases to familiar ones would rise, with problems of communication increasing. If one travelled to a particularly inaccessible village, one might find few common phrases. In the case of fourteenth century Montaillou, Ladurie writes that there was a continuum of communication between Occitania and Catalonia.

In travelling between villages and along the continuum of communication, there would be no point at which the peasant would imagine that they had passed through a linguistic boundary, separating one distinct tongue from another. Moments of intelligibility might get fewer, dribbling away entirely in distant horizons. The travelling peasant, however, would not stop to ask 'do these people speak the same language as myself?', as if there was an actual point at which the ratio between the familiar and the unfamiliar became critical and the speech pattern changed from one grammatical essence to another. This essentialism, by contrast, is insinuated into the core of modern common sense about language. We would want to know whether the speech of Montaillou should be categorized as a dialect of Occitan and whether the inhabitants of San Mateo *really* spoke a variant of Catalan. We assume the reality of underlying different deep grammars. If the modern political map, unlike its mediaeval equivalent, contains precise boundaries, so too does the modernly imagined map of speech. The assumptions of this imagined mapping are easily projected on to other cultures and other times. Clifford (1992) recounts how anthropologists typically assume that each village, or each tribe, which

they study, has its own unique language.

The modern imagining of different languages is not a fantasy, but it reflects that the world of nations is also a world of formally constituted languages. The disciplinary society of the nation-state needs the discipline of a common grammar. The mediaeval peasant had no official forms to complete, inquiring whether the respondent speaks Spanish or English. No acts of parliament decreed which language was to be used in compulsory public education or in state broadcasting; nor would the mediaeval subject have dreamt of ever going to war over such matters. The questions about language, which today seem so 'natural' and so vital, did not arise. To put the matter crudely: the mediaeval peasant spoke, but the modern person cannot merely speak; we have to speak *something* – a language.

Languages and Boundaries

A world of different languages requires the constitution of categorical distinctions. A problem confronts anyone who attempts to make distinctions between one language and another. Not all the speakers of a language speak in the same way. Thus, some differences of speaking have to be classified as being instances of different languages and some will be classified as differences within the same language. The notion of 'dialect' becomes crucial to maintain the idea of separate languages: it seems to account for the fact that not all speakers of a language speak the same way. The word 'dialect' did not gain its linguistic meaning until the early modern period (Haugen, 1966a). Previously, the linguistic problems, which the word addresses and seems to solve, did not arise. The inhabitants of fourteenth-century Montaillou did not worry whether their tongue was a 'dialect' of a wider language, or whether it was a separate language: the shoemaker was interested in knowing whether he shared a birthplace with the woman, not whether they spoke 'the same language'.

The idea of a dialect had little use before nation-states started establishing official ways of speaking and writing. Differences between languages and dialect, then, became hotly contested political issues, as well as concerns for the discipline of linguistics. If it seems obvious to us that there are different languages, it is by no means obvious how the distinctions between languages are to be made. Suppose one stipulated that speakers of the same language understand each other; and that speakers of different languages do not. This would imply that all the variants (or dialects) of a single language are mutually intelligible, and that different languages are mutually unintelligible. Linguists have emphasized that there is no simple criterion for determining mutual intelligibility. How much comprehension should count as intelligibility? Where on the continuum of comprehensibility is the boundary between understanding and non-understanding to be drawn?

Even if such a criterion could be applied, it would lead to very different distinctions from those which are conventionally accepted and which seem so solid to speakers and non-speakers alike (Comrie, 1990; Ruhlen, 1987). There are instances of 'different' languages, such as Danish, Norwegian and Swedish, which are mutually intelligible. As Eriksen (1993) points out, the spoken language of Norwegian cities like Bergen and Oslo is closer to standard Danish than it is to some of the rural dialects of Norwegian. As well as the problem of different languages which are mutually comprehensible, there is the problem of languages which encompass mutually incomprehensible dialects. Thus, speakers of both Gheg and Tosk dialects imagine themselves to speak the common language Albanian, although the dialects are mutually incomprehensible (Ruhlen, 1987).

More is at stake in drawing the boundary of a language than linguistics. The battle for hegemony, which accompanies the creation of states, is reflected in the power to define language, or in what Thompson has called the power "to make meaning stick" (1984, p. 132). This power resides not merely in the imposition of certain words or phrases, but also in the claim of languages to be languages. The middle class of the metropolitan areas typically will make their meanings stick as the official language, relegating other patterns within the national boundaries to 'dialects', a term which almost invariably carries a pejorative meaning. As Haugen (1966a) suggested, a 'dialect' is frequently a language which did not succeed politically: for example, Piedmontese was relegated to the status of dialect after Tuscan succeeded in becoming the language of Italy.

Nationalists, in attempting to create a separate nation, often will create a language as a distinct language, although they might claim to be creating the nation on the basis of the language, as if the latter were an ancient, 'natural' fact. When Herder was praising the German language as the soul of the German nation, he was arguing to bring both – the language and the nation – into existence, whilst treating both as if age-old. The speech of the territory that was to become Germany comprised several mutually unintelligible ways of talking, none of which had succeeded yet in establishing its status as the 'correct' form of an overall German language. At that time, Prussians spoke Low German and "learnt High German as a second language" (Hawkins, 1990, p. 105). In the following century, with the rise of Prussia, 'standard' German was to emerge as the north German pronunciation of southern High German.

Again and again, the boundaries between languages, and the classification of dialects, have followed the politics of state-making. Where national boundaries are established, then, the differences in speech patterns either side of the boundary are more likely to be seen as belonging to distinctly different languages by the speakers themselves, their national centres and the world in general. When the Dutch went their way politically, their form of lower Franconian was to become a separate language, in contrast to other forms which have become known as dialects of German (Schmidt, 1993). Galician, spoken in Spain, and Portuguese, spoken across the border, are now generally thought to be distinct languages. In linguistic terms, French and Italian merge into each other, but the speech patterns on the French side of the border are likely to be seen as dialects of French, and those on the Italian side as dialects of Italian (Ruhlen, 1987). Similarly, Friul in Northern Italy is similar to Romanesch in Switzerland, but, again, national boundaries reinforce a sense of linguistic separateness (White, 1991). The creation of Norwegian is instructive. The decolonization from Denmark was marked by a struggle for language. First, the state of Norway was to declare its own language, creating a spelling to match so-called Norwegian patterns of talking, rather than Danish ones. Then, there was the internal battle between two rival patterns of speech, the Riksmål and Landsmål, both having claims to be considered as the proper Norwegian (Haugen, 1966b). In all these cases, professional linguists have tended to fall into line with accepted practices, accepting Norwegian and Danish as different languages, High and Low German as variants of the same language etcetera (Comrie, 1990). As Ruhlen (1987) admits, because there are no purely linguistic criteria for classifying languages, linguists follow common beliefs about identifying similar and different languages.

The common practices of naming languages tend to emerge through struggles for hegemony. And what is made into a common practice can, under certain circumstances, be unmade or become a locus of struggle. For example, Italian law makes a distinction between *koine* (dialects) of Italian and full-blown minority languages. Friulan and Sardinian activists campaigned for years to have their speech recognized in law as official languages. Successive central governments, fearful of separatism and the cost of grants for minority languages, resisted their demands. In the debate whether Friulan and Sard were dialects or languages, both sides have their expert linguists, contesting the other side's characterization of what constitutes a language and what is merely a dialect (Petrosino, 1992). More dramatically, the Turkish government officially denies that its Kurdish citizens are Kurds and that there is a Kurdish language: the Kurds really are "mountain Turks", who have forgotten their native, Turkish tongue (Entessar, 1989).

One might suppose that nationalist movements, seeking to form separate states, will seek to convert dialect into language. The power of writing down a way of speaking should not be underestimated: it provides material evidence for the claim that a separate language exists. In order to highlight differences from the 'official' governing language, separate spellings might be adopted and these might highlight the area's distinctive way of talking. These spellings, written on public notices and used in mythic poetry, will proclaim the uniqueness of the speech and its status as a language. Sometimes different orthographies can divide mutually intelligible ways of speaking, as in the case of Serbian and Croat, and also Urdu and Hindu. The status of the writing, however, can be contested or officially branded as dialect. In 1994, for the first time since the 1872 Scottish Education Act banned the use of lowland Scottish (or Lalland) in schools, Glasgow University accepted a dissertation written in Lalland: topic of the 'deisertation' was 'Scots spellin'. Significantly, the university senate only agreed to accept the thesis on the understanding that its writing be classified as a dialect of English, not

as a separate language (*Guardian*, 8 July 1994).

Writing down a 'dialect' is not a simple issue, because a particular way of speaking has to be selected. Braudel (1988) writes of the problem faced by those who wished to translate the official French documents of the post-Revolutionary state into local 'patois'. Each village seemed to have its own way of speaking and its own accent. The Director of the *département* of Corrèze spoke about the difficulty of finding acceptable translations: "The translator, who happened to come from the canton of Juillac, did not speak with the same accent as the other cantons which all vary slightly; the difference becomes marked at a distance of seven or eight leagues" (quoted in Braudel, 1988, p. 92). Another official, according to Braudel, proposed translating the Declaration of the Rights of Man into a devised patois, which would be "midway between all the different jargons" of the peoples in the Bordeaux area. One might surmise what might have happened had the authorities accepted the idea of such a compromise language, which did not represent the speaking patterns of any existing person. Had this language been taught in schools, and were it used by later poets to extol the historic romance of the area, then separatist groups today might be demanding its official recognition. The University of Bordeaux might be faced with doctoral 'deisertations' written in this apparently ancient tongue.

The establishment of a distinct language involves its own internal struggles for hegemony, as one way of speaking is to stand as the model for the whole language. Were the Kurdish movement in Turkey to champion an official Kurdish language, then it must select from among its supporters' various ways of talking. In the 1930s and 1940s the Sardinian nationalist movement avoided the language issue. To have promoted Sard as a separate language, and to have held it as the symbol of Sardinian independence, would have invited conflict. Sard contained a variety of different forms: even to refer to 'Sard', as such, implies a contestable uniformity. One form of Sardinian speaking would have to have been selected as the official form, with other variations transformed into mere dialects, or poor relations to 'metropolitan Sard'. In order not to alienate speakers of any variety of Sardinian speech, the leaders of the pre-war Sardinian nationalist movement downplayed the importance of language (White, 1991).

The case of the separatist Lombard League is interesting. In the early 1980s, the League declared Lombardian to be a separate language from Italian (Ruzza, 1993). Activists daubed out the final vowels on street signs in Lombardy. In response, opponents mocked the idea that Lombardian was a proper language. There is little point in turning to the linguistic textbooks to settle the issue: some classify Lombardian as a separate language (Grimes, 1988), whilst others do not (Vincent, 1987). Had the League's programme been successful during the early 1980s, and had Lombardy seceded from Italy, establishing its own state boundaries, a prediction might be made: increasingly Lombardian would have come to be recognized as different from Italian, as Norwegian is from Danish and Swedish. After a while, linguistic textbooks would agree on the matter. However, in the late 1980s the League dropped the language issue, and, indeed, it changed its name from Lombard to Northern League (Ruzza, 1993). The issue of language was alienating potential supporters, who considered themselves Lombardian but did not speak the language. Also, a 'correct' form of Lombardian would have to have been created and few supporters were prepared to volunteer their area of Lombardy as the home of incorrectly spoken Lombardian.

Conflicts over language are commonplace in the contemporary world. They are comprehensible to 'our' common sense: reports about French and Flemish speakers in Belgium, or Urdu and Hindu speakers in India, do not occasion puzzlement. Such conflicts are not just struggles about language, but importantly they are conducted through language (as well as through violence). In this respect, the universal, or international, aspects of nationalism are crucial. Without common notions, which can be translated across particular languages and dialects, the conflicts would not be pursued in their nationalist forms. Foremost amongst such notions are the ideas of 'language' and 'dialect' themselves. These terms must be reproduced in every language which is used by its speakers to claim that they possess a separate language, and that, in consequence, they are a separate nation, whose internal differences of speech are merely differences of 'dialect'.

Notions of language and dialect are not the exclusive property of 'extremists', who pursue narrow national

dreams. They are part of 'our' common sense. This has methodological and political implications. Nations may be 'imagined communities', but the pattern of the imaginings cannot be explained in terms of differences of language, for languages themselves have to be imagined as distinct entities. If nationalism is to be studied as a widespread ideology, and if nationalist assumptions are to be found in common-sense notions about what a language is, then nationalism should not be projected on to others, as if 'we' are free from all its effects. In addition, the assumptions, beliefs and shared representations, which depict the world of nations as our natural world, are historical creations: they are not the 'natural' common sense of all humans.

At other times people did not hold the notions of language and dialect, let alone those of territory and sovereignty, which are so commonplace today and which seem so materially real to 'us'. So strongly are such notions embedded in contemporary common sense that it is easy to forget that they are invented permanencies. The mediaeval cobblers in the workshops of Montaillou or San Mateo might, with the distance of 700 years, now appear to us narrow, superstition-bound figures. But they would have found our ideas on language and nation strangely mystical; they would be puzzled why this mysticism could be a matter of life and death.

- nationalism
- nation and state
- dialects
- nation
- peoplehood
- patriotism
- language