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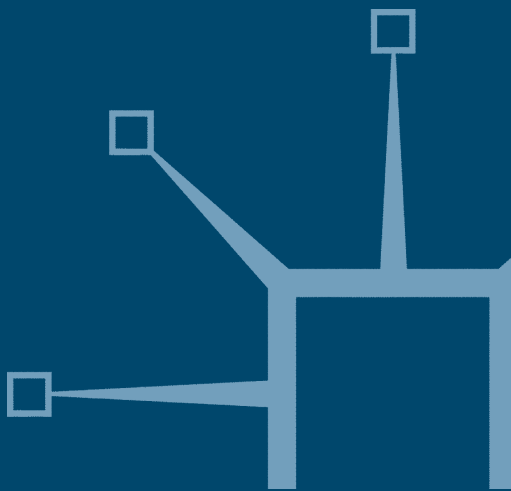
Theories of Nationalism

A Critical Introduction

Second Edition

Umut Özkirimli



Theories of Nationalism

Also by Umut Özkırımlı

Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey (with Spyros A. Sofos)
Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement
Nationalism and Its Futures (editor)

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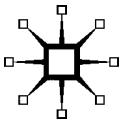

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Preface to the Second Edition

Almost a decade has passed since this book was first published. It was very easy to fill in the section on competing books in Palgrave Macmillan's *The Author's Publicity Form* back then as there were, despite the growing interest in nationalism, only a handful of general theoretical surveys of the field. This is no longer the case. Nationalism proved more resilient than expected as a subject of academic inquiry, certainly not a faddish obsession instigated by the tectonic changes that took place towards the end of the 'short twentieth century' (Hobsbawm 1994). As a result, the literature on nationalism has continued to grow exponentially. Whereas a basic keyword search on the popular online bookshop Amazon yielded 3,083 titles related to 'nationalism' in 1999 (Amazon 1999), today a similar search yields 86,360 titles (Amazon 2008). Obviously, part of this increase can be explained away by changing marketing strategies and improved technological capacities of internet firms, but this finding is corroborated by a similar keyword search in the Library of Congress Online Catalogue, which contains more than 10,000 titles related to nationalism (Library of Congress 2008) as opposed to 932 eight years ago (Library of Congress 2000). These may not be the most 'scientific' way to measure the growing interest in nationalism, but the trend is clearly there.

Theories of Nationalism had to take this remarkable upsurge into account for at least three reasons. First, there are now several introductory texts, handbooks, readers, even encyclopedias engaging with various aspects of the theories covered in this book. Second, the theorists themselves have not stood still and continued to amend and improve their theories/approaches *vis-à-vis* criticisms levelled at their initial formulations over the years. Third, the relative weight/position of particular theories within the debate has changed. Hence it is more difficult to hold that modernism, the view that nations and nationalism are historically and sociologically novel, is still the 'dominant orthodoxy' in the field today as there are more and more theorists who subscribe to the view that nations, if not nationalism, are not novel, that there were indeed nations in medieval or ancient times. The book had to be substantially updated and revised to be able to reflect the current state of play in the field and to address a twenty-first century audience.

Yet the expansion of the literature was not the only reason that called for a revision. *Theories of Nationalism* was derived from the PhD dissertation I submitted in 1999, and as such, reflected all the vices and limitations of its kind. I have become aware of some of these limitations as my work on nationalism has evolved over the years, in various theoretical exchanges and more importantly

through the study of actual historical cases. Others have been brought to my attention by colleagues who have been using the book as teaching material or pointed out in the reviews of the first edition. It may be useful to briefly refer to these limitations before summarizing the novel features of this edition.

Perhaps the most common charge brought against the first edition related to the conspicuous absence of authorial voice (MacDonald 2001; Peled 2002). This was partly deliberate as I did not want to let my theoretical preferences interfere with my treatment of other theories – which was indeed the central criticism raised against the main competitor of *Theories of Nationalism* at the time, Anthony D. Smith's *Nationalism and Modernism* (Marx, 2000; Frusetta, 2000). Nevertheless, I overdid it. I now realize that it was not a good idea to try to condense my own views on the debate and my suggestions for an alternative theoretical framework into a single chapter for the sake of fairness or a misguided 'objectivity'. Making my voice 'audible' throughout the text would have also enabled me to devote more space to my theoretical framework, which remained too undeveloped in the first edition, a point raised by several reviewers (Hawkins 2001; Mason 2001; Flynn 2002).

Another common criticism concerned the seemingly privileged treatment of 'recent approaches' to nationalism (Pozo 2002; Peled 2002; Mason 2001). Although this was never reflected on my treatment of other theories and approaches, as alluded to above, the critics were certainly right in pointing to the absence of a 'Critique of Recent Approaches' section in the book. Again, this was partly inevitable, as not many authors engaged with these approaches at the time, preferring to focus on classical theories instead. Fortunately, this is no longer the case.

The first edition was also criticized for overrelying on secondary sources, especially when covering the historical debates on nationalism, and for slavishly adopting Anthony D. Smith's definitions of various theoretical approaches to nationalism (MacDonald 2001). I partly accept the first criticism and reject the second. It was not (and still is not) possible to dwell on the writings of thinkers who have contributed to our understanding of nationalism over a time span of two centuries within the limited compass of a single chapter. In any case, the book's focus is on contemporary theoretical debates on nationalism; earlier contributions are only discussed to put the current debates into (a historical) perspective, to remind the reader that they do not take place in a vacuum. As for the second criticism, again, it was not (and still is not) possible to provide an overview of the theoretical debate without following in Smith's footsteps. Even the tripartite division we use today in categorizing theories of nationalism has been popularized, if not invented, by Smith. I personally have many problems with this categorization, as will be evident later, but this has become the most widely accepted categorization in the field and it would not make much sense to structure an introductory text on the theoretical debate on nationalism differently.

A final, relatively minor, criticism that needs to be mentioned in this context concerns what the book omits. Not surprisingly, everybody has his/her own list of priorities. Some would want to see more on the work of Adrian Hastings and Liah Greenfeld (Mirza 2002); others on Jack Snyder (MacDonald 2001) or on rational choice theories (Hawkins 2001) and non-Western theorists (Anand 2001). Obviously, it is not possible to satisfy all reviewers in this respect. In any case, any such text is bound to leave out certain names and perspectives, given the constraints of time and space, and any such decision will reflect the author's personal priorities in the final analysis. Still, there was a lot that could be done, and now would be a good time to say a few things on the changes introduced in the new edition.

The present volume is a revised and substantially enlarged version of the first edition. In this context:

- The discussion of the various theories and the Further Reading sections have been updated, taking on board the publications of the last decade – and occasionally older sources that were not available to me back in 1999 – including those by the theorists themselves.
- A new section is added to the end of each chapter dealing with the main theoretical approaches to cover the work of theorists who have provided original reformulations of these positions in recent years.
- A number of new theorists and approaches are added to the existing ones to keep up with the recent trends in the field. In this framework, a critique of 'recent approaches' is also provided.
- The chapter on historical debates has been significantly revised (and expanded) on the basis of primary sources in order to better reflect the contributions of various thinkers and social scientists to the evolution of the idea of nationalism.
- The Introduction and the chapter containing my own views on the theoretical debate as well as my suggestions for an alternative theoretical framework have been completely rewritten not only to make my 'signature' more legible (this will not be confined to a single chapter anyway), but also to provide the reader with an indication of how my own thoughts on nationalism have evolved.
- Finally, a series of 'Key Theorists' boxes are added to the text to give a fuller picture of the personal trajectories of particular theorists and the conditions that led them to study nationalism.

The structure of the book is also revised to accommodate these changes and to offer a more balanced treatment of particular theories and approaches. The chapter on primordialism for example, which has been found to be 'more truncated than that of modernism' by one reviewer (Flynn 2002), is expanded and made more congruent with the rest of the theoretical chapters. This is also the

case with the chapter on recent approaches which now includes a section devoted to the criticisms levelled against these approaches.

As the above account reveals, I would not be able to prepare a new edition of this book without the input of colleagues in various countries who were kind enough to point to the defects and limitations of *Theories of Nationalism* as a textbook over the years, based on their classroom observations. I am also indebted to the reviews of the first edition published in various scholarly journals and to the comments of the anonymous reviewer of Palgrave Macmillan on the first draft of this edition.

Special thanks are due to Michael Billig, John Breuilly, Rogers Brubaker, Craig Calhoun, Partha Chatterjee, Michael Hechter, John Hutchinson, Siniša Malešević, Ronald Grigor Suny, Pierre van den Berghe, Andreas Wimmer and Nira Yuval-Davis who have made biographical information and unpublished/forthcoming research of theirs available to me; to Spyros A. Sofos for allowing me to use material from our book, *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (2008), in the final chapter where I provide the outline of a theoretical framework to study nationalism and for his comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. I am grateful to The Hellenic Observatory and the European Institute at the London School of Economics for offering me a fellowship and to my colleagues at the Department of International Relations at Istanbul Bilgi University for sharing some of my responsibilities during the final stages of writing. I would like to reiterate my thanks to Fred Halliday for being a constant source of inspiration throughout the years, and to my publisher Steven Kennedy for his support and unwavering faith in my work. Finally, I would like to thank Yavuz Tüyloğlu without whose multifaceted assistance I would not have been able to write a single line over the last two years.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank my mother and my friends who have patiently endured the exigencies of yet another book without complaining too much – in particular Can, who has offered me sanctuary in Camden Town whenever I needed it most, and Eray, who has accompanied me throughout this, at times quite troubled, journey.

Istanbul–London UMUT ÖZKIRIMLI

Chapter 1

Introduction

Why nationalism?

Most recent texts on nationalism start by pointing to the 'rediscovery' of nationalism as a subject of academic inquiry with the proliferation of ethnic and nationalist conflicts across much of the world in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war. Delanty and Kumar, for example, remark that 'nationalism has seemingly returned with renewed vigor in recent decades', attracting growing attention from scholars from a variety of disciplines (2006a: 1; see also Day and Thompson 2004; Conversi 2002; Leoussi 2001). Spencer and Wollman make the point more personally noting that they began 'to think seriously about nationalism … when faced with the catastrophic consequences of what appeared to be a sudden explosion of nationalism in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s' (2001: 1), while already a few years earlier Smith was observing that 'The last ten years have witnessed a phenomenal growth in the practice and study of nationalism' and that ethnic nationalism 'has flourished more widely and powerfully than at any period since the Second World War' (1998a: xi).

Yet this picture of the worldwide proliferation of ethnic and nationalist conflicts needs to be seriously qualified. It has been documented that there has been a sustained decline in the total number of armed self-determination conflicts since the early 1990s, with a countervailing trend towards containment and settlement. As Hewitt *et al.* (2008) report, 26 armed self-determination conflicts were ongoing as of late 2006; 6 conflicts were settled between 2001 and 2006, and another 15 contained (2008: 14). A similar point is made by David D. Laitin, who claims that the world will take on a different colour if we shift our gaze from the catalogue of violent ethnic conflicts to the probability of violence given ethnic difference. After considering available quantitative data on ethnic and communal violence in Africa, for example, Laitin concludes: 'the percentage of neighboring ethnic groups that experienced violent communal incidents was infinitesimal – on average only 5 in 10,000 had a recorded violent conflict per year'. The same holds for other parts of the world as well; hence 'the popular belief that nationalism and ethnic differences in and of themselves are dangerous is discredited by quantitative research' (2007: 10–11, 22).

How can we explain this gap between available data and academic (as well

as popular) perceptions? One reason is 'selection bias'. According to Laitin, far more attention is given to violent cases than peaceful ones in the literature. This can partly be explained by what Brubaker and Laitin have referred to as the ubiquity of the ethnic frame, which 'generates a coding bias in the ethnic direction':

> Today, we [actors and analysts alike] are no longer blind *to* ethnicity, but we may be blinded *by* it. Our ethnic bias in framing may lead us to overestimate the incidence of ethnic violence by unjustifiably seeing ethnicity at work everywhere and thereby artifactually multiplying instances of 'ethnic violence'. (1998: 428)

The second reason that creates the gap between data and perception according to Laitin is the tendency to take the accounts of combatants at their face value. The grievances expressed by the combatants may have contributed to violent mobilization, but they are mostly latent, and it is precisely those factors that make these grievances 'vital and manifest' that differentiate violent from non-violent cases. '*Ex ante* measures of grievance levels are not good predictors of the transformation of latent grievances into manifest ones.' In any case, it is difficult to know 'whether, when, where, to what extent and in what manner' the posited grievances, beliefs and fears are actually held (Laitin 2007: 23–5; Brubaker and Laitin 1998: 443).

These observations suggest that the talk of the rise of nationalism or the proliferation of ethnic conflicts needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. But can we conclude on the basis of this that nationalism does not matter? Certainly not, and even the prevalence of a coding bias in the ethnic direction and the persistent tendency to kick off discussions of nationalism by referring to ethnic and nationalist hotspots in this or that part of the world are testament to this. Nationalism does matter – as the fundamental organizing principle of the inter-state order, as the ultimate source of political legitimacy, as a readily available cognitive and discursive frame, as the taken-for-granted context of everyday life. As such, it not only forms the horizon of international and domestic political discourse, and the natural framework for all political interaction, but it also structures our daily lives and the way we perceive and interpret the reality that surrounds us. It impinges on our analytical perspectives; it shapes our academic conventions. This is what some commentators have aptly termed 'methodological nationalism', the pervasive tendency to equate the concept of 'society' with that of the 'nation', to presuppose that the nation is the natural and necessary form of society in modernity (Wimmer 2006 and Wimmer and Schiller 2002; Chernilo 2006 and 2007). This is particularly the case with history as:

> the very tools of analysis by which we pretend to practice scientific history were invented and perfected within a wider climate of nationalism and

> nationalist preoccupations. Rather than neutral instruments of scholarship, the modern methods of researching and writing history were developed specifically to further nationalist aims. (Geary 2002: 16)

Social scientists and political theorists, too, take the existence of nations for granted, making it a background condition of their analyses and ruminations. This is what leads Canovan to argue that underneath most contemporary political thinking lie 'assumptions about the existence of bounded, unified political communities that seem suspiciously like nation-states' (1996: 27). In short, nationalism matters a lot and it seems difficult to disagree with Calhoun who contends in his recent book (snappily entitled *Nations Matter*) that:

> Even where we are deeply critical of the nationalism we see, we should recognize the continued importance of national solidarities. Even if we wish for a more cosmopolitan world order, we should be realistic enough not to act on mere wishes. (2007: 1)

Given this, it is striking that nations and nationalism have been a peripheral concern of social and political theory for much of the twentieth century. With the exception of the pioneering works of historians like Carleton Hayes, Hans Kohn, Louis Snyder and E. H. Carr, it is only in the 1960s and 1970s that we find a lively academic debate on nationalism, spurred on by the experience of decolonization and the proliferation of new states in Asia and Africa. Subscribing to some version of the then ascendant 'nation-building' model, most of these studies saw nationalism as a concomitant of the modernization processes, an outcome or by-product of the transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' society. The debate has been taken to a whole new level in the 1980s with the publication of John Armstrong's *Nations Before Nationalism* (1982), John Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* (1982), Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) and Anthony D. Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), among others. Nationalism, which had to wait until 1974 to have its first academic journal, finally had a stimulating, even polemical, literature.

It is possible to identify two reasons for the belated development of a fully fledged literature on nationalism. The first was the general indifference of mainstream academic thinking to nationalism as a topic of investigation in its own right. This attitude was partly conditioned by the rigidity and conservatism of established disciplines, which regarded nationalism either as *passé* or as a lesser, marginal preoccupation, as opposed to 'state', 'democracy', 'justice', 'development' and the like. Even as late as the 1990s, Yael Tamir recalls how difficult it was to justify her choice of nationalism as a PhD topic in Oxford:

> When I embarked on this project, nationalism seemed almost an anachronistic topic. During my years in Oxford, I exhausted a stockpile of phrases in answer to the comment, 'How interesting!' (Oxfordese for 'How weird!') – usually uttered after I reported I was writing a thesis on nationalism. (1993: ix)

The picture was further complicated by the tendency to take nations and nationalism for granted, a point we have alluded to above. This is the main thrust of Billig's argument on nationalism and the sociological common sense in his influential *Banal Nationalism* (1995: Chapter 3). Drawing our attention to the curious absence of nationalism in the subject indexes of standard textbooks in sociology, Billig shows how 'society' is construed in the image of a 'nation-state' by mainstream sociology – an assumption that 'we', the readers, are expected to share. If 'society', a universal feature of human existence, is treated as a 'nation-state', then nationalism ceases to be a problem worth exploring, and becomes a humdrum part of our social life. It only returns as a topic of investigation when an odious form of nationalism threatens the integrity of 'our' society. In that case, Billig argues, the textbooks of sociology are likely to add subsections, even whole chapters on nationalism. But even if they do:

> nationalism will still be seen as something surplus, even contingent. It will be a special subject. 'Society', modelled on the image of 'our' nation, will continue to be treated as necessarily universal. In this way, 'our' nationalism need not return textually. (1995: 54)

This brings us to the second reason that deferred scholarly intrusions into national phenomena, namely the tendency to reduce nationalism to its extreme manifestations, that is to separatist movements that threaten the stability of existing states, or to aggressive right-wing politics. Such a view locates nationalism on the periphery, treating it as the property of others, not of 'us'. In the words of Billig, ' "our" nationalism is not presented as nationalism, which is dangerously irrational, surplus and alien'; through a rhetorical sleight of hand, it is repackaged as 'patriotism', which is necessary and beneficial. This enables theorists to ignore their own nationalisms; when nationalism 'as a condition is projected on to "others", "ours" is overlooked, forgotten, even theoretically denied' (ibid.: 5, 17, 55). Yet this commonly accepted view is misleading as it turns a blind eye to the myriad ways in which nationalism is reproduced in established nations, forming a backdrop to public life, embodied in the habits and routines of everyday life.

It would not be wrong to say that the reasons that delayed the development of a vibrant literature on nationalism have gradually disappeared as the twentieth century wore on. Nationalism has proved to be much more than an academic fad, destined to vanish, like the grin of the Cheshire cat, as soon as

another 'pastime' is found, and has become one of the most explored topics in social sciences. Today, we find ourselves immersed in a flood of publications on nationalism, including, in addition to case studies and theoretical treatises, introductory texts (Smith 2001a; Spencer and Wollmann 2001; Delanty and O'Mahony 2002; Zimmer 2003; Day and Thompson 2004; Puri 2004; Lawrence 2005; Ichijo and Uzelac 2005; Dieckhoff and Jaffrelot 2005; Grosby 2005a; Hearn 2006), handbooks and readers (Guibernau and Hutchinson 2001; Pecora 2001; Spencer and Wollman 2005; Delanty and Kumar 2006b), monographs or edited collections devoted to a particular theorist/thinker or approach (Conversi 2002; Varouxakis 2002; Culler and Cheah 2003; Barnard 2003; Guibernau and Hutchinson 2004; Malešević and Haugaard 2007; Leoussi and Grosby 2007; Dingley 2008), even encyclopedias (Motyl 2001; Leoussi 2001 – the works cited here are limited to those published after 2000; for earlier examples, see Further Reading at the end of this chapter). Then there are the specialized journals, research centres, internet networks, academic programmes. The upshot of this has been a name – the field is now widely referred to as 'nationalism studies' – and an immense, highly diversified, literature. It is now time not only to take stock of the theoretical debate on nationalism, but also to move beyond the classical debate which has become too parochial and sterile over the years, and to set a new research agenda for the future.

Objectives

This book has three main objectives: first, to provide a systematic overview of some of the key theoretical approaches to nationalism and to consider the main criticisms raised against them in a comparative perspective; second, to point to the limitations of the classical debate and to identify the theoretical problems we are still facing; and finally, to propose, in the light of these considerations, an alternative theoretical framework that can be used in the study of nationalism. Before proceeding, however, I would like to say a few more things about what this book 'is not'.

This book is not an exegesis into historical or philosophical discourses on nationalism. Its focus is on contemporary theoretical debates on nationalism, those that have developed and come of age in the second half of the twentieth century. Needless to say, these debates have not taken place in a vacuum; most of the issues and problems that preoccupy contemporary theorists have already been identified and debated at length by, first, philosophers and historians, then the pioneering figures of social sciences over the past two centuries. Hence the second longest chapter of this book will be devoted to earlier discussions on nationalism in order the situate the contemporary debate in a wider historical context. Yet, given the vast amounts of ink expended to comprehend

nationalism, the treatment of various thinkers and their work will necessarily be sketchy and fragmentary.

This book is not a collection (or 'collage') of case studies either. In fact, one of the objectives of the book is to call attention to a problem that bedevils, sometimes even threatens the integrity of, the study of nationalism, namely the casual (one may say cavalier) use of brief historical examples to sustain an argument or to corroborate a particular theoretical perpective – what Breuilly (2005) ingeniously called the 'scissors-and-paste' type of argument. Lacking detail and context, this type of argumentation obfuscates analysis, leading us to see nationalism everywhere at work. This does not imply that theoretical discussions should steer clear of historical analyses. On the contrary, theories do not mean much unless tested against actual cases. But the cases should be examined in detail, not just cited for illustrative purposes with reference to a few standard (mostly outdated) texts. This book will not engage with actual cases in detail, mainly for reasons of space (see however Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008, for a detailed examination of the Greek and Turkish cases); it will not, however, fall into the trap of a 'scissors-and-paste' approach either, and refer to particular cases only when they are mentioned by the theories under review. It will also stress the value of theoretically informed historical analyses and comparative studies throughout, and in fact suggest this as one way out of the analytical stalemate that characterizes current debates.

Finally, this book does not claim to be exhaustive. Although it now covers more theorists (including non-Western ones) than before, it still omits a lot, notably contributions in languages other than English. There is no meaningful way to justify the choices made here except reiterating a point made earlier, that any such selection is bound to be partial. I do however believe that my selection reflects the main trends in the field and offers a balanced overview of all major contributions to the theoretical debate on nationalism.

Structure

Reflection on nationalism has a long past, and earlier assumptions and convictions continue to cast a shadow on contemporary discussions on nationalism. With this in mind, I will begin my survey by situating current debates historically and theoretically.

The following four chapters will be devoted to the discussion of the main theoretical positions with regard to nationalism. Each chapter will open with an overview of the various versions of the theoretical approach in question. It will then summarize the main criticisms levelled against these approaches, and conclude with a discussion of the contributions of theorists who have attempted a reformulation of this position in recent years.

In accordance with the general tendency in the field, I will start my discussion

with primordialist approaches. Hence Chapter 3 will examine the different versions of primordialism, namely the nationalist, sociobiological, culturalist and perennialist explanations. Chapter 4 will focus on modernism. Taking the differences between the theorists that fall under this category into account, I will divide them into three groups in terms of the key factors they identified in their analyses. Hence, scholars like Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter who stressed the importance of economic factors will be discussed under the heading 'economic transformations'; scholars like John Breuilly, Paul R. Brass and Eric J. Hobsbawm who emphasized the role of politics and power struggles between contending elites will be considered under the heading 'political transformations'; finally, scholars like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Miroslav Hroch who gave priority to social and cultural factors will be reviewed under the heading 'social/cultural transformations'. Chapter 5 will explore ethnosymbolism, focusing in particular on the contributions of the two leading figures of this approach, John Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith. Chapter 6 will be devoted to recent approaches to nationalism. In this chapter, I will first try to substantiate the claim that we have entered a new stage in the theoretical debate since the end of the 1980s. I will then discuss the work of Michael Billig, Nira Yuval-Davis, Partha Chatterjee, Craig Calhoun and Rogers Brubaker to illustrate the new generation of research on nationalism.

In Chapter 7, I will first offer a critique of the tripartite classification commonly used in categorizing various theoretical positions. I will then provide a critical assessment of the positions themselves, and propose an alternative framework of analysis that can be used in the study of nationalism. I will conclude by offering some reflections on the current state and the future of nationalism studies.

Further reading

As I have pointed out above, there are now several introductory texts on nationalism. Among these, Smith (1983) [1971] is still the standard work of reference for the theories of the 1950s and 1960s. The fact that Smith is a participant to the contemporary debate is more manifest in his later surveys of the field, namely his *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998a) and *Nationalism* (2001a), which are coloured by a heavy dose of scepticism towards modernism. For more balanced overviews which give due weight to recent approaches, see Day and Thompson (2004) and Puri (2004); for the current state of the play in the classical debate, see Ichijo and Uzelac (2005); and for a historiography of the theoretical debate on nationalism, see Lawrence (2005). Among the various readers and handbooks, Eley and Suny (1996b) and Delanty and Kumar (2006b) stand out, the former for the space it allocates to alternative interpretations, and the latter for its thematic breadth and the quality of the individual contributions. The collections of essays by Periwal (1995) and Balakrishnan (1996) need also to be mentioned in this context. The two-volume *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* (2001) by Motyl, on the

other hand, is an exhaustive resource for anyone interested in nationalism, broadly construed, and not just theories of nationalism. The essays by Laitin, Suny, Walker, Kaiser and W. Smith in the first, thematic, volume of the encyclopedia are to be particularly commended.

Apart from these, the reader should also consult the various specialized journals on nationalism, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Nations and Nationalism*, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *National Identities*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Ethnicities*, *Ethnopolitics*, among others, and *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, the biennial journal of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN) which includes, in addition to short thematic articles, a list of associations, research centres, journals and bulletins that are devoted to the study of nationalism, and a section on recent publications.

Chapter 2

Discourses and Debates on Nationalism

Historical overview

The academic study of nationalism may have taken off in the twentieth century, but nationalism itself, as an ideology and a social and political movement, has been very much in evidence since at least the end of the eighteenth century. Much ink has been spilled since then, first by philosophers, later by historians, in trying to come to grips with it as it soon became clear that nationalism was not something that could be easily brushed under the carpet – a temporary stage in the historical evolution of human societies. Interest in nationalism throughout much of this period was more ethical and political than analytical, but this was what would later be called the 'age of nationalism', and no one involved in the intellectual or political debates of the time could remain indifferent to its emotional appeal. Political or not, however, these contemplations bequeathed important theoretical insights to succeeding generations, and it would be 'near-sighted' to discuss contemporary theoretical debates on nationalism without taking this wider historical context into account.

I will thus begin my overview of the theoretical field with a discussion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in an attempt to trace the evolution of the idea of nationalism. My selection of thinkers will be necessarily incomplete since there is little agreement in the field on exactly who or which ideas have contributed to the genesis of nationalist thought. In what follows, I will try to focus on the writings of those thinkers whose role in the formation of the idea of nationalism is commonly acknowledged – by most, if not all, scholars.

It needs to be pointed out at the outset that the eighteenth century does not figure prominently in recent classifications of the theoretical debate on nationalism, and in a way this makes sense as the musings of Enlightenment thinkers and German Romantics can hardly be regarded as 'theories' of nations or nationalism. Hence Lawrence (2005) starts his overview in 1848, making it quite explicit that his aim is to produce a historiography of theories of nationalism. Day and Thompson (2004), on the other hand, begin with roughly the same period, focusing on the Marxist tradition and its legacy. I will start a century earlier, with the writings of Kant, Rousseau, Herder and Fichte, as my prime objective in this chapter is to trace the evolution of the idea of nationalism, not

that of theories of nationalism. Other than that, I will largely follow the conventional classification in the field, which distinguishes between two stages in the development of the theoretical debate in the twentieth century, 1918–1945 and 1945 to the present (see Snyder 1997). I will however argue that the period after 1945 should not be treated as a single stage, and suggest that some of the studies produced in the last decade signal a new stage in the study of nationalism, questioning the fundamental premises upon which the 'classical' debate is based. This classification is adopted by Day and Thompson as well, who point to a 'post-classical' debate developing since the early 1990s (2004: 12–17, Chapters 5 and 6). It can of course be argued that it is too early to speak of a new stage, that most of these analyses are too partial and fragmentary to produce a 'grand narrative' on nationalism (for such an argument, see Smith 1998a: 219). Against this view, I will stress the limitations of grand narratives and contend that the issues to which the recent approaches call attention will gradually assert themselves in the field of nationalism studies.

I will thus identify four stages in reflection on and the study of nationalism:

- The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the idea of nationalism was born. Here, the contributions of thinkers like Kant, Rousseau, Herder, Fichte, Mill, Lord Acton, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Bauer, Stalin; historians like Michelet, von Treitschke, Renan; and early social theorists like Durkheim and Weber will be briefly discussed.
- 1918–1945, when nationalism became a subject of academic inquiry. The works of Carleton Hayes, Hans Kohn and Louis Snyder will be considered in this context.
- 1945–1989, when the theoretical debate on nationalism became more intense and diversified, with the contributions of various disciplines. Here, the contributions of modernization theorists, for example Daniel Lerner, Karl W. Deutsch and early modernists like Elie Kedourie will be discussed.
- From 1989 to the present, when attempts to transcend the classical debate (characteristic of the third stage) have been made.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Did nationalism have its own 'grand thinkers'? Anderson's answer to this question is unequivocal: 'unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes or Webers' (1991: 5). According to Gellner, the existing thinkers did not make much difference anyway: 'If one of them had fallen, others would have stepped into his place. No one was indispensable.' He concludes: 'we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets' since they all suffered from a pervasive false consciousness (1983: 124–5). Others, notably O'Leary, disagree: 'It is strange not to classify Weber as a nationalist grand thinker,

stranger still that Rousseau, Burke, John Stuart Mill and Friedrich List are not seen as nationalist grand thinkers' (1998: 87; cf. Minogue 1996). The problem here lies in determining who can be considered as a 'thinker of nationalism', not in deciding whether those who have intellectually contributed to the nationalist doctrine are 'grand' or not. This is made exceedingly clear by the following statement by Yack: 'there are no great theoretical texts outlining and defending nationalism. No Marx, no Mill, no Macchiavelli. Only minor texts by first rate thinkers, like Fichte, or major texts by second rate thinkers, like Mazzini' (cited in Beiner 1999: 2). Of course Marx and Mill did write on nationalism, alongside others, like Herder and Rousseau, and it seems odd to write their contributions off simply because they have not treated the problem in a systematic way or made it the central focus of their analyses. So where do we begin?

Most studies of nationalism trace the origins of the nationalist doctrine generally back to German Romantic thought – roughly to the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. But the thinkers of this period were heavily influenced by the philosophical foundations laid down by their predecessors, in particular the writings of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, two influential figures of the Enlightenment tradition. In fact, according to Kedourie (1994), who explains nationalism in terms of seismic changes in European philosophy, it all started with Kant.

This might seem to be an odd place to set off since Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was the philosopher of moral universalism *par excellence* (see Kitromilides 2001, among others). But the political consequences of the ethical and epistemological dualism he developed were far-reaching (Smith 1983: 31–2). At the heart of this dualism lies a separation between the external, that is phenomenal, world and man's inner world. For Kant, the source of knowledge was the phenomenal world; our knowledge was based on sensations emanating from things-in-themselves. But the phenomenal world was a world of 'inexplicable contingencies' and 'iron necessities', and if our morality were also derived from this kind of knowledge, 'then we could never be free but always the slave either of contingency or of blind personal laws'. Morality, then, had to be separated from knowledge, hence the phenomenal world, the world of appearances: instead, it should be 'the outcome of obedience to a universal law which is to be found within ourselves' (Kedourie 1994: 14).

Kant held that human beings can only be free when they obey the laws of morality which they find within themselves, and not in the external world. This was, according to Kedourie, a revolutionary definition of freedom. Kant equated 'virtue' with 'free will'. On the other hand, neither freedom nor virtue depended on God's commands. Hence the new formula: 'the good will, which is the free will, is also the autonomous will'. This was revolutionary because the formula made the individual the centre and the sovereign of the universe, 'in a way never envisaged by the French revolutionaries or their intellectual precursors'; 'self-determination thus becomes the supreme political good'. Kedourie

admits that Kant cannot be held responsible for the uses to which his doctrine was put, but his teachings expressed a new attitude to political and social questions and 'a new political temper' which would later become popular among the intellectual classes of Germany (ibid.: 17–23).

Probably no one contributed to the idea of 'self-determination' more than the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) however, whose ideas had a not inconsiderable influence on Kant. Chief among these was his idea of 'general will'. For Rousseau, the greatest danger man faces when living in society, as opposed to the state of nature, is 'the possible tyranny of will by his fellowmen'. To guard against this danger, men need to exchange their selfish will for the 'general will'. This can only be achieved if they cease to be natural men and become citizens instead. Natural men live for themselves, whereas citizens depend on the community of which they are a part: 'Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole' (Rousseau 2001 [1762]: 75). A political association makes sense, Rousseau believed, only if it can protect men from the capriciousness of others: 'this it can solely bring about if it substitutes law for the individual, if it can generate a public will and arm it with a strength that is beyond the power of any individual will' (Barnard 1984: 246).

Yet Rousseau was fully aware that citizenship, which entailed submission to the general will, could not take place spontaneously. 'In order to achieve this degree of unity, a national *esprit de corps* had to be created in which every citizen saw in citizenship a supreme moral good' (Barnard 1983: 239). This *esprit de corps*, the consciousness of belonging together, can only be created through patriotism, that 'fine and lively feeling which gives the force of self-love all the beauty of virtue, and lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all passions' (cited in Barnard 1984: 250). This was indeed what Rousseau had to say to the Polish Convention when he was asked for advice on a constitution for an independent Poland:

> There is one rampart … that will always be readied for its defense, and that no army can breach; and that is the virtue of its citizens, their patriotic zeal, in the distinctive cast that national institutions are capable of impressing upon their souls … Give a different bent to the passions of the Poles; in doing so, you will shape their minds and hearts in a national pattern that will set them apart from other peoples, that will keep them from being absorbed by other peoples. (2001 [1772]: 77)

The most efficient way to instil patriotism, on the other hand, is education:

> it is education that you must count on to shape the souls of the citizens in a national pattern … The newly-born infant, upon first opening his eyes,

> must gaze upon the fatherland, and until his dying day should behold nothing else. Your true republican is a man who imbibed love of the fatherland, which is to say love of the laws and of liberty, with his mother's milk. That loves makes up his entire existence … the moment he has no fatherland, he is no more; if not dead, he is worse-off than if he were dead. (Ibid.: 79–80)

The link between the Enlightenment and German Romanticism was provided by the German thinker Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). What distinguishes Herder from Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau and Montesquieu is his belief in the uniqueness and incommensurability of national cultures. This was particularly the case with language which 'bears the stamp of the mind and character of a national group', according to Herder:

> Has a nationality anything more precious than the language of its fathers? In this language dwell its whole world of tradition, history, religion and principles of life, its whole heart and soul. To rob a nationality of its language or to degrade it, is to deprive it of its most precious possession. (Cited in Heater 1998: 68–9)

Language is something internal, expressing man's innermost thoughts and feelings, just like the other cultural bonds which linked members of a nation; these bonds were not 'things or artifacts imposed fom above but living energies (*Kräfte*) emanating from within' (Barnard 1983: 242–3). Hence, 'nationality is a plant of nature; a nation is as natural a plant as a family, only with more branches; the most natural state is … one nation, an extended family with one national character' (cited in Heater 1998: 79). In that context, Herder objects to the conquest of one nation by another:

> Nothing … is more manifestly contrary to the purpose of political government that the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing of various races and nationalities under one sceptre. Such states are … wholly devoid of inner life, and their component parts are connected through mechanical contrivances instead of bonds of sentiment. (Ibid.)

In extolling the virtues of the diversity of cultures, Herder's aim is to repudiate the universalism of the Enlightenment. The political order he envisages is inspired by the example of ancient Hebrews who were purportedly conscious of themselves as 'one people', despite their institutional and tribal fragmentation. In such a 'quasi-pluralist' order, individuals would be free to pursue their diverse interests and form a variety of autonomous institutions to serve these interests (Barnard 1983: 246–7). Contrary to much received wisdom, then, Herder's vision is one of plurality of cultures and its celebration, not of exclusionary nationalism. He does indeed recognize the benefits of unification for

the Germans; '[t]he separation of Prussians from the rest of Germans is purely artificial … The separation of the Germans from the other European nations is based on nature' (cited in Heater 1998: 79). Yet there is no *Favorit-Volk* in his scheme of things. 'No nationality has been solely designated by God as the chosen people of the earth; above all we must seek the truth and cultivate the garden of the common good' (cited in ibid.: 108).

Unfortunately, it was not his humanism that made the deepest inroads into the nineteenth century and German romantic thought. To nationalists and romanticists, Barnard remarks, 'it was rather his vibrant defence of native languages as incommensurable treasures or his emotionally charged critique of the European Enlightenment that mattered first and foremost' (2003: 12; see also ibid.: 35, 57–64).

It was Kant's disciple, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), who gave these ideas a specifically 'German' colouring. The most explicit statement of Fichte's ideas on nationalism can be found in his famous *Addresses to the German Nation*, delivered between 1807 and 1808, in the wake of Prussia's defeat by France at the Battle of Jena in 1806. Fichte is quite unequivocal regarding the purpose and the audience of the *Addresses*:

> I want to gather … from over the whole of our common soil men of similar sentiments and resolutions, to link them together, so that at this central point a single, continuous, and unceasing flame of patriotic disposition may be kindled, which will spread over the whole soil of the fatherland to its utmost boundaries. (Cited in Heater 1998: 111)

For Fichte, 'only the German … really has a people and is entitled to count on one, and that he alone is capable of real and rational love for his nation' (2001 [1808]: 115). In fact, the Germans are the *Urvolk*, the original people, entrusted with a mission towards the rest of humankind – to create the perfect state: 'it is first of all Germans who are called upon to begin the new era as pioneers and models for the rest of mankind … you will see this nation the regenerator and recreator of the world' (cited in Heater 1998: 107). But what makes the Germans so special in the eyes of Fichte? Their high culture, above all their language. 'Wherever the German language was spoken', says Fichte:

> everyone who had first seen the light of day in its domain could consider himself as in a double sense a citizen, on the one hand, of the State where he was born … and, on the other hand, of the whole common fatherland of the German nation … [Everywhere in Germany] the higher culture was, and continued to be, the result of the interaction of the citizens of all German states: and then this higher culture gradually worked its way down in this form to the people at large. (2001 [1808]: 125–6)

Language does not matter only in the case of the Germans. 'Those who speak the same language', Fichte argues, 'are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins':

> It is true beyond doubt that, wherever a separate language is found, there a separate nation exists, which has the right to take independent charge of its affairs and to govern itself … where a people has ceased to govern itself, it is equally bound to give up its language and to coalesce with conquerors. (Cited in Heater 1998: 69)

It is not easy to assess the immediate impact of Fichte's *Addresses*. According to Heater, for example, their role in rousing support for German unification should not be exaggerated. The lectures, delivered at the Berlin Academy on Sunday afternoons, were sparsely attended and not reported in Berlin newspapers. The masonic lodges and secret societies which might have diffused his message, on the other hand, had limited memberships (1998: 21, 131). But the long-term impact of Fichte's ideas was profound. Kohn argues that Fichte spoke of an 'ideal' German in his *Addresses*, something which could only be realized after thorough education. This has not prevented him, however, from attributing to actual Germans those qualities which have been reserved to 'true' Germans. It was 'this confusion of historical reality and metaphysical ideal' that made his legacy so controversial and dangerous (1949: 336).

There was hardly any confusion, however, in the writings of German Romantics, such as the Lutheran theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), his friend Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), Fichte's disciple F. W. Schelling (1775–1854), the publicist Adam Müller (1779–1805), the dramatist Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), the publicist Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860) and the nationalist agitator Friedrich Jahn (1778–1852). Kohn (1949, 1950) observes that Fichte occupied a unique position among the Romantics as he regarded nationality as an historical growth, and not a natural, timeless essence. For the latter, nationality was an organic growth, based on customs and traditions which gave expression to the authentic folk spirit, the *Volkgeist*. Hence for Schlegel:

> It is much more appropriate to nature that the human race be strictly separated into nations than that several nations should be fused as has happened in recent times … Each state is an independent individual existing for itself, it is unconditionally its own master, has its peculiar character, and governs itself by its peculiar laws, habits and customs. (Cited in Kohn 1950: 460)

Not surprisingly, the Germans consitute the quintessential nation, a people with 'a very great character':

> There is not much found anywhere to equal this race of men, and they have several qualities of which we can find no trace in any known people. I see in all the achievements of the Germans … only the germ of an approaching great time … Everywhere I see traces of becoming and growth. (Ibid.: 456)

'Among the world conquering nations of the past', Schlegel writes, 'the Germans occupy a place of the first rank'. 'Though they were much too high-minded to wish to impose their character upon other nations, it nevertheless struck root where the soil was not too unfavourable' (ibid.: 458).

In short, Romanticism was an aesthetic revolution, a movement for moral and cultural regeneration, and as such, it was opposed to the rationalism and universalism of the Enlightenment, and its political incarnation, the French Revolution. The latter was probably the most important political source of the idea of nationalism as it was in the context of the French Revolution that the nation became the only legitimate source of political power. Here the 'nation' signified the idea of shared and equal 'citizenship', hence the motto of the French Revolution, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. In this, the revolutionaries were inspired by a book by the abbé Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès entitled *What is the Third Estate?*. In the ancien régime, the French parliament consisted of three parts: the First Estate, representing the nobility; the Second Estate, the clergy; and the Third Estate, everyone else. Sieyès rejected the privileges granted to the upper classes and argued that all members of the nation are citizens, hence equal before the law:

> Subtract the privileged order and the Nation would not be something less, but something more. What then is the Third Estate? Everything; but an everything that is fettered and oppressed. What would it be without the privileged order? Everything, but an everything that would be free and flourishing … The Third Estate thus encompasses everything pertaining to the Nation, and everyone outside the Third Estate cannot be considered to be a member of the Nation. (2003: 96, 98)

The translation of these various ideas into a fully fledged ideology took some time. But the political doctrine we recognize today as nationalism was firmly in place by the early nineteenth century. On the other hand, debates on nationalism continued to reflect ethical concerns and political expediencies, some embracing nationalism or sympathizing with the claims of particular nationalisms, others disparaging or renouncing it. As we will see below, however, these positions were not cast in stone, but adjusted or revised in line with changing circumstances and, more importantly, with the growing awareness that nationalism was there to stay. My discussion of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will cover the Marxist and liberal responses to nationalism as well as the contributions of the nascent fields of historiography and social theory.

The political and theoretical difficulties nationalism poses to Marxism are well-documented. 'Of all the historical phenomena discussed by Marx', writes Avineri, 'nationalist movements and the emergence of the nation-state is the least satisfactory' (1991: 638; see also Munck 1986; Nimni 1991; Benner 1995 and Forman 1998). Some, notably Nairn, went so far as to claim that 'the theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure' (1981: 329). Others disagree. Benner, for example, asserts that Marx and Engels have put forward strands of argument which address the national question, and that we have a lot to learn from these if we want to understand nationalism in our own times (1995: 6). Munck, on the other hand, criticizes attempts to deride those who have tried to come to grips with nationalism within the Marxist tradition, and concludes: 'It is now necessary to forge some kind of coherent Marxist approach to nationalism on the basis of these writers' (1986: 168). The position that will be adopted here is closer to that of Benner and Munck; Marxists may not have produced a 'theory' of nationalism as such, but they have certainly discussed the problem in their writings and within the framework of the various Internationals from 1864 onwards. An overview of the arguments that have been advanced within the Marxist tradition will not only help us make better sense of nationalism, as Benner argues, but also shed light on contemporary theoretical debates among, but not limited to, neo-Marxists.

Marx (1818–83) and Engels's (1820–95) position in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) was unmistakably internationalist. The memorable passages from the *Manifesto* are worth recalling:

> The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country … In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. (1998 [1848]: 39)

> The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got … National differences, and antagonisms between peoples, are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, the freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. (Ibid.: 58)

It is sometimes argued that certain sections of the *Manifesto* reflect the authors' ambivalence on the national question. Hence Marx and Engels claim that the

struggle of the proletariat is first a national struggle: 'The proletariat of each country must, of course, settle matters with its own bourgeoisie' (ibid.: 49). Yet this argument seems superfluous; Marx and Engels are quite clear that the 'national' struggles of the workers of different countries are to bring forth the common interests of the entire proletariat, 'independently of all nationality' (ibid.: 51). The same point is made by Munck who insists that the meaning of these sections is far from being ambiguous. The workers should first become the leading class ('national class' in the first German edition) in their nation; only then can they work to diminish national antagonisms. In saying this, Munck concludes, Marx and Engels do not betray their internationalism (1986: 24).

A more controversial aspect of Marx and Engels's writings on the national question concerns their appropriation of the Hegelian distinction between 'historic' and 'non-historic' nations. This has been commonly interpreted as an indication of a shift in Marx and Engels's attitudes *vis-à-vis* nationalism, mainly in response to the emergence of powerful national movements in the wake of the revolutions of 1848–9. Avineri, for example, argues that Marx started to see nationalism as a superstructural expression of the bourgeoisie's need for larger markets and territorial expansion. In this view, nationalism is no longer treated as a relic of a pre-industrial age, and becomes the building block of capitalism. This led Marx to support the unification of Germany and Italy and oppose the various national movements in Eastern and Central Europe, notably of those peoples who tried to secede from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Should they succeed, Marx claimed, they would slow down or hamper industrialization and economic development in these regions (1991: 640–1). Nimni, on the other hand, observes that the term 'nation' is reserved for the permanent population of a nation-state in Marx and Engels's writings, whereas an ethnocultural community that has not achieved full national status, that is without a state of its own, is referred to as a 'nationality'. They believed that nationalities will either become nations by acquiring a state of their own or remain as 'historyless peoples' (*Geschichtslosen Völker*). The latter are unable to adapt to the capitalist mode of production, hence necessarily regressive as their existence depends on the survival of the old order (1991: 23). More generally, Marx and Engels maintain that a common language and traditions, or geographical and historical homogeneity, are not sufficient to constitute a nation. A certain level of economic and social development is required, with a priority given to larger units. According to Munck, this explains why they have objected to the ceding of Schleswig and Holstein to Denmark in 1848. For them, Germany is more revolutionary and progressive than the Scandinavian nations because of its higher level of capitalist development (1986: 11).

Some commentators claim that Marx and Engels have abandoned this distinction during the 1860s. Munck points to the Crimean War of 1853–6, where they supported the independence of the Slav peoples from the Ottoman

Empire, to illustrate this change of attitude. The Irish case, he contends, is even a better example (1986: 15). Marx and Engels thought that England could not embark on a revolutionary path until the Irish question had been solved to the latter's advantage: 'The separation and independence of Ireland from England was not only a vital step for Irish development but was also essential for the British people since "A nation that oppresses another forges its own chains" ' (Nimni 1991: 33).

We should stress at this point that there is no universal agreement on the relevance of the Irish case. Munck considers it as a turning point in Marx and Engels' treatment of the national question and devotes a whole section to it in his book (1986: 15–20). Nimni, on the other hand, explains their support for Irish independence in terms of their general sympathy for the cause of historic nations, which never extends to non-historic nations. In that sense, there is no contradiction or incoherence in their analytical logic. The Irish and Polish national movements deserve to be supported, because they are advancing the course of progress by establishing national states 'capable of developing a healthy contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie'. The non-historic nations, on the other hand, either cannot develop a bourgeoisie, because they are peasant nations, or cannot develop a state of their own, because they either live in a mixed area of residence or they are too small to create an internal market. Thus these nations must seek alliances with the defenders of the old order; the irresistible flow of progress requires either the voluntary assimilation or the annihilation of these national communities (Nimni 1991: 33).

What is the legacy of Marx and Engels's views on the international socialist movement? According to Avineri (1991), of the two phases in their thinking on the national question, the internationalist phase of the *Communist Manifesto* and the bourgeois phase of later years (which treated nationalism as a necessary stage of capitalist development), it is the second that remained dominant. It is true that the socialist movement adopted a pragmatic attitude towards the national question from the Second International (an organization of socialist and labour parties formed in Paris in 1889) onwards, offering tactical support to the national independence movements of 'oppressed' peoples, under the guidance of Lenin. But this conclusion needs to be qualified in two ways: first, internationalism was never completely abandoned, at least theoretically, as the ultimate goal of socialism; second, a number of influential figures, notably Rosa Luxemburg, continued to stick to an unabashedly internationalist position, at the risk of being politically marginalized within the socialist movement. A brief overview of later debates on the national question will enable us to better judge the legacy of the founding fathers of socialism.

The Second International is a good starting point in this respect as it provided a forum for the discussion of nationalism (or 'the nationalities question' as it was commonly called then), enabling thinkers and politicians on the

revolutionary left to grapple with the thorny issues of national rights and national self-determination. It is possible to identify three positions with regard to these issues in the context of the Second International: the radical internationalism of Luxemburg, the strategic defence of the right to self-determination by Lenin and national–cultural autonomy espoused by Bauer and Renner (for this classification, see Forman 1998).

Rosa Luxemburg's (1871–1919) views on the national question were shaped under particular circumstances, more specifically, in the context of the political conflict between the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland (SDKP; later the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPL) – which she founded – on the issue of the independence of Poland. Describing the PPS's pro-independence position as 'social patriotic', Luxemburg opposed the liberation of Poland on the grounds that the future of Polish economic development lay within Russia (Munck 1986; Löwy 1998). The industrialization of Poland thanks to the protectionist policies of the Czarist Empire not only led to the strengthening of the bourgeoisie, but also created a thriving proletariat. The independence of Poland would be a retrograde step from the viewpoint of socialism as it would impede the development of capitalism in Poland (Nimni 1991: 50–4).

More generally, Luxemburg believes that 'the nation as a homogenous sociopolitical entity does not exist. Rather, there exist within each nation, classes with antagonistic interests and rights' (cited in Forman 1998: 89). The national state is a specifically bourgeois formation, a necessary tool and condition of its growth. Given this, to talk about a theoretical 'right of nations' valid for all nations at all times is nothing but a metaphysical cliché, just like the so-called 'right to work' advocated by nineteenth-century utopians or the 'right of every man to eat from gold plates' proclaimed by the writer Chernishevsky (cited in Löwy 1998: 32). According to Luxemburg, only socialism can bring about self-determination of peoples. 'So long as capitalist states exist … there can be no "national self-determination" either in war or peace' (Luxemburg 1967 [1915]: 61).

This does not mean that Rosa Luxemburg condoned national oppression. Rather, for her, national oppression is only one form of oppression in general, which is a product of the division of societies into antagonistic classes. The task of the proletariat is to abolish the very root of the system of oppression, namely the class society. 'Since all forms of oppression are derived from the need to sustain class divisions, the emancipation from class societies will necessarily bring about the end of oppression of nations' (Nimni 1991: 53). Hence Luxemburg's position was anti-nationalist, and not anti-nationality. She drew a clear line between opposition to persecution and oppression, and support for nationalism. In any case, it was not possible to decide which people suffered the greater injustice (Forman 1998: 84). In a letter to her friend Mathilde Wurm, who expressed particular concern for the torment of the Jews, she asked:

> What do you want with this particular suffering of the Jews? The poor victims on the rubber plantations in Putuyamo, the Negroes in Africa with whose bodies the Europeans play a game of catch, are just as near to me … I have no special corner of my heart reserved for the ghetto: I am at home wherever in the world there are clouds, birds and human tears. (Luxemburg 1978: 179–80)

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's (1870–1924) views on the national question were diametrically opposed to those of Luxemburg. If we want to grasp the meaning of national self-determination, Lenin argues, we need to stop juggling with legal definitions or inventing abstract definitions, but examine the historical–economic conditions of national movements, which were intimately linked with the victory of capitalism over feudalism. 'From the standpoint of national relations, the best conditions for the development of capitalism are undoubtedly provided by the national state' (2001 [1914]: 223). This leads Lenin to distinguish between two periods of capitalism, the period of the collapse of feudalism and absolutism when the national movements attract mass support and the period of the fully formed capitalist states characterized by a highly developed antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat – 'the eve of capitalism's downfall'. The proletariat should support national movements in the first phase to secure national peace and to further the cause of international revolution, and reject those in the second phase as these represent the interests of the bourgeoisie and the particular nation they belong to:

> *Insofar as* the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, *in favour*, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for *its own* bourgeois nationalism, we stand against. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation. (Ibid.: 227–8)

Lenin firmly believes that the socialists would play into the hands of the bourgeoisie, feudal landlords and the oppressor nation if they fail to support the right to national self-determination. This support is not 'practical' as the critics argue. National demands are always subordinated to the interests of class struggle, and that is why 'the proletariat confines itself, so to speak, to the negative demand for recognition of the *right* to self-determination, without giving any guarantees to any nation, and without undertaking to give *anything at the expense* of another nation' (ibid.: 226).

A final important aspect of Lenin's contribution to Marxist thinking on the national question, and probably the one with the greatest influence on contemporary theories of nationalism (see in particular theories of economic

transformations in Chapter 4), is his theory of imperialism. With it, Lenin adds an international dimension to his discussion of the right to national self-determination and argues that nationalism is intensified in the era of imperialist expansionism. The nationalism of the 'periphery' becomes an anti-capitalist, hence progressive, force in this context as it emerges as a reaction to the exploitation of the colonies by Western imperialist powers, helping to break the imperialist chain at its weakest link:

> To imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*, without a movement of the politically conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by the landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc. – to imagine all this is to *repudiate social revolution*. (Cited in Nimni 1991: 83; see also Avineri 1991: 645)

Lenin's position also differed from that of Austro-Marxists like Otto Bauer (1881–1938) and Karl Renner (1870–1950) who were trying to prevent the constituent nationalities of the multinational Austro-Hungarian Empire from seceding by granting them 'national–cultural autonomy'. This would enable national communities to be organized as autonomous units or sovereign collectives, whatever their residential location within the empire. The model proposed by Bauer and Renner stressed the need to separate the nation and the state, thus challenging the intuitive assumption that national self-determination required the establishment of independent nation-states. According to this model, all citizens would declare their nationality when they reach voting age; members of each national community would thus form a single public body which is sovereign and has the authority to deal with all national-cultural affairs (Nimni 2000: xvii–xviii). The model also stipulates that national functions would be restricted to education and culture, while the federal state would deal with social and economic issues as well as justice, defence and foreign policy (Stargardt 1995; Breuilly 1993a).

Their concern for national differences has not led Bauer and Renner to abandon their commitment to internationalism altogether. For Bauer, the attempt to impose one species of socialism, 'which is itself the product of a particular national history, of particular national characteristics', on workers' movements 'with entirely different histories, entirely different characteristics', is utopian. Rather, the international socialist movement must take the national differentiation of methods of struggle and ideologies within its ranks into account and teach its nationally differentiated troops to mobilize their efforts in the service of common goals. After all, 'it is not the leveling of national differences, but the promoting of international unity within national diversity that can and must be the task of the International' (2000 [1924]: 18).

Bauer's contribution to Marxist thinking on the national question was not limited to the concept of 'national-cultural autonomy' however. His monumental *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (2000 [first edition, 1907]) was the first attempt to theoretically engage with the issue of nations and nationalism from a Marxist perspective. For Bauer, the nation is 'a community of character that grows out of a community of destiny rather than from a mere similarity of destiny'. This also points to the significance of language for a nation for '[i]t is with the people I stand in closest communication with that I create a common language' (Bauer 1996: 52). Bauer is quick to stress that 'national character', 'the totality of physical and mental characteristics that are peculiar to a nation', is not immutable; 'in no way is the nation of our time linked with its ancestors of two or three millennia ago' (Bauer 1996: 40–1). More importantly:

> the national character only means a relative commonality of traits in the mode of behaviour of particular individuals; it is not an explanation of these individual modes of behaviour. National character is not an explanation, it is something to be explained. (Ibid.: 41)

This community of character that is the nation is the product of various modernizing processes, including the breakdown of peasant subsistence farming and the following uprooting of the rural population by capitalism, the drawing of isolated rural areas into regional economic relationships which in turn led to the homogenization of various dialects. There is also a second stage in which a 'cultural community' bridging the gap between the linguistic and national communities is created. Here, the focus is on the development of a 'high culture' and with it, a 'high language' above all spoken dialects. On the other hand, the most important factor in the transition from a cultural community to a nation is 'sentiment', a sense of the community's own shared destiny. For Bauer, commonality of destiny is at least as important as commonality of past, hence his definition of the nation as, above all, a 'community of fate' (Stargardt 1995: 97–8; see also Bauer 1996: 43–50).

Bauer also claims that the national culture is shaped by the contribution of various classes. In a socialist society, conflicts among different nationalities will cease, because antagonistic relations are based upon class divisions; once class divisions are removed, national distinctions will give rise to cooperation and coexistence. Given that, 'only socialism could make the nation truly autonomous, because socialism was synonymous with acquisition of full membership on the part of the masses'. According to Forman, this leads to a significant break with the views of Lenin and Luxemburg who both saw nationalism, in their own ways, as an ideological tool of national bourgeoisies. For Bauer, on the other hand, nationalism is not reducible to bourgeois imperatives, and calls for a different analysis and different strategies (Forman 1998: 102).

It was a certain Iosif Vissarionovich Djugashvili, later to be known as Joseph

Stalin (1879–1953), who took Bauer to task for his solution to the nationalities problem. In stark contrast to Bauer's, Stalin's definition of the 'nation' was unashamedly objectivist: 'a nation is a historically evolved stable community arising on the foundation of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manisfested in the community of culture' (cited in Heater 1998: 64). Moreover, the nation is:

> a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism was at the same time a process of amalgamation of people into nations. Such, for instance, was the case in Western Europe. The British, French, Germans, Italians and others formed themselves into nations at the time of the victorious advance of capitalism and its triumph over feudal disunity. (Ibid.: 67)

The parallels here with Lenin's views on the national question are obvious. Yet there were differences too, in particular with regard to their treatment of the question of national self-determination. For Stalin, the right to self-determination entails that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has 'the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and other institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language, or curtail its rights' (cited in Forman 1998: 129). But national sovereignty is not the only way to express this right:

> self-determination means that a nation can arrange its life according to its will. It has the right to arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign and all nations are equal. (Ibid.)

This defence of federalism and autonomy was to become the backbone of the official nationalities programme in the Soviet Union, which was guided by the philosophy of 'socialism in one country'. The central goal of the programme was to create the conditions which would lead to the peaceful coexistence of a variety of nations within a single proletarian state. This would eliminate the contradictions between nationalities, and project them onto an international plane, where the Soviet Union would side with the nations oppressed by the West (Forman 1998: 133–7).

'Socialism has been burdened with an anti-national bias', writes Avineri, 'which did not make it especially capable of meeting the challenges of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries'. 'In this blindness and in a very profound sense, Marxism shares this poverty with its rival, classical liberalism' (1991: 654). Of course, the Marxists were anything but blind to the national question, as the last few pages have shown. The same is true of classical liberalism.

The renowned political theorist John Stuart Mill (1806–73) was probably the first major liberal thinker to engage directly with the practical and theoretical problems posed by nationalism (see Varouxakis 2001 and 2002). For Mill:

> a portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others – which make them cooperate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively. (2001 [1861]: 143)

This feeling of nationality may be the result of a variety of causes – race, descent, shared language and religion; but above all, it is the 'identity of political antecedents: the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past' that creates a sense of nationality (ibid.).

Where the sentiment of nationality exists, Mill argues, 'there is a *prima facie* case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart. This is merely saying that the question of government ought to be decided by the governed'. In fact:

> Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist. (Ibid.: 144)

For these reasons, the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities if we are to have free institutions. What Mill shared with most, if not all, Marxist thinkers was a suspicion towards what he calls 'backward' nations. 'Experience proves that', he remarks, 'it is possible for one nationality to merge and be absorbed in another; and when it was originally an inferior and more backward portion of the human race the absorption is greatly to its advantage':

> Nobody can suppose that it is not more beneficial to a Breton, or a Basque of French Navarre, to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilized and cultivated people – to be a member of French nationality … than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times … without participation and interest in the general movement of the world. (Ibid.: 146)

These views led to an almost contemporaneous essay on the same theme by the English historian and philosopher John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, or

Lord Acton (1834–1902). For Lord Acton, the whole concept of the rights of nationalities is a historical novelty; they were not recognized by governments in the old European system, nor asserted by the people. It was the imperial partition of Poland – 'an act of wanton violence' – in the late eighteenth century that 'awakened the theory of nationality, converting a dormant right into an aspiration, and a sentiment into a political claim' (2001 [1862]: 151). Contra Mill, Lord Acton believes that individual freedom is better maintained in a multinational state. 'Inferior races are raised by living in political union with races intellectually superior. Exhausted and decaying nations are revived by the contact of a younger vitality.' In that sense, the greatest enemy of the rights of nationality is in fact the modern theory of nationality, which makes the state and the nation commensurate with each other. He concludes:

> If we take the establishment of liberty for the realization of moral duties to be the end of civil society, we must conclude that those states are substantially the most perfect which, like the British and Austrian Empires, include various nationalities without oppressing them. Those in which no mixture of races has occurred are imperfect; and those in which its effects have disappeared are decrepit … The theory of nationality, therefore, is a retrograde step in history. (Ibid.: 153–4)

The Marxists and the liberals are not the only ones who have been accused of underestimating the significance of nationalism; a similar fate befell the social theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to James, for example, 'Neither Durkheim nor Weber, nor any of their contemporaries associated with the nascent fields of sociology and political science, Simmel, Tönnies, Pareto, Mosca or Cooley, developed anything approaching what we might call a theory of the nation.' Once again, this is only partly true as James himself is quick to note (1996: 83, 86–7). Just like Marxists and liberals before them, social theorists of the period did in fact discuss various aspects of nationalism. In any case, their influence on contemporary theories of nationalism is not limited to their fragmented writings on the subject, but extends beyond, to their broader work on the state, power, religion, societal transformation and so on. For reasons of space, I will confine myself to a brief overview of the views of Durkheim and Weber on the national question as their writings contained a number of themes that were to become central to the theories of the succeeding generations (Smith 1998a: 13).

For Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), 'a nationality is a group of human beings, who for ethnical or perhaps merely for historical reasons desire to live under the same laws, and to form a single state' (cited in Mitchell 1931: 96). 'Patriotism', on the other hand, designates 'the ideas and feelings as a whole which bind the individual to a certain State'. Durkheim is keen to stress that these ideas and feelings are of a particular kind; patriotism joins the individual

to the political society 'seen from a certain viewpoint', 'from the affective angle'. Hence a political organization can exist without patriotism. Finland belongs to the Russian State, says Durkheim, 'but does a Russian patriotism exist among the Finns?' (1986: 202)

The constituent elements of Durkheim's nation include customs, traditions and beliefs derived from a shared historic past; it follows that each nation has its own soul and its own characteristics, which is subject to change from one day to the next. Not surprisingly, the most excellent example of the nation is France. Yet Durkheim has never taken the unity of his home country, or any other country for that matter, for granted. It is in this context that he stresses the value of public gatherings, rituals, ceremonies and emblems in promoting the integration of the nation (Mitchell 1931: 97–8). 'It is only by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture that they [people] feel themselves in unison' (cited in Mitchell 1931: 99). Equally important is education. Durkheim believed that French education had to be 'national'. This requires that certain ideas and practices be inculcated in all individuals throughout the nation. Chief among these is attachment to the nation. The fundamental task of education is to teach the children to know and love *la patrie*, to study its history and to be ready to put the interests of the nation before their own, even if this involves the sacrifice of their lives (Mitchell 1931: 101–2).

According to Smith, two aspects of Durkheim's work have been particularly influential on contemporary theories of nationalism. The first is his emphasis on religion as a moral community and his belief that ' "there is something eternal in religion" … because all societies feel the need to reaffirm and renew themselves periodically through collective rites and ceremonies' (Smith 1998a: 15; see also Smith 2001a). This was the main thrust of Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995 [1912]) and his famous 'totemic principle':

> … the totem expresses and symbolizes two different kinds of things. From one point of view, it is the outward and visible form of what I have called the totemic principle or god; and from another, it is also the symbol of a particular society that is called the clan. It is the flag of the clan, the sign by which each clan is distinguished from the others … Thus, if the totem is the symbol of both the god and the society, is this not because the god and the society are one and the same? (1995: 208)

The second influential aspect of Durkheim's work is his analysis of the transition from 'mechanical' to 'organic' solidarity. Essentially, Durkheim argued that traditions and the influence of the *conscience collective* (similarity of beliefs and sentiments in a community) decline, along with impulsive forces, such as affinity of blood, attachment to the same soil, ancestral worship and community of

habits. Their place is taken by the division of labour and its complementarity of roles (Smith 1998a: 15). This aspect of his work was particularly influential on some modernist theories of nationalism, notably that of Ernest Gellner.

For Max Weber (1864–1920), on the other hand, the concept of 'nation' cannot be defined unambiguously:

> it certainly cannot be stated in terms of empirical qualities common to those who count as members of the nation. In the sense of those using the term at a given time, the concept undoubtedly means, above all, that one may exact from certain groups of men a specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups. Thus, the concept belongs in the sphere of values. (2000: 5)

Weber believes that the idea of nation for its advocates 'stands in very intimate relation to "prestige" interests'. Hence the earliest manifestations of the idea contained the myth of a 'providential mission'. When all is said and done, however, if there is at all a common object underlying the term 'nation', it is located in the field of politics:

> One might well define the concept of nation in the following way: a nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own. (Ibid.: 9)

It was this stress on the role of politics and the state that proved to be the most important legacy of Weber's thinking on nationalism, according to Smith (1998a: 14). In a recent essay on Weber's work on ethnic groups, Banton goes even further: 'few contemporary perspectives on race and ethnic relations cannot be linked, in one way or another, to Weber's writings' (2007: 33). Whatever the case, it is certainly not easy to overlook the traces of Durkheim and Weber's insights in contemporary theories of nationalism.

Probably the only group that has not been accused of turning a blind eye to nationalism in the context of eighteenth–nineteenth century debates is the historians. The role of historians in promoting particular nationalisms – usually their own – and debunking others is widely recognized (see for example Smith 1996a and 2001c; Kumar 2006). 'Missionary historians' have often 'unearthed' – in most cases 'created' – the evidence which testifies to their nation's perennial existence, or 'rediscovered' – in most cases 'invented' – the traditions, myths, symbols and rituals which go in to the making of national cultures. In the words of Hobsbawm, 'historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market' (1996: 255). This was expecially true of nineteenth-century historians like Jules Michelet, Heinrich von Treitschke, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, František

Palacký, Nicolae Iorga, Eoin MacNéill, among several others, who were heavily involved in the cultural and political regeneration of their respective nations. The German historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–96), for example, did not express any doubts with regard to the particular audience he was addressing:

> I write for Germans. Much water will flow down our Rhine before foreigners allow us to speak of our fatherland with the same pride which has always distinguished the national historical works of the English and French. The time will come when other countries will have to accustom themselves to the feelings of modern Germany. (Cited in Headlam 1897: 728)

Von Treitschke was equally explicit about his political objectives:

> There is only one salvation; a single state, a monarchical Germany under the dynasty of the Hohenzollern; expulsion of the princely houses, annexation to Prussia. That is, in clear and definite words, my programme. Who believes that this can be done peacefully? But is not the unity of Germany under the emperor William I an idea which outweighs 100,000 lives? Compared with this idea my life is not worth a farthing. (Ibid.: 733)

The French historian Jules Michelet's (1798–1874) narrative was not too dissimilar to von Treitschke's, only with a different 'lead actor':

> Races and ideas are combined and complicated in advancing toward the Occident. Their mixture, so imperfect in Italy and Germany, unequal in Spain and England, is in France equal and perfect. What is the least simple, the least natural, the most artificial, that is to say, the least fatal, the most human, and the most free part of the world is Europe; the most European of all countries is my country, France. (Cited in Carroll 1998: 123)

'France deserves to initiate the freedom of the world and to bring together for the first time all peoples in a true unity of intelligence and will', writes Michelet (cited in Crossley 1993: 202), and adds:

> The Frenchman wants above all to imprint his personality on the conquered, not as his own but as the model of the good and the beautiful. That is his naïve belief. He believes that there is nothing more profitable he can do for the world than to give it his ideas, his customs, and his tastes. He converts other peoples, sword in hand, and after the combat … he shows them eveything they will gain in becoming French. (Cited in Carroll 1998: 126)

Yet not all historians were simply involved in the business of promoting their own national causes. Some have tried to adopt a more neutral (even critical)

attitude and analyse the phenomenon of nationalism – a trend, we might add, that will become more visible in the twentieth century (Kumar 2006; Suny 2001a). The French historian Ernest Renan (1823–92) was a good case in point. In fact, some of the ideas contained in Renan's crisp but penetrating lecture *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*, delivered at Sorbonne in 1882, were to have a profound impact on the theories of the succeeding generations, making him a figure of almost compulsory citation. In that sense, Renan's formulations constitute a perfect stepping-stone to the studies of the twentieth century.

Nations, according to Renan, are something fairly new in history; antiquity did not have them. 'Classical antiquity had republics, municipal kingdoms, confederations of local republics and empires, yet it can hardly be said to have had nations in our understanding of the term' (1990: 9). The modern nation, he argues, is a historical creation brought about by the convergence of many facts. Renan rejects the popular conceptions that define nations in terms of objective characteristics such as race, language or religion, and asks:

> How is it that Switzerland, which has three languages, two religions, and three or four races, is a nation, when Tuscany, which is so homogeneous, is not one? Why is Austria a state and not a nation? In what ways does the principle of nationality differ from that of races? (1990: 12)

The nation is 'a soul, a spiritual principle':

> A nation is … a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life. (Ibid.: 19)

Thus race, language, material interest, religious affinities, geography and military necessity are not among the ingredients which constitute a nation; a common heroic past, great leaders and true glory are. Another, very important, ingredient is 'collective forgetting':

> forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation … Yet the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale, or a Visigoth, yet every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew. (Ibid.: 11)

This overview of the writings of various thinkers shows clearly that the received wisdom on the lack of reflection on the national question before the twentieth century tells only part of the story. True, there was no 'theory' of nationalism, if we understand by this term relatively detached study of nationalism or the formulation of a framework of analysis that will explain nationalism everywhere, in every period. But, as I have alluded to earlier, this view should be qualified in at least three important respects. First, it is not clear that there is such a theory anyway. Most accounts of nationalism produced in the second half of the twentieth century would not qualify as theories if subjected to the same criteria – 'detached', 'universal', and so on. Second, thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, be they liberals, conservatives or Marxists, have indeed engaged with the theoretical and political problems posed by the national question, and their reflections bequeathed important insights that enriched our understanding of nationalism. And third, contemporary theorists of nationalism have been profoundly influenced by the broader writings of these thinkers, on issues that are only indirectly related to nationalism. In short, the contemporary theoretical debate on nationalism did not arise *ex nihilo*.

1918–1945

It was in the opening decades of the twentieth century, amidst the detritus of the First World War, that nationalism became a subject of academic inquiry. The early writings of historians like Hans Kohn, Carleton J. H. Hayes, Louis Snyder, Alfred Cobban and E. H. Carr were pioneering in that they treated nationalism as something to be explained, not merely defended or criticized. 'So much is nationalism a commonplace in the modes of thought and action of the civilized populations of the contemporary world', writes Hayes, 'that most men take nationalism for granted'. This contention, he believes, is fallacious:

> We can be sure that prior to the eighteenth century A.D. it was not the general rule for civilized nationalities to strive zealously and successfully for political unity and independence, whereas it has been the general rule in the last century and a half. Universal mass-nationalism of this kind, at any rate, has no counterpart in earlier eras; it is peculiar to modern times. (Hayes 1931: 292–3)

Kohn agrees: 'Nationalism as we understand it is not older than the second half of the eighteenth century' (1958 [1944]: 3). Hayes, Kohn and their fellow historians were thus the first to stress the historical novelty of nationalism and to explore the structural conditions that gave birth to it.

Yet there were also important similiarities between their work and that of the earlier generations. For one thing, as a careful reading of the above quotations will show, it is 'nationalism' which is problematized, not the 'nation' or

'nationality'. As Breuilly observes, when historians of the early twentieth century came to write about nationalism, 'they worked principally by collecting together and generalising from various national histories'. Even for those hostile to nationalism, 'this meant incorporating and thus perpetuating the assumption that nationalism was an expression of the nation rather than something to be understood in its own right' (forthcoming).

The historians of the period also shared the moralistic tone of their predecessors. As we will see in more detail below, this was most evident in the typologies they developed to classify various forms of nationalism, which usually ended up being attempts at distinguishing morally defensible forms of nationalism from morally indefensible ones. These limitations notwithstanding, however, the early writings of the likes of Kohn and Hayes were the harbinger of a lively debate on nationalism.

For the American historian and diplomat Carleton J. H. Hayes, nationalism is 'the paramount devotion of human beings to fairly large nationalities and the conscious founding of a political "nation" on linguistic and cultural nationality' (1931: 6). The central question that needs to be addressed, Hayes claims, is 'what has given such a vogue to nationalism in modern times'. For much of recorded history, human beings have been loyal to their tribes, clans, cities, provinces, manors, guilds or polyglot empires; nationalism is simply another expression of human sociality, not more natural or more latent than, say, tribalism or imperialism. What makes nationalism such a major force in the eighteenth century are 'certain underlying tendencies', the most important of which is the growth of a belief in the national state as the medium through which human progress and civilization is best achieved (ibid.: 289–302).

According to Hayes, modern nationalism manifested itself in five different forms (see Hayes 1931, Chapters 2 to 6; for a concise summary see Snyder 1968: 48–53):

Humanitarian nationalism

This was the earliest and for some time the only kind of formal nationalism. Expounded in the intellectual milieu of the eighteenth century, the first doctrines of nationalism were infused with the spirit of the Enlightenment. They were based on natural law and presented as inevitable, therefore desirable steps in human progress. In object, they were all strictly humanitarian. Hayes argues that humanitarian nationalism had three main advocates: the Tory politician John Bolingbroke who espoused an aristocratic form of nationalism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau who promoted a democratic nationalism and finally, Johann Gottfried von Herder who was mainly interested in culture, not politics. As the eighteenth century neared its end, humanitarian nationalism underwent an important transformation: 'Democratic nationalism became "Jacobin"; aristocratic nationalism became "traditional"; and nationalism which was neither democratic, nor aristocratic became "liberal" ' (1931: 42).

Jacobin nationalism

This form of nationalism was based in theory on the humanitarian democratic nationalism of Rousseau, and was developed by revolutionary leaders for the purpose of safeguarding and extending the principles of the French Revolution. Developing in the midst of foreign war and domestic rebellion, Jacobin nationalism acquired four characteristics: it became suspicious and intolerant of internal dissent; it eventually relied on force and militarism to attain its ends; it became fanatically religious; and it was imbued with missionary zeal. 'The tragedy of the Jacobins was that they were idealists, fanatically so, in a wicked world' (ibid.: 80). Hence, the more they fought, the more nationalist they became. They bequeathed to the succeeding generations the idea of 'the nation in arms' and 'the nation in public schools'. Jacobin nationalism also set the pattern for twentieth-century nationalisms, in particular Italian fascism and German national socialism.

Traditional nationalism

Certain intellectuals who opposed the French Revolution and Napoleon embraced a different form of nationalism. Their frame of reference was not 'reason' or 'revolution', but history and tradition. They detested everything that Jacobinism was supposed to stand for. Hence, while the latter was democratic and revolutionary, traditional nationalism was aristocratic and evolutionary. Its most illustrious exponents were Edmund Burke, Vicomte de Bonald and Friedrich von Schlegel. Traditional nationalism was the powerful motivating force behind the revolts within France and the growing popular resistance on the continent, as exemplified in the nationalist awakenings in Germany, Holland, Portugal, Spain and even Russia. It prevailed over its main rival, Jacobinism, in The Battle of Waterloo in 1815, but this victory was more apparent than real. In the long run, a mild form of Jacobinism was incorporated in the rising liberal nationalism. Traditional nationalism, on the other hand, continued to be expressed here and there throughout Europe, eventually vanishing into the integral nationalism of the twentieth century.

Liberal nationalism

'Midway between Jacobin and traditional nationalism was liberal nationalism … It originated in England, that country of perpetual compromise and of acute national self-consciousness' (ibid.: 120). Its leading spokesman was Jeremy Bentham who was intent on limiting the scope and functions of government in all spheres of life. For him, nationality was the proper basis for state and government. War, in this context, was peculiarly bad and should be eliminated. Bentham's liberal nationalism quickly spread from England to the continent. His teachings were appropriated in Germany (Wilhelm von Humboldt, Baron Heinrich vom Stein, Karl Theodor Welcker), France (François Guizot, Victor Hugo, Jean Casimir-Périer) and in Italy (Guiseppe Mazzini). There were many

differences in detail among these apostles with regard to the scope and implications of liberal nationalism. But they all assumed that 'each nationality should be a political unit under an independent constitutional government which would put an end to despotism, aristocracy and ecclesiastical influence, and assure to every citizen the broadest practicable exercise of personal liberty' (ibid.: 159). Liberal nationalism managed to survive the First World War, but its logic and sublime intentions were not sufficient to ensure its triumph; it needed to grasp its sword and slay its adversaries. Hence in time its liberalism waned as its nationalism waxed, because it had to compete now with a new form of nationalism (ibid.: 161–3).

Integral nationalism

In the journal *L'Action Française*, Charles Maurras, the chief protagonist of this type of nationalism, defined integral nationalism as 'the exclusive pursuit of national policies, the absolute maintenance of national integrity and the steady increase of national power – for a nation declines when it loses its might' (cited in ibid.: 165). Integral nationalism was deeply hostile to the internationalism of humanitarians and liberals. It made the nation not a means to humanity, but an end in itself. It put national interests above those of the individual and those of humanity, refusing cooperation with other nations. On the other hand, in domestic affairs, integral nationalism was highly illiberal and tyrannical. It required all citizens to conform to a common standard of manners and morals, and to share the same unreasoning enthusiasm for it. It would subordinate all personal liberties to its own purpose and if the people should complain, it would abridge democracy in the name of 'national interest'. The philosophy of integral nationalism was derived from the writings of a number of theorists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Auguste Comte, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras. Integral nationalism flourished in the first half of the twentieth century, especially in countries like Italy and Germany. Its impact was also felt in countries like Hungary, Poland, Turkey and Yugoslavia.

As the above summary reveals, Hayes' typology is chronological and evolutionary. Thus democratic nationalism evolves into Jacobinism; aristocratic nationalism evolves into traditional nationalism; Jacobinism and traditionalism evolve into liberal and integral nationalisms. Yet this account of the evolution of the ideology of nationalism is not descriptive or value-free; Hayes' preference for liberal – read English – nationalism is explicit. So is his distrust of nationalism-in-general. 'Is there something inevitable in the evolution of nationalism which advances its devotees ever faster toward war?', asks Hayes. His answer is a qualified 'yes': 'Nationalism in many of its doctrines and much of its practice has undoubtedly been a beneficent influence in modern history. Unfortunately, it has tended to evolve a highly intolerant and warlike type which we have arbitrarily termed "integral" ' (ibid.: 311, 320; for the problems of a typology based on purely ideological distinctions, see Smith 1983: 196).

More generally, Hayes' work, like those of most of his contemporaries and predecessors, suffers from the tendency to take 'nationalities' for granted. Nationalism may be novel and historically contingent, but not nationalities:

> It is true that historical records are strewn from earliest times with traces of the existence in greater or less degree of a consciousness of nationality … It is also true that we have historical evidence of the teaching and practicing of genuine nationalism among some peoples at a relatively ancient date, for example among Hebrews, Armenians, and Japanese. (1931: 292)

This necessarily limits the analytical value of Hayes' formulations as he tends to 'assume' rather than 'explain' his main object of analysis, the nation – and derivatively of nationalism (see also Lawrence 2005: 87).

Much more influential was the work of Hans Kohn, whose 1944 classic *The Idea of Nationalism* was hailed as 'without hyperbole, the most brilliant, all-inclusive and incisive analysis of the ideological origins of nationalism which has yet appeared in any language' in the *New York Times* (cited in Liebich 2006: 580). For Kohn, nationalism is the end product of the process of integration of the masses of people into a common political form. It is thus 'unthinkable before the emergence of the modern state in the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century' (1958: 4). Kohn defines nationalism as 'first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness' which has become more and more common since the French Revolution. It permeates the majority of a people and claims to permeate all its members; it posits the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and nationality as the ultimate source of cultural energy and economic well-being. The nation thus commands the supreme loyalty of the individual (ibid.: 13–14, 16).

Kohn distinguishes between two types of nationalism in terms of their origins and main characteristics. In the Western world, in England, France or the United States, the rise of nationalism was a political occurrence; it was preceded by the formation of the national state, or, as in the case of the United States, coincided with it. Outside the Western world, in Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia, nationalism arose later and at a more backward stage of social and political development:

> the frontiers of an existing state and of a rising nationality rarely coincided … [it thus] found its first expression in the cultural field … in the 'natural' fact of a community, held together, not by the will of its members nor by any obligations of contract, but by traditional ties of kinship and status. (Ibid.: 329, 331)

Western nationalism is a child of the Enlightenment, and as such intimately connected with the concepts of individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism;

BOX 2.1 **Hans Kohn**

Born in 1891 in Prague, Hans Kohn moved to the United States in 1933, where he taught modern history at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts (1934–49) and, until his retirement, at the City College of New York (1949–62). He died in 1971 in Philadelphia. Kohn's magnum opus is *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (1944); his other contributions to the study of nationalism include, among others, *Prophets and Peoples: Studies in Nineteenth Century Nationalism* (1946), *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay* (1957), *The Age of Nationalism: The First Era of Global History* (1962), *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (1965).

The origins of Kohn's interest in nationalism can be traced back to Prague, the city he grew up in at the turn of the twentieth century. '**Prague was the foremost European laboratory for the struggles, tensions and implications of modern nationalism. Here Germanic and Slavic aspirations met head on, and found their principal battleground**', he later recalls. '**At the same time, this plurality of national civilizations and their clash and competition gave Prague a cosmopolitan and culturally stimulating character**'. It was '**the very air of Prague**' that got him into the study of nationalism (Liebich 2006: 582–3). The other formative influence on Kohn's ideas was his conversion to Zionism, under the influence of Martin Buber and the writings of Ahad Ha'am. '**In the summer of 1908, when I was seventeen years old, I became a Zionist. As far as I remember I made this decision quite suddenly, without much soul-searching**'. Kohn became disillusioned with Zionism in Palestine, where he moved in 1925, in the wake of intercommunal violence between Jews and Arabs which led to the 1929 riots. '**The events in Pal[estine] are very bad**', he wrote to Martin Buber, '**we all share guilt, we should never have let things come so far**' (ibid.: 584, 587). It was in the United States that Kohn would find his intellectual salvation – a distinctively American form of Enlightenment rationalism and liberalism: '**To become an American has always meant to identify oneself with the idea. What is this idea? It is the English tradition of liberty as it developed from older roots in the two revolutions of the seventeenth century**' (ibid.: 588; see also Calhoun 2005; Wolf 1976).

the later nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia has a different orientation:

> Dependent upon, and opposed to, influences from without, this new nationalism, not rooted in a political and social reality, lacked self-assurance; its inferiority complex was often compensated by overemphasis and overconfidence, their own nationalism appearing to nationalists in Germany, Russia, or India as something infinitely deeper than the nationalism of the West. (Ibid.: 330)

The binary distinction Kohn developed in *The Idea of Nationalism* proved to be the longest-living, and probably the most influential, typology in the field of nationalism studies. It certainly had a long pedigree – already in 1907, Friedrich Meinecke distinguished between 'political' and 'cultural' nations – but it was Kohn who gave the distinction a specifically geographical and normative character. Ironically, these were the most problematic aspects of Kohn's typology.

As a number of commentators have pointed out, the categories upon which Kohn's distinction is based are arbitrary. According to Smith, for example, its spatial distinction between 'East' and 'West' is misleading since Spain, Belgium and Ireland, being at the time socially backward, belong to the 'Eastern' camp (it needs to be pointed out that Kohn does not use the term 'Eastern' nationalism in his 1944 book; it is Smith who introduces the term in his reading of Kohn's work – see Liebich 2006: 593); some nationalisms like that of Turkish or Tanzanian elites blend 'voluntarist' and 'organic' elements in a single movement; and too many levels of development, types of structure and cultural situations are included within each category (1983: 196–8).

These ambuigities are further complicated by the moralistic nature of Kohn's distinction, or his tendency to associate all that is good with 'Western' nationalism. In the words of Calhoun:

> His story of nationalism is a story of liberal achievement and an illiberal challenge to it. It is a story in which the West … represents the universal and the rest of the world, frequently identified with the East, represents innumerable particularisms. (2005: x)

Yet Kohn's account is highly problematic as 'political' and 'cultural', or 'civic' and 'ethnic', elements are intertwined in almost all actually existing nationalisms, and the 'political', 'civic' nationalisms of the West are not more benign, or liberal, than their allegedly 'cultural', 'ethnic' counterparts (for an elaboration of the problems of the civic–ethnic distinction see Özkırımlı 2005: 24–8; Brubaker 2004, Chapter 6; Brown 2000, Chapter 3; Spencer and Wollman 2001, Chapter 4; Kuzio 2002; Shulman 2002). As Calhoun points out, Kohn's distinction implies that a purely political and rational form of nationalism is possible, that belonging can be based entirely on adherence to an 'idea'. This is not only analytically flawed – after all, even the paradigmatic cases of political nationalism, America or England, involve a cultural component or a strong sense of peoplehood (Brubaker 2004: 137) – but also politically dangerous as 'it encourages self-declared civic nationalists … to be too complacent, seeing central evils of the modern world produced at a safe distance by ethnic nationalists from whom they are surely deeply different' (2005: xiii).

Another important typology produced in this period was that of the renowned British historian E. H. Carr (Carr's work is largely overlooked in recent discussions of nationalism; for notable exceptions see Gellner 1995,

Chapter 2; Smith 1996a: 183 and Lawrence 2005: 127–8). Carr was more interested in delineating the various stages of European nationalism than the ethical value of it. For him, 'the nation is not a "natural" or "biological" group – in the sense, for example, of the family'. It is not a definable and clearly recognizable entity: 'It is confined to certain periods of history and to certain parts of the world.' Carr concedes that the modern nation has a place and function in the wider society. But, he continues, the claim of nationalism to make the nation 'the sole rightful sovereign repository of political power and the ultimate constituent unit of world organization' has to be challenged and rejected (Carr 1945: 39).

According to Carr, 'the modern history of international relations divides into three partly overlapping periods, marked by widely differing views of the nation as a political entity' (ibid.: 1). The first period began with the gradual dissolution of the medieval unity of empire and church, and the establishment of the national state. It was terminated by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. In this period, the nation was identified with the person of the sovereign, and international relations were relations between kings and princes. Equally characteristic of the period was 'mercantilism', whose aim was not to promote the welfare of the community and its members, but to augment the power of the state, of which the sovereign was the sole embodiment.

The second period, Carr argues, 'was essentially the product of the French Revolution and, though its foundations were heavily undermined from 1870 onwards, lasted on till the catastrophe of 1914' (ibid.: 2). This was the most orderly and enviable period of international relations. Its success depended on balancing nationalism and internationalism, and on striking a compromise between political and economic power so that each can develop on its own lines. The diffusion of the idea of popular–democratic nationalism, first formulated by Rousseau, also played a role in this.

The third period, on the other hand, began to take shape at the end of the nineteenth century (after 1870) and reached its culmination between 1914 and 1939. This period was characterized by the catastrophic growth of nationalism and the bankruptcy of internationalism. The re-establishment of national political authority over the economic system, 'a necessary corollary of the socialization of the nation', in the words of Carr, was crucial in bringing about this state of affairs (ibid.: 27).

Carr is not pessimistic about the future of international relations. He believes that the modern nation-state is under attack from within and from without, from the standpoints of idealism and power:

> On the plane of morality, it is under attack from those who denounce its inherently totalitarian implications and proclaim that any international authority worth the name must interest itself in the rights and well-being not of nations but of men and women. On the plane of power, it is being sapped

> by modern technological developments which have made the nation obsolescent as the unit of military and economic organization and are rapidly concentrating effective decision and control in the hands of great multinational units. (Ibid.: 38)

The future, Carr concludes, depends on the strength of each of these forces and on the nature of the balance that may be struck between them.

Despite its original intentions, Carr's typology is not immune from the moralistic tone of its predecessors, in particular the scepticism of Hayes. He thus notes in passing that he once believed in the possibility of achieving a community of nations; it now seems clear to him that this belief must be abandoned (ibid.: 42). This leads Smith to criticize him for failing to allow for the possibility of a wave of anti-colonial nationalisms or renewed European and Third World secession nationalisms. This, according to Smith, reflects the moral and teleological basis of his analysis, as well as its Eurocentrism (1996a: 183).

Carr's work coincided with a breaking point in world politics, the end of the Second World War, which also marked the beginning of a new stage in the study of nationalism.

1945–1989

The experience of decolonization, coupled with general developments in social sciences, inaugurated the most intensive and prolific period of research on nationalism. The earlier studies of this period – roughly those produced in the 1950s and 1960s – were produced under the sway of modernization theories, then ascendant within American social sciences.

The point of departure of modernization theories was the classical sociological distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies. Drawing on this distinction, scholars of the period posited three different stages in the modernization process: tradition, transition and modernity. In these accounts, modernization signified a breakdown of the traditional order and the establishment of a new type of society with new values and new relationships. Smith summarizes this line of argument aptly:

> To survive painful dislocation, societies must institutionalise new modes of fulfilling the principles and performing the functions with which earlier structures can no longer cope. To merit the title, a new 'society' must reconstitute itself in the image of the old … Mechanisms of reintegration and stabilisation can ease and facilitate the transition; among them are collective ideologies like nationalism which spring up naturally in periods of social crisis, and appear meaningful and effective for the participants of the situation. (1983: 49–50)

Nationalism, then, has a clear 'function' in these accounts. It can provide identity in a time of rapid change; it can motivate people to work for further change; it can provide guidelines in such fields as the creation of a modern educational system and of a standard 'national' culture (Breuilly 1993a: 418–19). The archetype of such functionalist accounts was Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of a Traditional Society* (1958).

Lerner's book is based on the story of three characters from Balgat, a little town in Turkey, near the capital Ankara (for a concise summary see Smith 1983: 89–95). These characters represented the different stages of the modernization process: the village chief, contented, paternal, and fatalistic is the epitome of traditional Turkish values; the grocer, restless, unsatisfied, is the man of transition; finally Tosun, Lerner's informant from the capital city, is the man of modernity. The main problem for these people is 'how to modernize traditional lifeways that no longer "work" to their own satisfaction' (2000: 119). According to Lerner, 'all societies … must pass from a face-to-face, traditional stage through an ambivalent, uncertain "transition" to reach finally the plateau of the modern, "participant" and national society and culture' (Smith 1983: 90). That there will be a transition to the Western model of society is undisputed; the only thing that matters is 'pace'. Where does nationalism stand in this picture? Although nationalism only received a passing mention in Lerner's story, it is implicitly there as the ideology of 'Transitionals': 'The *Transitionals* are our key to the changing Middle East. What they are today is a passage from what they once were to what they are becoming. Their passage, writ large, is the passing of traditional society in the Middle East' (2000: 133).

Lerner's account was a typical example of a whole range of theories inspired by the modernization paradigm. All these accounts share the basic assumption that nationalism is a concomitant of the period of transition, a balm that soothes weary souls, alleviating the sufferings caused by that process. As several commentators have observed, functionalist accounts are flawed in more than one way.

First, functionalist theories derive explanations from end states. In these accounts, consequences precede causes, and events and processes are treated as wholly beyond the understanding of human agents (O'Leary 1996: 86). They assume that individuals are the effects of the social conditions they find themselves in, 'bits of litmus paper turning blue under the right conditions'. This inevitably limits the range of choices initially open to individuals who might respond rationally, and variably, to their situation, hence redefine and modify it (Minogue 1996: 117). According to Smith, there are a large number of cases of traditional communities which failed to develop any form of protest when subjected to modernization or structural differentiation. Most functionalist accounts cannot cope with these exceptions. More importantly, most of the goals that are thought to be served by nationalism are logically and historically

posterior to the emergence of a nationalist movement; thus, they cannot be invoked to explain it (1983: 51).

Second, functionalist explanations are too holistic. The functions of nationalism, that is solidarity or modernization, are such large terms that one can hardly connect something as specific as nationalism to them. In the light of this observation, one can ask: 'Is one suggesting that without nationalism these things could not be achieved?' The answer cannot be positive, says Breuilly, as achievement can be understood in myriad ways and as solidarity or modernization have clearly taken place in a variety of settings without accompanying nationalist feelings (Breuilly 1993a: 419).

Third, functionalist accounts cannot explain the variety of historical responses to modernization. Smith asks: 'Why was Pakistan's type of nationalism of the so-called neo-traditional kind, whereas Turkey's was secularist? Why the Bolshevik response in Russia, the Fascist in Italy, the socialist in Yugoslavia and Israel?' (1983: 53).

Finally, functionalist theories are Eurocentric; they tend to simplify and reify the ideal types of 'tradition' and 'modernity', deriving them from Western experiences. According to Lerner, for example, that the model of modernization evolved in the West is a historical fact. 'The same basic model', he believes, 'reappears in virtually all modernizing societies on all continents of the world, regardless of variations in race, color, creed.' In fact, 'Middle Eastern modernizers will do well to study the historical sequence of Western growth' (2000 120)! As several decades of post-colonial theorizing and the unfolding of history since the 1950s and 1960s have shown, however, the reality is much more complex than Lerner would have us believe.

Another variant of modernization theories is the so-called 'communications approach', generally associated with the work of the American political scientist Karl W. Deutsch. Deutsch begins his analysis by defining a 'people' as a large group of persons linked by complementary habits and facilities of communication. He then proposes a functional definition of nationality: 'Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders' (1966: 96–7):

> In the political and social struggles of the modern age, *nationality*, then, means an alignment of large numbers of individuals from the middle and lower classes linked to regional centers and leading social groups by channels of social communication and economic intercourse, both indirectly from link to link and directly with the center. (Ibid.: 101)

In the age of nationalism, nationalities press to acquire a measure of effective control over the behaviour of their members. They strive to equip themselves

with power, with some machinery of compulsion strong enough to make the enforcement of commands possible: 'Once a nationality has added this power to compel to its earlier cohesiveness and attachment to group symbols, it often considers itself a *nation* and is so considered by others' (ibid.: 104–5). This process is underpinned by a variety of functionally equivalent arrangements. More specifically, what sets nation-building in motion are socio-demographic processes like urbanization, mobility, literacy and so on. The communications mechanisms have an important role to play in this scenario, providing new roles, new horizons, experiences and imaginings to keep the process going smoothly (Smith 1983: 99).

The crucial defect of this approach, according to Smith, is its omission of the particular context of beliefs, interpretations and interests within which the mass media operate. The mechanisms of communications are always those developed in the West and their effects outside the West are held to be identical to Western results (1983: 99, 101).

Second, the conception of mass communication in these theories is unidimensional. Communication systems do not convey a single ideology, that is 'modernization', and the messages conveyed are not perceived in the same manner by the individuals that make up a community. Thus, 'exposure to mass communications systems does not automatically carry with it the desire for "modernity" and its benefits' (ibid.: 101).

Third, intensified communications between individuals and groups can as often lead to an increase in internal conflict as to an increase in solidarity. Equally importantly, such conflict or solidarity may be expressed in terms other than nationalist ones. The structures of communication do not indicate what types of conflict and solidarity exist within a particular community and therefore cannot in itself predict what kinds of nationalism will develop (Breuilly 1993a: 406–7).

A final problem is brought to our attention by Schlesinger who argues that Deutsch's functionalist account of cultural integration would not work if the level of analysis shifts outside the nation-state. 'It offers no general principle for analyzing the interaction between communicative communities – a matter of central concern to contemporary cultural and media studies – because it is not where the center of interest lies' (2001: 27).

Despite their shortcomings, or because of them, the modernization and communications theories gave a fresh impetus to the theoretical debate on nationalism. The 1960s saw the burgeoning of interdisciplinary interest in national phenomena and, partly as a result of this, a diversification of theoretical perspectives. This period in many ways represented the 'consolidation' of the academic study of nationalism (Lawrence 2005: 132). It was in this context that the pioneering works of the modernist approach, namely Kedourie's *Nationalism* (originally published in 1960) and Ernest Gellner's *Thought and Change* (1964), were published.

BOX 2.2 **Elie Kedourie**

Born in Baghdad in 1926, Elie Kedourie became Professor of Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1953 and stayed there until his retirement in 1990. He died in Washington in 1992. One of the world's leading authorities on the Middle East, he published extensively on the politics and history of the region. His main contribution to the field of nationalism studies is *Nationalism* (1960); he is also the editor of *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1971), a collection of articles by nationalist politicians and intellectuals.

Marked by a deep conservatism and what Martin Kramer calls 'his disbelief in the redemptive power of ideological politics', Kedourie's writings on nationalism can be considered as part of his more general critique of British diplomatic history in the Middle East, in particular the encouragement of Arab nationalism to which he attributes the failure of British imperial will in the region. '**Only after the First World War was Arab nationalism given its armour of doctrine**', writes Kedourie, and '**this happened principally in Iraq, where under British auspices, Arab nationalists in control of the administration and of the educational system set out systematically to propagate their views and to indoctrinate the rising generation with it. According to this doctrine, by virtue of speaking one language, etc., the Arabs formed one nation and were therefore entitled to form one state. Like other nationalist doctrines, this one suffers from a simple logical defect, for there is really no way of showing that people who speak one language have to unite into one state**' (Kedourie 1967). In the words of Cranston, 'like Lord Acton, Kedourie held that a decent, moderate, and, above all, slack imperial regime offered a better chance for the liberty' of miscellaneous ethnic groups 'than did ideologically inspired efforts to secure sovereignty for each of those intermingled groups'. '**Humanity is not naturally divided into "nations" '**, says Kedourie; '**the characteristics of any particular "nation" are neither easily ascertainable nor exclusively inherent in it; while to insist that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government is capriciously to dismiss the great variety of political arrangements to which men have given assent and loyalty and to strive after a state of affairs the attempt to realize … would be, in the nature of things, both ruinous and futile**' (Kedourie 1971: 28; see also Kramer 1999 and 2003; Cranston 1992).

Kedourie's conservative attack on nationalism is a milestone in the evolution of the theoretical debate. For him, the question of nationalism is a problem in the history of ideas. 'My object in writing this book', he tells us, is 'to present an historical account of nationalism as a doctrine, and … to give the reader some idea of the circumstances and consequences of the spread of the doctrine' in Europe and other parts of the world (1994: 136). Hence:

> nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century … Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally

> divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government. (1994 : 1)

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Kedourie traces the origins of this doctrine back to the writings of Kant and German Romantic thought. He explains it in terms of a revolution in European philosophy, laying special emphasis on the role played by Kant's epistemological dualism, the organic analogy developed by Fichte and his disciples, and historicism. But the story does not end there. The revolution in ideas, Kedourie holds, was accompanied by an upheaval in social life: 'at the time when the doctrine was being elaborated, Europe was in turmoil … Things which had not been thought possible were now seen to be indeed possible and feasible' (1994: 87). At this point, Kedourie draws our attention to the low social status of German Romantics whose upward mobility was blocked at the time. The younger generation was spiritually restless, dissatisfied with things as they were, eager for change. This restlessness was partly caused by the legend of the French Revolution. What mattered most, however, was 'a breakdown in the transmission of political habits and religious beliefs from one generation to the next' (ibid.: 94). Kedourie's depiction of this situation is quite vivid:

> The sons rejected the fathers and their ways; but the rejection extended also to the very practices, traditions, and beliefs which had over the centuries moulded and fashioned these societies which suddenly seemed to the young so confining, so graceless, so devoid of spiritual comfort. (Ibid.: 95)

According to Kedourie, this revolt against old ways can also explain the violent nature of many nationalist movements, in that the latter, ostensibly directed against foreigners, were also the manifestation of a clash of generations: 'nationalist movements are children's crusades; their very names are manifestoes against old age: Young Italy, Young Egypt, the Young Turks' (ibid.: 96). Such movements satisfied an important need, the need to belong to a coherent and stable community:

> Such a need is normally satisfied by the family, the neighbourhood, the religious community. In the last century and a half such institutions all over the world have had to bear the brunt of violent social and intellectual change, and it is no accident that nationalism was at its most intense where and when such institutions had little resilience and were ill-prepared to withstand the powerful attacks to which they became exposed. (Ibid.)

These frustrated, but passionate, young men turned to literature and philosophy which seemed to give way to a nobler world, failing to notice that

philosophical speculation was incompatible with the civil order. However, there was no effective means to control the musings of such young men for they were not the fruit of conspiracy: 'They were inherent in the nature of things; they have emanated from the very spirit of the age' (ibid.: 100).

'This is a powerful and original thesis', Smith comments (1983: 34), but this does not make it immune to criticisms. First, several commentators disagree with Kedourie on the question of Kant's contribution to the doctrine of nationalism. Gellner for example argues that 'Kant is the very last person whose vision could be credited with having contributed to nationalism'. In fact, 'if a connection exists between Kant and nationalism at all, then nationalism is a reaction against him, and not his offspring' (1983: 132, 134). Smith concurs, noting that even if Kedourie's interpretation of Kant is right, he forgets Kant's debt to Rousseau (1983: 35). Kedourie replies to this criticism in an Afterword to the fourth edition of his book, stressing that he never claimed that Kant was 'nationalist'. Rather, the argument is that the idea of self-determination, which is at the centre of Kant's ethical theory, became the dominant notion in the moral and political discourse of his successors, in particular that of Fichte. Kant is of course not responsible for the actions of his disciples or successors. (1994: 137).

Second, a question mark hangs over Kedourie's general treatment of nationalism as a problem in the history of ideas. Gellner, among others, argues, *contra* Kedourie, that we shall not learn too much about nationalism by the study of its own prophets (1983: 125). In a similar vein, Smith accuses Kedourie of 'intellectual determinism'. The social and political factors in Kedourie's account, such as the blocked mobility of the German intelligentsia, the breakdown of traditional ways, are overshadowed by the developments in the intellectual arena; social factors become contributory or intervening variables in what amounts to a single factor explanation (1983: 37–8).

Third, Smith objects to Kedourie's stress on the 'need to belong', arguing that this factor does not provide an answer to the following questions: 'why only at certain times and places it was the nation which replaced the family, the religious community, the village'; 'why does this need appear to affect some and not others in a given population'; 'how can we measure it in relation to other factors'? Without these answers, Smith concludes, the argument is 'a piece of circular psychologism' (1983: 35). A similar point is made by Breuilly who argues that 'identity needs' cover much more than nationalism. He notes that some of those who have suffered from an identity crisis turned to other ideologies – of class, of religion; some accepted the changes that have taken place and sought to advance their interests under the new conditions; some turned to drink; and about most we know nothing. He also remarks that nationalism has not received its strongest support from those groups which one would imagine to have been most damaged from an identity crisis (1993a: 417).

Finally, it is not clear how ideas have contributed to the breakdown of

existing structures. Rapid social change has occurred before the eighteenth century as well. Traditional institutions were always criticized, most of the time by the younger generations. Why, then, did nationalism appear so sporadically in earlier eras? What was unique about the recent onslaught on tradition (Smith 1983: 39–40)?

The 1970s have witnessed a new wave of interest in nationalism. The input of neo-Marxist scholars who focused on the role of economic factors in the genesis of nationalism was particularly important in that context. Significant contributions of the period include Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (1975) and Tom Nairn's *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (1977). The debate received a new twist in the 1980s, with the publication of John Armstrong's *Nations before Nationalism* (1982) and Anthony D. Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), which laid the groundwork for an 'ethnosymbolist' critique of modernist theories of the 1960s and 1970s. Ironically, the great classics of the modernist approach were also published in this period. Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, all published in 1983, set the scene for the ardent, sometimes highly polemical, debates of the last decade (the contributions of these theorists will be discussed at length in Chapters 4 and 5). With these studies, the debate on nationalism reached its most mature stage.

From 1989 to the present

One of the arguments of this book is that we have entered a new stage in the theoretical debate on nationalism since the end of the 1980s. I contend that a number of studies produced in the last two decades have sought to transcend the 'classical' debate which was in the ascendancy from the 1960s onwards by casting doubt on the fundamental tenets upon which it is based and by adding new dimensions to the analysis of nations and nationalism. This argument will be substantiated at some length in Chapter 6, where I will discuss new approaches to nationalism. Suffice it to say, at this stage, that the argument is even more valid today than it was in 2000, when it was first spelled out, and has been implicitly or explicitly adopted by a number of studies since then (see for example Day and Thompson 2004; Puri 2004; and Lawrence 2005). In fact, Day and Thompson go so far as to argue that the studies of the last two decades can be termed 'post-classical' as they 'seek to redefine the terms of the debate, and pose new and different questions' (2004: 13). It may be too early to call this period 'post-classical', given the relatively marginal position of these approaches within the mainstream debate on nationalism. It needs to said, however, that the tide is turning and the new approaches are occupying a more and more central position within the theoretical debate on nationalism. In that

sense, we may indeed end up talking about a 'post-classical' age in the study of nationalism within the next ten years or so.

The aim of this brief, necessarily sketchy, *tour d'horizon* over two centuries of reflection on the national question was to set the scene for an overview of the contemporary theoretical debate on nationalism, which roughly corresponds to the third and fourth stages in the above classification. My discussion will follow a chronological order, in accordance with the general tendency in the field. I start with primordialist–perennialist approaches to nationalism.

Further reading

The last ten years have witnessed a significant increase in the number of readers and handbooks that contain the writings of the major thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among these, the most comprehensive are Pecora (2001) and Dahbour and Ishay (1995), which cover a time span of two centuries, bringing together the contributions of classical thinkers with those of major contemporary theorists and political figures. Despite its eccentric, sometimes irritating, 'Platonic' style, Heater (1998) includes several excerpts from the writings of Herder, Fichte, Mazzini, Mill, Renan, Hitler and Stalin, and is useful for all that. Apart from these, the reader may find the following helpful: Kedourie (1994) – a controversial, nevertheless classic account of Kant's contribution to the doctrine of nationalism; Barnard (1983) and (1984) on Rousseau – the first, a comparison of Herder and Rousseau; the second, an overview of Rousseau's views on patriotism and citizenship; Barnard (2003) on Herder (it needs to be noted in passing that Barnard is probably the most authoritative source on Herder in the English language – awarded the 2002 International Herder Society Prize for the Advancement of Herder Studies); and Kohn (1949) and (1950) on Fichte and the German Romantics – a somewhat biased, yet masterful, account of the evolution of Romantic thinking.

On Marxism and nationalism, the best sources are Munck (1986), Nimni (1991) and, more recently, Forman (1998). The latter offers an exhaustive survey of the debates on the national/nationalities question within the internationalist movement, casting doubt on the myth of the lack of theoretical reflection on nationalism within the Marxist tradition. In this context, the short, but insightful, essay by Avineri (1991) should also be mentioned. Otto Bauer's *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (2000), perhaps the most sophisticated attempt to theorize nationalism within the Marxist tradition, is finally available in English, with a perceptive introduction by Nimni.

The exchange between John Stuart Mill and Lord Acton can be found in Pecora (2001). On Mill, see also Varouxakis (2002). Rosen (1997) provides a comprehensive summary of the impact of nationalism on early British liberal thought in the nineteenth century. The contributions of social theorists are rarely covered in readers or collections of essays. For a notable exception, see the excerpt from Weber in Hutchinson and Smith (2000). On Weber's relevance for the study of nationalism see also Smith (1998a), Norkus (2004) and Banton (2007). For

Durkheim, see Durkheim (1986 and 1995). Mitchell (1931), on the other hand, is a quite dated, but still useful, source on Durkheim's views on nationalism. On nationalism and the historians, see Suny (2001a) and Smith (1996a). The famous lecture delivered by Renan (1990) can be accessed in Bhabha (1990) and Woolf (1996).

Of the several general historical studies of nationalism produced in the first half of the twentieth century, Hayes (1931), Kohn (1958) and Carr (1945) are still relevant. In passing, let us note that a new edition of Kohn's *The Idea of Nationalism* (2005) is now available, with a penetrating introduction by Calhoun. On Kohn, the reader should also consult the brilliant essay by Liebich (2006). A summary of the historiographical debates in this period can also be found in Lawrence (2005).

For the modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s, see Smith (1983). Among primary sources, Deutsch (1966), regarded by many as the archetype of the communications approach, and Kedourie (1994), one of the pioneering works of the modernist paradigm, should be mentioned.

Chapter 3

Primordialism

What is primordialism?

'Primordialism' is an umbrella term used to describe the belief that nationality is a 'natural' part of human beings, as natural as speech, sight or smell, and that nations have existed from time immemorial. This is the view of nationalists themselves, and was for some time the dominant paradigm among social scientists, notably the historians. Primordialism also constitutes the laymen's view of nations and nationalism.

The term comes from the adjective 'primordial' which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as 'of, relating to, or existing from the very beginning of time; earliest in time; primeval, primitive; (more generally) ancient, distant in time' and 'that constitutes the origin or starting point from which something else is derived or developed, or on which something else depends; fundamental, basic; elemental' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2008). It is generally thought that Edward Shils is the first to have employed the term to describe relationships within the family. In his famous article, 'Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties', Shils argues that the attachment family members feel for each other stems from 'significant relational' qualities which can only be described as 'primordial'. It is not just a function of interaction; 'it is because a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood' (1957: 142). Shils notes that his conceptualization of primordial relations is influenced by several books on the sociology of religion, notably by A. D. Nock's *Conversion* and Martin P. Nilsson's *Greek Popular Religion*. 'In these books' he writes, 'the "coerciveness" of the primordial properties of object, the ties of blood and of common territory was very strikingly portrayed' (ibid.). Clifford Geertz uses a similar definition in the context of his discussion of social and political stability in post-colonial states:

> By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens' – or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' – of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These

> congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. (1993: 259)

Like the other theoretical approaches we will review in the book, primordialists do not form a monolithic category. It is possible to identify four different versions of primordialism: the 'nationalist', 'sociobiological', 'culturalist' and 'perennialist' approaches. The common denominator of these approaches is their belief in the naturalness and/or antiquity of nations. Some commentators prefer to distinguish between these two claims and treat those who believe in the antiquity of nations, without holding that they are in any way natural, as a separate category, calling them 'perennialists' (see Smith 1998a, 2000 or

BOX 3.1 ***Edward Shils***

Born in 1910 in Philadelphia, Edward Shils was Distinguished Service Professor in the Committee on Social Thought and in Sociology at the University of Chicago, when he died in his Chicago home in 1995. Shils was best known for his writings on tradition and civility and for his work on the role of intellectuals and their relations to power and public policy. 'If you wrote a dissertation under Edward', his longtime friend Joseph Epstein reminisces, 'you were sent to the South of England, thence to Sumatra and back, but when you were done, you really knew everything about your subject. Many a student must have left his apartment, heart weighted down with a list of another thirty tomes he would have to plough through and head spinning from having discovered that, to take the next logical step in his studies, he would have to learn Polish' (1996: 388).

In 'Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties', his major contribution to theoretical debates on nationalism, Shils wrote that '**modern society is no lonely crowd, no horde of refugees fleeing from freedom. It is no *Gesellschaft*, soulless, egotistical, loveless, faithless, utterly impersonal and lacking any integrative forces other than interest or coercion. It is held together by an infinity of personal attachments, moral obligations in concrete contexts, professional and creative pride, individual ambition, primordial affinities and a civil sense which is low in many, high in some, and moderate in most persons**' (1957: 131). These words reflected Shils's recurring concern for the societal role of tradition. For him, '**tradition is not the dead hand of the past but rather the hand of the gardener, which nourishes and elicits tendencies of judgement which would otherwise not be strong enough to emerge on their own … It establishes contact between the recipient and the sacred values of his life in society. Man has a need for being in right relations with the sacred. A low level of intensity with intermittent surges serves their needs. But should they be entirely deprived of that contact for too long a time, their needs will flare up into a passionate irrationality**' (cited in Dewey 1999: 75; see also *The University of Chicago Chronicle* 1995 and Boyd 1998).

2001a). I will not follow this line of thinking in what follows, and treat perennialism as simply a milder form of primordialism.

The nationalist thesis

For the nationalists, nationality is an inherent attribute of the human condition. 'A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears' (Gellner 1983: 6). The nationalists believe that humanity is divided into distinct, objectively identifiable nations. Human beings can only fulfil themselves and flourish if they belong to a national community, the membership of which overrides all other forms of belonging. The nation is the sole depository of sovereignty and the only source of political power and legitimacy. This comes with a host of temporal and spatial claims – to a unique history and destiny, and a historic 'homeland'.

The nationalist thesis is not the preserve of political elites only. It has also shaped the developing fields of history, folklore and literature which acquired a veritable nation-building mission in the course of the nineteenth century. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, historians were influential figures in their respective national movements, busy in excavating the 'evidence' that would establish beyond doubt the eternal character of their nation. The narratives they produced had a number of recurrent themes, which we can exemplify with the help of Kedourie's *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1971), a collection of articles by nationalist leaders and intellectuals in Asia and Africa. There is first the theme of the antiquity of the ('particular') nation. Hence according to Tekin Alp [Moise Cohen], who was reporting the proceedings of the Turkish History Congress of 1932, it was time:

> to make the whole world, and to begin with the Turks themselves, understand that Turkish history does not begin with Osman's tribe, but in fact twelve thousand years before Jesus Christ. It is not the history of a tribe of four hundred tents, but that of a great nation, composed of hundreds of millions of souls. The exploits of the Osmanli Turks constitute merely one episode in the history of the Turkish nation which has founded several other empires. (Kedourie 1971: 210)

Second, there is the theme of golden age. For the Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop, the 'modern pharoah' of African studies:

> it was first the Ethiopians and then the Egyptians who created and developed to an extraordinary degree all the elements of civilization at a time when all other peoples – and the Eurasians in particular – were plunged into barbarism … It is impossible to exaggerate what the whole world – and in particular the Hellenic world – owes to the Egyptian world. (Ibid.: 275)

Third, there is the theme of the superiority of the national culture. Choudhary Rahmat Ali, the founder of the Pakistan national movement, claims that:

> Pakistan is one of the most ancient and illustrious countries of the Orient. Not only that. It is the only country in the world which, in the antiquity of its legend and lore as in the character of its history and hopes, compares with Iraq and Egypt – the countries which are known as the cradle of the achievement of mankind … Pakistan was the birthplace of human culture and civilization … it is the first and the strongest citadel of Islam in the Continent of Dinia and its Dependencies. (Ibid.: 245–6)

Fourth, there is the theme of periods of recess or 'somnolence', from which the nation is destined to 'awaken'. This is what Adamantios Korais, the foremost figure of the Neohellenic Enlightenment, has to say of the Greeks of his time:

> In the middle of the last century, the Greeks constituted a miserable nation who suffered the most horrible oppression and experienced the nefarious effects of a long period of slavery … Following these two developments [the opening of new channels for trade and the military defeat of the Ottomans] the Greeks … raise their heads in proportion as their oppressors' arrogance abates … This is the veritable period of Greek awakening … For the first time the nation surveys the hideous spectacle of its ignorance and trembles in measuring with the eye the distance separating it from its ancestors' glory. (Ibid.: 183–4)

Finally, there is the theme of the national hero, who comes and awakens the nation, ending this accidental period of decadence:

> He [Kemal Atatürk] could not tolerate therefore this false conception of Turkish history which was current among some of the Turkish intellectuals … He has therefore taken it into his head to eliminate it by means of a revolutionary outburst which would subject it to the same fate as the other misconceptions from which the Turkish people have suffered for centuries. (Ibid.: 211)

This brief foray into the writings of nationalist elites shows that nationalists share a common language, a common frame of reference to express their claims. What remains constant and central in all these narratives is the belief in, and representation of, the nation as a mystical, a-temporal, even transcendental entity whose survival is more important than the survival of its individual members at any given time.

Pierre van den Berghe and the sociobiological approach

'The sociobiological theory of ethnicity, race and nationalism', writes van den Berghe, the most outspoken proponent of this approach in the field of nationalism studies, 'holds that there is indeed an objective, external basis to the existence of such groups' without denying that these groups are also socially constructed and changeable. 'In simplest terms, the sociobiological view of these groups is that they are fundamentally defined by common descent and maintained by endogamy. Ethnicity, thus, is simply kinship writ large' (2001b: 274; all references are to van den Berghe's work in this section unless otherwise stated).

The basic question asked by sociobiology is: 'why are animals social, that is, why do they cooperate?' (1978: 402). According to Pierre van den Berghe, the answer to this question was long intuitively known: 'animals are social to the

BOX 3.2 **Pierre van den Berghe**

Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Washington, Pierre van den Berghe has published extensively in the area of ethnic and race relations, including *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (1981), probably the most elaborate statement of his sociobiological approach. '**The general failure of sociologists to understand, much less accept, an evolutionary perspective on human behavior transcends mere ignorance and ideological bias, although it incorporates a good deal of both**', he writes. '**It also includes a general anthropocentric discomfort with evolutionary thinking … and a trained sociological incapacity to accept the fundamental canons of scientific theory construction: reductionism, individualism, materialism and parsimony**' (van den Berghe 1990).

'**Everything in my biography predestined me to become interested in ethnic relations**', says van den Berghe. '**Born of a French mother and a Belgian father in the then Belgian Congo, I was successively exposed to linguistic and class conflicts in bilingual Belgium, to Nazi occupation in Belgium and France, to a colonial situation in the Congo, to American race relations as an undergraduate at Stanford, and then, as a trained anthropologist *cum* sociologist, to a succession of periods of field work in situations of complex race and ethnic conflicts in Mexico, South Africa, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, and Peru. By the mid-1970's, it was becoming clear to me that the cultural determinist, social science paradigm, dominant for a half century, was coming unstuck. I began to look at ethnic (and 'race') relations as kinship relations writ large, and to link nepotism to the evolution of animal sociality in general. Thus, I arrived at a model of gene-culture co-evolution which looked at ethnic relations and ethnocentrism as the product of both natural selection and a multiplicity of cultural factors. In this, too, my life history played a key role: on my father's side, I am descended from three generations of physicians, and my maternal grandfather, Maurice Caullery, was a distinguished French biologist**' (personal correspondence).

extent that cooperation is mutually beneficial'. What sociobiology does, van den Berghe argues, is to supply the main genetic mechanism for animal sociality, namely 'kin selection' to increase inclusive fitness. The concept of 'kin selection' was first developed by William Donald Hamilton in 1964, but remained arcane to social scientists until the publication of Edward Osborne Wilson's *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975), and Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* (1976) (2001a: 167). It basically implies that:

> an animal can duplicate its genes directly through its own reproduction, or indirectly through the reproduction of relatives with which it shares specific proportions of genes. Animals, therefore, can be expected to behave cooperatively, and thereby enhance each other's fitness to the extent that they are genetically related. This is what is meant by kin selection. (1978: 402)

Van den Berghe claims that kin selection, or mating with relatives, is a powerful cement of sociality in humans too. In fact, both ethnicity and race are extensions of the idiom of kinship: 'therefore, ethnic and race sentiments are to be understood as an extended and attenuated form of kin selection' (ibid.: 403). To put it differently, ethnic groups, races and nations 'are super-families of (distant) relatives, real or putative, who tend to intermarry, and who are knit together by vertical ties of descent reinforced by horizontal ties of marriage' (2001b: 274). That the extended kinship is sometimes putative rather than real is not important. Just as in the smaller kin units, the kinship is often real enough 'to become the basis of these powerful sentiments we call nationalism, tribalism, racism, and ethnocentrism'. If that is the case, then how do we recognize our 'kin'? According to van den Berghe, 'only a few of the world's societies use primarily morphological phenotypes to define themselves'. It follows that cultural criteria of group membership are more salient than physical ones, if the latter is used at all. In a way, this is inevitable because neighbouring populations resemble each other in terms of their genetic composition. Eye colour in Europe, van den Berghe notes, is a good case in point. The further north one goes, the higher the proportion of lightly pigmented eyes. 'Yet, at no point in the journey is there a noticeable discontinuity.' The criteria for identifying kinsmen, on the other hand, should discriminate more reliably between groups than within groups. In other words, 'the criterion chosen must show more intergroup than intra-group variance'. Cultural criteria, like differences of accent, body adornment and the like, meet this requirement far more reliably than physical ones (1978: 404–7). Language is particularly useful in this respect because, van den Berghe maintains, 'ethnic affiliation can be quickly ascertained through speech and is not easily faked' (2001b: 275).

Noting that kin selection does not explain all of human sociality, van den Berghe identifies two additional mechanisms: reciprocity and coercion. 'Reciprocity is cooperation for mutual benefit, and with expectation of return,

and it can operate between kin or between non-kin. Coercion is the use of force for one-sided benefit'. All human societies continue to be organized on the basis of all three principles of sociality. But, van den Berghe adds, 'the larger and the more complex a society becomes, the greater the importance of reciprocity' (1978: 403). Moreover, while kin selection, real or putative, is more dominant in intra-group relations, coercion becomes the rule in interethnic (or interracial) relationships. Ethnic groups may occasionally enter into a symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship (reciprocity), but this is usually short-lived: relations between different groups are more often than not antagonistic (ibid.: 409).

Van den Berghe concedes that ethnic groups appear and disappear, coalesce or break up. But, he hastens to add, all this construction, reconstruction and deconstruction remains firmly anchored in the reality of 'socially perceived, biological descent' (2001b: 274). This structure, 'the biology of human mating and reproduction', is prior: 'Ethnies have existed since the dawn of history' (2005: 115). We may speak of nationalism, when a sense of belonging to an ethnie is transformed into a demand for political autonomy or independence. A nation, in this sense, is simply 'a politically conscious ethnie' (2001b: 273).

Edward Shils, Clifford Geertz and the culturalist approach

The culturalist approach is generally associated with the works of Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz whose definitions of the 'primordial' we have alluded to above. In their oft-quoted 1993 article, 'The Poverty of Primordialism', Eller and Coughlan argue that the concept of primordialism used in the works of these writers contains three main ideas:

1. Primordial identities or attachments are 'given', *a priori*, underived, prior to all experience and interaction … Primordial attachments are 'natural', even 'spiritual', rather than sociological. Primordial attachments have no social source.
2. Primordial sentiments are 'ineffable', overpowering, and coercive … If an individual is a member of a group, he or she *necessarily* feels certain attachments to that group and its practices.
3. Primordialism is essentially a question of emotion and affect … These feelings make primordialism more than a mere interest theory, and primordial identities are qualitatively different from other kinds of identities. (1993: 187)

Yet Eller and Coughlan do not stop there, and argue that this is indeed how Shils and Geertz view ethnic and national ties. As several commentators have noted, however, this is a gross misreading of these writers' works. It is true that Geertz, for example, cites the congruities of blood, language, religion and particular social practices among the objects of primordial attachments. But he

never suggests that these objects are themselves 'given' or primordial; rather, they are 'assumed' to be given by individuals:

> One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import *attributed to* the tie itself. The general strength of such primordial bonds … differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. But for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments *seem to* flow more from a sense of natural … affinity than from social interaction. (1993: 259–60, emphasis added)

BOX 3.3 **Clifford Geertz**

Born in 1926 in San Francisco, Clifford Geertz joined the Anthropology Department of the University of Chicago in 1960, then became the first professor of the newly established School of Social Sciences at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 1970, where he created '**a school of interpretive social science**' (Handler 1991: 610), and devoted himself to full-time research and writing until his death in 2006. Variously described as 'the best-known and most influential of American anthropologists of the past several decades' (Shweder 2007: 191) or 'the foremost anthropologist of his generation' (White 2007: 1187), Geertz's work straddled the boundaries between social sciences and humanities, and his impact was felt in areas as diverse as political science, philosophy and literary criticism. It is through his first collection of essays, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), that Geertz made his greatest impact in the field of nationalism studies.

Geertz's approach to culture is 'semiotic'. '**Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning**' (Geertz 1973: 5). Yet this approach is not dependent on a theory of meaning. '**I am not a meaning realist**', he notes. '**I do not think meanings are out there to theorize about. One tries to look at behaviour, what people say, and make sense of it – that is my theoretical approach to meaning. That is why … I differ a little bit from the phenomenologists. They concern themselves with general issues of meaning independently of any empirical case. I am concerned with what some *thing* means – what the cockfight means, what a funeral means**' (Micheelsen 2002: 6). Elsewhere he quips: '**The elements of a culture are not like a pile of sand … It's more like an octopus, a rather badly integrated creature – what passes for a brain keeps it together, more or less, in one ungainly whole. But we must, as anthropologists, search for as much coherency as we can find, try to find connections, and where we can't find them simply say that we can't find them**' (cited in Shweder 2007: 199; see also Schneider 1987).

Geertz' language here is quite clear (see Box 3.3): the unaccountable absolute import 'attributed to' the tie, attachments that 'seem to' flow, or earlier, the 'assumed' givens of social existence. What attributes the quality of being 'natural', 'ineffable' and 'overpowering' to the 'givens of social existence' are the perceptions of those who believe in them, not Geertz. In the words of Brubaker:

> In most discussions, this crucial distinction between *perceived* 'givens' and *actual* 'givens' is elided. Primordialists are depicted as 'analytical naturalizers' rather than 'analysts of naturalizers'. In fact, on the primordialist account, it is participants, not the analysts, who are the real primordialists, treating ethnicity as naturally given and immutable. (2004: 83)

The same goes for Shils. Eller and Coughlan infer from Shils' 1957 essay that he believes in the sacredness of primordial attachments. The evidence, they contend, is provided by his following assertion: 'the primordial property … could have had sacredness attributed to it' (Shils 1957: 142). But, like Geertz, Shils does not attribute sacredness to these attachments; instead, he notes that the attachment derives its strength from 'a certain ineffable significance … *attributed to* the tie of blood' (Shils 1957: 142, emphasis added). It needs to be pointed out at this point that Eller and Coughlan's (mis)interpretation has in fact proved quite resilient. Even as late as 2002, Leoussi finds the labelling of Shils and Geertz as 'cultural primordialist' 'quite inappropriate' given that it is Shils himself who coined the term 'primordial' and that 'culture does not "construct" these relationships but consecrates them by articulating, elaborating or idealising them' (2002: 256). In fact, it is Anthony D. Smith who first used the term 'cultural primordialist' (simplified here as 'culturalist') in his 1998 survey of contemporary theories of nationalism. The passage is worth quoting in full as it goes to the heart of a serious confusion that continues to surround the work of Shils and Geertz:

> Neither Geertz nor Shils regarded primordial ties as purely matters of emotion … Nor did they regard primordiality as inhering in the objects themselves, but only in the perceptions and emotions they engendered … This is the language of perception and belief, of the mental and emotional world of the individuals concerned. Geertz is underlining the power of what we might term a 'participants' primordialism'; he is not saying that the world is constituted by an objective primordial reality, only that many of us believe in primordial objects and feel their power. (1998a: 157–8; see also Smith 2000: 21; 2001a: 53–4; Fenton 2003: 82–3 and Tilley 1997)

In the light of this, the culturalist approach may be more properly described as one that focuses on the role of 'perceptions' in understanding ethnic and national attachments, or in the words of Geertz (1993: 5), on the webs of meaning spun

by the individuals themselves. As Tilley explains convincingly, Geertz is in fact 'making use of the term "primordial" more in its sense of "first in a series" … in order to highlight the ways in which foundation concepts provide the basis for other ideas, values, customs or ideologies held by the individual' (1997: 502; see also Horowitz 2002: 78).

Adrian Hastings and perennialism

As I have alluded to in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, some commentators prefer to distinguish the view that nations have existed from the dawn of history from other versions of primordialism. Smith introduces the term 'perennialism' to refer to those who believe in the historical antiquity of the 'nation', its immemorial and perennial character. The perennialists do not treat the nation as a 'fact of nature'; but they see it as a constant and fundamental feature of human life throughout recorded history (1998a: 159). There are two versions of perennialism, according to Smith. The first, what he calls 'continuous perennialism', sees the roots of modern nations stretching back several centuries – even millennia in a few cases – into the distant past. This version stresses 'continuity', pointing to cultural continuities and identities over long time spans, which link medieval or ancient nations to their modern counterparts. The second version, 'recurrent perennialism', refers to those who regard the nation as 'a category of human association that can be found everywhere throughout history'. Particular nations may come and go, but the nation itself is ubiquitous and, as a form of association and collective identity, 'recurrent' (2000: 34–5; see also Smith 2001b: 243–4 and 2002: 12–14). According to Smith, the lines separating these two versions are not clear. Still, he continues, recurrent perennialists, such as the medieval historians Adrian Hastings, John Gillingham, Colette Beaune and Bernard Guenée, are more 'careful' and 'nuanced' in their analyses than continuous perennialists. They argue that there are sufficient documents and chronicles which prove the existence of 'nations' and 'national sentiment' in Western Europe from the later medieval epoch, but not of 'nationalism' as an ideology (2002: 12; see also Box 3.4). We can better understand the perennialist position by considering the writings of the late Adrian Hastings, probably the most commonly cited exponent of perennialist views in nationalism studies.

Hastings begins his analysis by defining ethnicity as 'a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language'. The nation is a far more self-conscious community than ethnicity; formed from one or more ethnicities and identified with a literature of its own, 'it possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control of specific territory'. Nationalism, on the other hand, can be defined in two ways. As a political theory, it claims that each nation should have its own state, and dates only from the nineteenth century. In practice, however, it derives fom the belief

that one's own national tradition is particularly valuable and needs to be defended at all costs through the establishment or expansion of its own state. In that 'practical' sense, it existed as a powerful reality in some places long before the nineteenth century (1997: 3–4). This is indeed Hastings' central thesis: modern nations can only grow out of certain ethnicities, under the impact of the development of a vernacular and the pressures of the state. It is true that every ethnicity did not become a nation, but many have done so. The defining origin of the nation, Hastings argues, like that of every other great reality of modern Western experience, needs to be located in an age a good deal further back than most modernist historians feel safe to handle, that of the shaping of medieval society. Hastings contends that ethnicities naturally turn into nations at the point when their specific vernacular moves from an oral to written usage to the

BOX 3.4 *Adrian Hastings*

Born in 1929 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, theologian, church historian and priest Adrian Hastings first came to prominence in 1973, when he exposed the massacre by the Portuguese army of around 400 peasants in a remote Mozambican village called Wiryamu. His subsequent article in *The Times* and appearance at the United Nations did much to precipitate the downfall of the Portuguese regime the following year. Hastings became a Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Zimbabwe in 1982, and a Professor of Theology at Leeds University in 1985, until his retirement in 1994. The foremost expert on Christianity in Africa, he died in Leeds in 2001. Hastings's main contribution to the theoretical debate on nationalism is *The Construction of Nationhood* (1997), based on the Wiles Lectures he delivered at The Queen's University of Belfast in 1996.

'When I chose this subject', writes Hastings in the opening paragraphs of this book, **'I thought that in developing my theme I would be able to begin by largely adopting the viewpoint of recent studies of nationalism and go on from there to insert within it the somewhat neglected dimension of religion. In particular, I naturally intended to take as a starting point Eric Hobsbawm's Wiles Lectures of 1985 on *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* … However I quickly realized that my own understanding of nationalism differed too profoundly from that of Hobsbawm to make this possible in the way I had hoped. Moreover the very parameters he laid down for the subject effectively ruled out two-thirds of what I wanted to discuss. Far from moving from Hobsbawm, I realized that the only course open to me was to attempt to deconstruct his central thesis in favour of a very different one … In consequence, the central topic of this book has become the history of nations and nationalism in themselves … My discussion of the relationship of religion to nationalism has then had to be done within the course of a larger historical reconstruction, and in the consciousness of speaking across the frontline of an historiographical schism'** (Hastings 1997: 1–2; see also Maxwell 2001; Gifford 2001).

extent that it is being regularly employed for the production of a literature, and particularly for the translation of the Bible (ibid.: 11–12; see also 180–1).

In the light of the observations in Box 3.4, Hastings suggests that England presents the prototype of both the nation and the nation-state in its fullest sense. Its national development precedes every other:

> Despite the, often exaggerated, counter-action of the Norman Conquest, an English nation-state survived 1066, grew fairly steadily in the strength of its national consciousness through the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but emerged still more vociferously with its vernacular literary renaissance and the pressures of the Hundred Years Wars by the end of the fourteenth. Nevertheless the greatest intensity of its nationalist experience … must undoubtedly be located in and after the late sixteenth century. (1997: 4–5)

The evidence for this can be found in the history of the word 'nation' itself. After a brief excursus into various historical documents and chronicles, Hastings concludes: 'The frequency and consistency in usage of the word [nation] from the early fourteenth century onward strongly suggest a basis in experience: Englishmen felt themselves to be a nation' (ibid.: 15).

What makes the English case so important, on the other hand, is the role of religion in the birth of English nationalism, and the precise impact of the latter on its neighbours and colonies. Religion is in fact an integral part of nationalism; 'the Bible provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation', writes Hastings. Without it and its Christian interpretation, nations and nationalism, as we know them, could have never existed (see Box 3.4).

A critique of primordialism

There are several problems with primordialist approaches. In what follows, I will mainly focus on the general criticisms of primordialism, leaving the specific charges brought against particular versions aside, in order to avoid ending up with an exhaustive list. These relate to four, closely related, aspects of primordialist explanations: the nature of ethnic and national ties, the origins of ethnic and national ties, the date of emergence of nations and the question of emotion and affect. Since the problems are related, so too are the criticisms.

The nature of ethnic and national ties

One common denominator of the primordialists, with the exception of culturalists, is their tendency to take ethnic and national identities as 'given', or as facts of nature. They are transmitted from one generation to the next with their 'essential' characteristics unchanged; they are thus fixed, or static. This view has been undermined in the last couple of decades by an ever-growing number of studies

which stress the 'socially constructed' nature of ethnic and national identities, pointing to the role of individual choices, tactical decisions, political opportunity structures and various contingencies in their construction. Far from being fixed, their boundaries and contents are continuously negotiated and redefined in each generation as groups react or adapt to changing circumstances.

This is the main thrust of the instrumentalist critique of primordialism. According to Brass, one of the most vociferous advocates of instrumentalism, primordial attachments are clearly variable (1991: 70–2; for Brass' own explanation of nationalism see Chapter 4). Take language, for example: many people speak more than one language, dialect or code in multilingual societies, and many illiterate people, far from being attached to their mother tongues, will not even know its name when asked. In some cases, members of different ethnic groups will choose to change their language in order to provide better opportunities for their children or to differentiate themselves further from other ethnic groups. Finally, many people never think about their language at all, nor do they attach to it any emotional significance. Religions too have been subject to many changes over the centuries. 'Shifts in religious practices brought about under the influence of religious reformers are common occurrences in premodern, modernizing, and even in postindustrial societies' (ibid.: 71). As for place of birth, it can be conceded that one's homeland is important for some people; but, Brass remarks, many people have migrated by choice from their native places and a considerable proportion of them have chosen to assimilate into their new society and have lost any sense of identification with their homelands. More importantly, a person's attachment to her region or homeland rarely becomes politically significant unless there is some degree of perceived discrimination against the region or its people in the larger society. Besides, even the fact of one's place of birth is subject to variation since a region may be defined in many ways. When it comes to kinship connections, Brass claims that 'the range of genuine kin relationships is usually too small to be of political significance'. 'Fictive' kin relationships may extend the range of ethnic groups, but the fact that they are fictive presumes their variability by definition. Moreover, the meaning of such fictive relationships will naturally vary from person to person since the 'imagined' character of the attachment will be dominant in these relationships (ibid.).

The same point is made by Smith, an ethnosymbolist (see Chapter 5), who argues that 'ethnic ties like other social bonds are subject to economic, social and political forces, and therefore fluctuate and change according to circumstances'. Intermarriages, migrations, external conquests and the importation of labour have made it very unlikely for many ethnic groups to preserve 'the cultural homogeneity and pure "essence" posited by most primordialists' (1995: 33).

In a later essay, van den Berghe rejects this criticism, blaming 'social constructionists' for judging primordialist approaches without really understanding

them. According to him, the fact that ethnic and national attachments are based in biology does not mean they are frozen or static. In fact, this flies in the face of the theory of evolution. 'Three or four generations of changing patterns of exogamy or endogamy can profoundly alter ethnic boundaries … create entirely new ones'. In short, 'ethnicity is both primordial and socially constructed' (2005: 117). Yet van den Berghe never explains how this can be so, or considers the implications of this for his sociobiological theory of ethnicity which treats ethnic groups as 'extended kin groups'. How is exogamy possible if humans are biologically programmed to mate with relatives? What happens to 'vertical ties of descent' if and when ethnic boundaries change? And if extended kinship is completely fictive or 'putative', to use van den Berghe's words, then what remains of 'biology'? A similar point is made by Smith in his review of van den Berghe's *The Ethnic Phenomenon* who points out that the stress on cultural and environmental factors 'that facilitate, promote, inhibit, or modify these genetically determined tendencies' weaken the direct link between sociobiological theory and the explanation of human behaviour (1983: 367; see also Jenkins 1983: 430).

The origins of ethnic and national ties

If ethnic and national attachments are 'given', then they are also 'underived', prior to all social interaction, and 'ineffable', that is 'incapable of being expressed in words' – thus unanalysable. This leads several commentators to dismiss primordialism, especially its nationalist and sociobiological versions, as unscientific and teleological. Unscientific, because, as Eller and Coughlan argue, primordialism tends to see the identification of primordial attachments as the successful end of analysis (1993: 189). Teleological, because primordialists treat the history of modern nations as an inexorable process which tends towards a predetermined outcome – starting from their rudimentary beginnings in the ancient or medieval epochs to present-day nation-states (Smith 2000: 51).

As Horowitz notes, what is 'ineffable' in ethnic and national attachments is left unexplained in these formulations. What is more, 'there is no effort at explaining how some affiliations become primordial, while other candidate affiliations lose out, or why ethnic boundaries settle where they do, including some subgroups and excluding others'. At the end of the day, Horowitz concludes, there is little in primordialist explanations other than an emphasis on the intensity of ethnic affiliations (2002: 74).

The same problem is underlined by Brass who argues that we cannot predict, on the basis of attachments people have to their ethnic or national identities alone, either which groups will develop a successful nationalist movement or the form this movement will assume. Brass cites the creations of Israel and Pakistan as examples. A knowledge of orthodox Judaism or traditional Islam in India, he argues, would have suggested that the least likely possibilities would have been the rise of a Zionist movement or the movement for the creation of

Pakistan since traditional religious authorities in both cases were opposed to a secular state (1991: 73).

This is the burden of nationalist narratives which embody, in Balibar's words, a double illusion:

> It consists in believing that the generations which succeed one another over centuries on an approximately stable territory, under an approximately univocal designation, have handed down to each other an invariant substance. And it consists in believing that the process of development from which we select aspects retrospectively, so as to see ourselves as the culmination of that process, was the only one possible, that it represented a destiny. (1990: 338)

But this 'prehistory' consists of a multiplicity of qualitatively distinct events, none of which imply the subsequent nation. More importantly, these events do not belong to the history of one particular nation. 'It is not a line of necessary evolution but a series of conjunctural relations which has inscribed them after the event to the prehistory of the nation form' (ibid.: 340).

Gellner approaches this problem in his own remarkable way. For him, the fundamental question is: 'do nations have navels?' – the analogy here is with the philosophical argument about the creation of mankind. If Adam was created by God at a certain date, then he did not have a navel, because he did not go through the process by which people acquire navels. The same goes with nations, says Gellner. The ethnic, the cultural national community is rather like the navel. 'Some nations have it and some don't and in any case it's inessential' (1996b: 367–70). He refers to the Estonians to illustrate his argument. The Estonians, he contends, are a clear example of highly successful navel-free nationalism:

> At the beginning of the nineteenth century they didn't even have a name for themselves. They were just referred to as people who lived on the land as opposed to German or Swedish burghers and aristocrats and Russian administrators. They had no ethnonym. They were just a category without any ethnic self-consciousness. Since then they've been brilliantly successful in creating a vibrant culture … It's a very vital and vibrant culture, but it was created by the kind of modernist process which I then generalise for nationalism and nations in general. (Ibid.: 367–8)

This criticism is valid in the case of sociobiological explanations as well. These accounts, based on such presumably 'universal' factors as blood ties, kinship relationships, are not able to explain why only a small proportion of ethnic groups become aware of their common identity, while others disappear in the mists of history. If we accept that ethnic groups are extensions of the idiom of

kinship, that is super-families, then this has to be valid in the case of all ethnic groups. But as some scholars have underlined, for every successful nationalist movement there are *n* unsuccessful ones (Gellner 1983: 44–5; Halliday 2000). Why do some groups effectively establish their own political roof, while others fail?

The date of emergence of nations

What primordialism does recognize, argues Grosby, is that, despite changes in their structural form, 'there have always been primordial attachments' (2001: 253). This is the central idea behind perennialist interpretations which can be considered as a milder version of primordialism, for they reject the nationalist belief in the 'naturalness' of nations, while retaining a belief in their antiquity. According to Hastings, we can even talk about a 'historiographical schism' between modernist social scientists and medieval historians who reject the 'modernist' orthodoxy (1997: 2; see also Box 3.4). This picture is not entirely accurate, however, since for every medieval historian who argues for the antiquity of nations, there are others who emphasize their novel and constructed nature. All you need to do, says Breuilly in a recent intervention, is to find your own pet medievalist (2005: 47).

Patrick J. Geary is a good example of a growing number of medieval historians who firmly reject the perennialist position. For Geary, the congruence between early medieval (let alone ancient) and contemporary peoples is a myth. We have difficulty in recognizing the differences between earlier ways of perceiving group identities and more contemporary attitudes because 'we are trapped in the very historical process we are attempting to study'. What we see in reality is the long-term, discontinuous use of certain labels that we have come to see as 'ethnic' (2002: 41, 155). But these names were less descriptions than claims; the social realities behind them underwent rapid and radical transformation in each case:

> Whatever a Goth was in the third-century kingdom of Cniva, the reality of a Goth in sixteenth-century Spain was far different, in language, religion, political and social organization, even ancestry … With the constant shifting of allegiances, intermarriages, transformations, and appropriations, it appears that all that remained constant were names, and these were vessels that could hold different contents at different times. (Ibid.: 118)

In fact, contrary to what Hastings and other perennialists claim, names were renewable resources; old names could be reclaimed, adapted to new circumstances and used as rallying cries for new powers. And they could convince people of continuity, even if radical discontinuity was the lived reality (ibid.).

The history of the nations that populated Europe, Geary concludes, begins in the eighteenth century, not in the sixth. Given this, we should not take claims to

continuity at their face value. The nationalist or perennialist conception of history is static; it is the 'very antithesis of history':

> The history of European peoples in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages is not the story of a primordial moment but of a continuous process. It is the story of political appropriation and manipulation of inherited names … It is a history of constant change, of radical discontinuities, and of political and cultural zigzags, masked by the repeated re-appropriation of old words to define new realities. (Ibid.: 155–6)

As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, this is also the main thesis of modernist accounts which treat both the concept of nation and the forms of political units we now call nation-states as products of the last two hundred years. As Zubaida, for example, reminds us, many of the states and empires in history ruled over diverse populations. Neither the state personnel, nor the subject population were ethnically homogeneous, and the rulers more often than not had a different ethnicity than the population they ruled over. Moreover, 'shared ethnicity between ruler and ruled did not always constitute grounds for favour or mutual support' (1978: 54). Ethnicity was not, and had never been, the primary basis of identification for the members of these multinational empires. Ethnic designations, although not devoid of reference to linguistic groups or ethnicity, were inconsistently used and often had non-ethnic connotations. For many, locality or religion remained a strong anchor of identity until well into the nineteenth century. Even then, ethnicity was one identity among many, and certainly not the most important.

Breuilly expresses similar views with regard to the English case, Hastings's prototypical nation. According to him, 'the continuity of a term such as English does not automatically mean a continuity in the meaning of the term'. Equally importantly, 'the existence of an institution does not automatically produce some determinant, "matching" consciousness'. The shire court, for example, may be regarded as a 'national' institution given its territorial reach and significance, but that does not show, in itself, that those who have used such courts thought of them as 'national' (2005: 22; for the thesis of the historical novelty of the English nation see also Kumar 2003 and Colley 1992).

Yet it is not only the modernists who take issue with the perennialist position. 'Is a sense of cultural and historical difference the same as "nationalism" ' asks Smith, whose reading of the modernist position is not at variance with that of the perennialists. Or 'can the perception of differences even in political symbols like temple, territory, and kingship be usefully termed nationalism'? Smith's answer is of course a flexible one, one that calls for different concepts of nationalism for different epochs and culture areas (2000: 49).

What complicates matters further in all these cases and in general for any attempt to see whether there were nations and nationalism in antiquity is lack

of evidence, even from the small ruling strata (Smith 2002). In the words of Connor:

> A key problem faced by scholars when dating the emergence of nations is that national consciousness is a mass, not an elite phenomenon, and the masses until quite recently isolated in rural pockets and being semi- or totally illiterate, were quite mute with regard to their sense of group identity(ies). Scholars have been necessarily largely dependent upon the written word for their evidence, yet it has been the elites who have chronicled history. Seldom have their generalities about national consciousness been applicable to the masses … (2004: 40–1)

I will return to this point later, when I discuss the ethnosymbolist interpretations of nations and nationalism. Suffice it to say at this point that the question of 'dating' the origins of nations goes to the heart of the theoretical debate on nationalism, and there are several scholars who question Connor's definition of 'nation' as a mass phenomenon. Hastings himself rejects it, arguing that it is not necessary for a nation to exist that everyone within it should have full consciousness that it exists; if many people beyond government circles or a small ruling class consistently believe in it, then the nation does exist (1997: 26).

The question of emotion and affect

Primordialism is about emotions and affect. What the primordialists offer, argues Horowitz, is 'an account of the thick nature of ethnic affiliations, based as they are on community, even communion, at a level that can only be justified by myths of common ancestry and analogies of ethnicity to the family' (2002: 75). For some commentators, this is indeed the most important contribution of primordialist approaches to our understanding of nations and nationalism. The primordialists have been able to focus our attention, writes Smith, 'on the intensity and passion that ethnicity and nationalism so often evoke, and which modernists [whose alternative explanations we will see in the next chapter], even when they condemn it, so often fail to address' (2008: 10; see also Ichijo and Uzelac 2005: 52).

Eller and Coughlan, while recognizing the important role emotions play in human social life, object to their mystification. They argue that the mystification of the primordial has led to a fallacy, namely the desocializing of the phenomenon. It is suggested that these emotional ties are not born in social interaction, but are just there, 'implicit in the relationship (kin or ethnic) itself'. According to Eller and Coughlan, the source of this fallacy 'is the failure of sociology and anthropology to deal intelligibly with emotion' (1993: 192; this is no longer the case – see Chapters 6 and 7 for examples of work focusing on nationalism and emotions from a 'non-primordialist' perspective).

The way out of this impasse lies in Geertz's writings, ironically the main target of Eller and Coughlan's article. Drawing on Geertz, Tilley argues that:

> the 'primordial' elements of culture are not affect but the cognitive framework which shapes and informs affect … Certain assumptions or knowledge systems set the stage for affect, and to the extent that such knowledge systems form a kind of cognitive substratum not only for affect but for most conscious thought, they might be said to be 'primordial'. (1997: 503)

Primordialism today

In an overview of the contribution of primordialists to our understanding of nationalism, Horowitz complains:

> The matter reached the point at which anyone wishing to make an argument about the fluidity of identities or the rationality of pursuing a conflict has half the argument made by citing the allegedly contrary view of unnamed, benighted primordialists. So evocative is the epithet, there is reason to suspect the primordialists are no longer much read. (2002: 73)

His words were echoing those of Brubaker who declared in 1996 that primordialism is 'a long-dead horse that writers on ethnicity and nationalism continue to flog'. 'No serious scholar today', Brubaker wrote, 'holds the view that is routinely attributed to primordialists in straw-man setups, namely that nations or ethnic groups are primordial, unchanging entities' (1996: 15). The recent revival of primordialism showed that these words were somewhat premature. The last decade has witnessed a proliferation of studies which resuscitated the primordialist enterprise and presented a sanitized version of it as an alternative to modernist explanations.

For the new primordialists, even perennialism is not enough. Hence Steven Grosby, the most outspoken supporter of primordialism in the field of nationalism studies, accuses Hastings of 'uncertain perennialism', pointing to his claim that Biblical Israel provided a model for later nations. 'In so far as Hastings recognized ancient Israel to be a nation', he maintains, 'then the possibility of nationality as an historically perennial manifestation is open' (2003: 10). According to Grosby, 'evidence of humans forming large, territorially distinct societies can be observed from our first written records' (2005a: 1). The question is whether such societies as early Sri Lanka, ancient Israel, Japan of the eighth century CE, medieval Poland of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries or Korea between the tenth and fourteenth centuries could be considered nations. They could be, argues Grosby, as there were a number of factors which led to the formation of nations – 'a community of kinship, specifically a bounded,

territorially extensive, temporally deep community of kinship' (ibid.: 14) – in pre-modern times. Law, for example, was such a factor in ancient Israel; government officials were placed throughout the land to administer it and to collect taxes. Moreover, the Israelite law codes 'drew a distinction between the "native of the land", the Israelite, to whom the law applied, and the foreigner'. In other cases, the emperor was a formative factor, 'an unquestioned object of veneration transcending … regional loyalties'. Hence in ancient Japan, 'Indicating the existence of a national collective self-consciousness was, during the Tokugawa Period, the combination of the samurai's slogans "revere the emperor" and "expel the barbarian".' Another important factor in the formation of a distinctive culture was religion. 'The God of Israel was Yahweh, while those countries that bordered Israel had different Gods.' 'In Japan, by the late seventh century CE, the emperor's family had appropriated the sun goddess Amaterasu, as not only its divine ancestor but also as being ascendant over all local, clan Gods, the *kami*.' Language, too, contributed to the formation of these 'pre-modern national communities'. There is evidence in the Israelite case, suggests Grosby, that 'differences in language may have been understood as indicating distinctions between native Israelites and foreigners'. The final formative factor mentioned by Grosby is war. Wars with the Philistines and the Ammonites in the case of ancient Israel and with T'ang China in the case of ancient Japan required the mass mobilization of the entire population, and it is difficult to avoid suspecting that, given the existence of a territorially unifying religion and a law propagated by the centre, 'there must have been some degree of recognition by the peasantry that the centre of their respective society was precisely that, and accordingly was due their respect'. In short, all these pre-modern societies had a number of characteristics that justify considering them nations: 'a self-designating name; a written history; a degree of cultural uniformity, often as a result of and sustained by religion; legal codes; an authoritative centre, and a conception of a bounded territory' (ibid.: 66–72).

It needs to be pointed out that Grosby does not rule out the possibility of change altogether; the conclusion that there were nations in pre-modern times forces the analyst to tolerate various ambiguities, various partial developments, he says. But this is the case for modern nations as well. One should free oneself from 'the tyranny of impressionistic disjunctive periodisations' and consider the evidence from antiquity and the Middle Ages. The term 'nation', he concludes, implies 'the continuation over time of a relatively uniform territorial culture' (ibid.: 20, 74; 2005b: 69).

Aviel Roshwald, in his new book, *The Endurance of Nationalism* (2006), goes even further and argues that not only nations, but also 'nationalism existed in the ancient world'. He uses the term 'nation' to refer to 'any community larger than one of mutual acquaintance that claims some form of collective, bounded, territorial sovereignty *in the name of its distinctive identity*, or any population in its capacity as a society on whose behalf such claims are asserted'.

Nationalism, on the other hand, is 'any ideology or set of attitudes, emotions and mentalities based on the assertion of such claims' (2006: 3). According to Roshwald, 'the idea of nationhood as well as the phenomenon of national consciousness and its expression in nationalism are not exclusively modern, but have appeared in various forms, among diverse societies, throughout much of the history of literate civilization'. To see this, he argues, we need to develop a terminology which allows us to differentiate between pre-modern and modern forms of nationalism. As in the case of Grosby, Roshwald's prime example of a pre-modern nation is ancient Israel. The Enlightenment idea of a social contract, which lies at the basis of modern secular conceptions of sovereignty, he contends, is inspired by biblical covenant theology. This does not of course mean that the Torah is a nationalist propaganda pamphlet. Rather, it means that 'the Jewish scriptures and liturgy both presuppose and reinforce a strong sense of national particularism' (ibid.: 16–17). But the ancient Jews were not the only ones to develop a recognizably national form of identity; ancient Greeks too possessed conceptions and visions of collective identity that qualified as expressions of nationalism. Roshwald is careful to stress that he is not proposing a definition of nationalism that is broad enough to cover all societies in all periods of history. But even if the ancient Jews and ancient Athenians were the only examples of pre-modern nationalism, this is significant because 'they fly in the face of the dominant theoretical school of thought that regards nationalism as the exclusive outgrowth of the material and cultural conditions of modernity' and they have served as models in the development of modern European conceptions of nationhood (ibid.: 30–1).

Grosby and Roshwald's analyses are not immune from the general criticisms that are levelled against perennialism or other versions of primordialism. Their understanding of national identities and cultures is static, at times essentialist, their account of nation formation reductionist and teleological (for an extended critique of Grosby's views see Özkırımlı 2007 – and Grosby's reply 2007). More importantly, as even sympathetic commentators such as Smith or Routledge point out, they are guilty of 'retrospective nationalism', or the tendency to project modern concepts and categories onto earlier social formations. Admitting that perennialist interpretations of Jewish history have raised some important questions, Smith nevertheless concedes that these interpretations, which have been recently challenged by 'post-Zionist' scholars, invites 'the possibility of a metaphysical rather than a purely causal historical analysis' for 'it suggests that not only is the Jewish nation a visibly recurrent collective cultural identity over a three-thousand-year span, it is also one that endured immemorially throughout the long exile of its dispersion and fragmentation' (2000: 49–50). In a similar vein, Routledge, an archaelogist focused on the Bronze and Iron Age cultures of the Middle East, notes that Biblical Israel as a 'nation' is not 'the expected outcome of a universal tendency, but rather the cumulative effect of the intentioned transformation of

established cultural resources in a particular historical context'. This is not to suggest that we cannot ask whether ancient Israel was a 'nation'. Rather, we should not forget that 'yes' and 'no' are not the only appropriate answers to such a question if our aim is to explore alternative ontologies offered by the past. People in the ancient Middle East, writes Routledge, have identified themselves in a variety of ways and under a variety of circumstances. These practices should indeed be studied, but 'to be meaningful such studies must encounter pre-modern pasts as more than a "mirror of the present", for in fitting the past to the present's frame we risk merely revealing the present as it already knows itself to be' (2003: 224–5, 229).

This is also the burden of Grosby's attempt to rehabilitate the concept of the 'primordial' by calling our attention to the universal tendency of humans to form large, territorially distinct societies which is based on a distinction between 'the native of the land' and the 'foreigner'. Is the tendency to distinguish between 'us' and 'them', we may ask, sufficient to justify the existence of pre-modern nations? Grosby's argument is trivial, unless it can establish that this tendency has produced the same kind of social organization or collective identity throughout recorded history, national or otherwise. This also forms the gist of the modernist critique of the primordialist line of thinking. A clear distinction between various eras is crucial, argues Hobsbawm in a recent exchange with Grosby, 'since so much of the presumed traditions and symbols surviving from the "nation's" alleged antiquity come, not from a supposed "popular memory", but are the product, generally of rulers and ideologists, at specific historical moments'. According to Hobsbawm, 'primordialism is dangerous for both historians and sociologists':

> It confuses socio-cultural analysis by failing to distinguish between the essentially state-aspiring nineteenth- to twentieth-century 'nation' from ensembles of communities politically dispersed by their structure, such as the ancient Hellenes … It confuses socio-political analysis by failing to distinguish, as the nineteenth-century politicians did so clearly … between achieved national reality (with or without a recognized group history) and indeterminate national potential. (2005: 81–2)

Further reading

Any bookshop will contain a plethora of nationalist histories and pamphlets stressing the primordial roots of particular nations. A useful introduction in this respect is the collection of essays edited by Kedourie (1971). For the sociobiological account of nationalism see van den Berghe (1978) and (2001b); for the culturalist perspective see the classic article by Shils (1957) and Geertz (1993); for the perennialist thesis see Hastings (1997). A reformulation of primordialism is provided in Roshwald (2006) and Grosby (2005a). Apart from these primary

sources, the reader should also consult Smith (2000) for an elaboration of perennialism and Horowitz (2002) for a critical overview of primordialism.

For a critique of primordialism from an instrumentalist and modernist standpoint see Brass (1991), Hobsbawm (2005) and Breuilly (2005). A controversial discussion of Shils and Geertz can be found in Eller and Coughlan (1993). Geary (2002) is a fascinating exposition of the 'myth' of the medieval origins of nations; Routledge (2003) is a more sympathetic, yet equally sharp, critique of primordialist theses. For a polemical exchange on the question of the antiquity of nations see Özkırımlı (2007) and Grosby (2007).

Chapter 4

Modernism

What is modernism?

Modernism emerged as a reaction to the self-evident primordialism of the older generations who saw nationalism as a natural and universal – or at least perennial – feature of human societies. According to Smith, classical modernism, the belief that nations and nationalism are intrinsic to the modern world and the revolution of modernity, achieved its canonical formulation in the modernization theories of the 1960s, which achieved wide currency in social sciences in the wake of the movements for decolonization in Asia and Africa (1998a: 3).

The common denominator of all these accounts is a belief in the modernity of nations and nationalism. For them, both appeared in the last two centuries and they are the products of specifically modern processes like capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state. In that sense, modernists are making both a chronological and a structural claim. They do not simply hold that nations and nationalism are historically novel; they also argue that they become a sociological necessity in the modern world, that there was no room for nations or nationalism in the pre-modern era (Smith 2003b: 358; Gorski 2006: 143; Ichijo and Uzelac 2005: 9–10; see also Smith 1994 and 1995).

As we will see in more detail below, apart from this basic belief, modernists have very little in common. I will thus divide modernist theories into three categories in terms of the key factors they identify, starting with those that emphasize economic transformations, followed by those that focus on political and social/cultural transformations respectively. It needs to be pointed out at the outset, not to cause any misundertandings, that theorists are classified on the basis of the factor they 'prioritize' in their accounts. This does not mean that they rely on a single factor to explain nationalism, but that they attach a greater weight to one set of factors as opposed to others.

Economic transformations

I will begin my overview with neo-Marxist and rational choice theories which stress economic factors in their explanations. Neo-Marxists believed that

traditional Marxism was ill-prepared to cope with the challenges posed by nationalism which were given a new urgency in the late 1960s and 1970s, with the proliferation of anti-colonial nationalist movements in many parts of the so-called Third World – to which most left-wing intellectuals were sympathetic – and the recent 'ethnic revival' in Europe and North America which was now threatening the unity of the 'established' nation-states of the Western world. The new generation of Marxists attempted to reform the orthodox credo without 'dismantling the old edifice' (James 1996: 107), attaching a greater weight to the role of culture, ideology and language in their analyses. Probably the most important statements of the neo-Marxist position were Tom Nairn's *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (1981), first published in 1977, and Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (1975). The following section will also include a brief discussion of Hechter's later work, notably *Containing Nationalism* (2000b), which exemplifies a rational choice approach to nationalism.

Tom Nairn and uneven development

Growing out of a series of articles published mainly in the *New Left Review*, *The Break-up of Britain* (1981) reflects Nairn's long-term theoretical and political engagement with issues of nationalism. Despite its Marxist credentials, it was dubbed a nationalist manifesto by some (Davidson 1999), 'an epitaph for Marxism' by others (Cocks 2005: 79). Gellner, who believes Nairn's theory to be substantially correct but is puzzled as to how Nairn could think his theory was at all compatible with Marxism, interprets this dilemma in his own exceptionally witty style:

> The Christians have passed through at least three stages: the first, when they really believed what they said, when the actual message and its promise of salvation was what attracted them to it, and when the historic continuity with earlier believers was an irrelevancy; the second, when they had to struggle to retain their faith in the face of increasingly pressing grounds for unbelief, and many fell by the wayside; and the third, that of modernist theology, when the 'belief' has acquired negligible (or sliding-scale) content, when the claim to continuity with their purely nominal predecessors becomes the only real psychic reward and significance of adherence, and it is doctrine which is played down as irrelevancy. Marxists seem doomed to pass through the same stages of development. When they reach the third stage (some already have), their views also will be of no intellectual interest. Tom Nairn is still in the second stage … His struggles with or for faith are still passionate, troubled and sincere, which is what gives the book some of its interest. (1979: 265–6)

BOX 4.1 **Tom Nairn**

Spending the nineties at Edinburgh University and the Centre for the Study of Nationalism at the Prague College of Central European University, Tom Nairn moved to Australia in 2001, first to the School of Social and Political Inquiry of Monash University, Melbourne, then to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) to join the Globalization Research Unit established by Mary Kalantzis and Paul James. Nairn's major publications in the field of nationalism studies include his influential *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (1981), *The Faces of Nationalism: The Janus Revisited* (1997) and *Global Matrix: Nationalism, Globalism and State-Terrorism* (with Paul James, 2005).

When asked 'Is *The Break-up of Britain* a nationalist manifesto?', Nairn wryly replies, **'*Yes, it is*: guilty as charged!'** (Nairn and James 2005: 85). **'The only exculpation I can offer in this regard'**, he writes elsewhere, **'is that I have never hidden the fact that my own dilemmas and oddities emanate from those of my country, Scotland. These undoubtedly explain a good deal of my intellectual passions and concerns. It is easier for others to sense, interpret and make fun of this, but I have not tried to evade it. There is no point, and dubious auras like pride and shame have nothing to do with this … A fear of philosophical relativism often attaches to any admission of just how biased speculation normally is by a theorist's or historian's national background. In my view, this is wholly unfounded. It nearly always emanates from some metropolitan thought-world within which the thinker assumes his or her privileged and instinctive access to the universal … I have always been an anarchist optimist, and felt instinctively that enlightenment (without a capital letter) must lie somewhere pretty far ahead and away from 'all this': through the community of national identity from which we were preserved, rather than abstractly against it'** (Nairn 1997: 180–1; see also Open Democracy 2007).

Nairn's stated aim in *The Break-up of Britain* is not to provide a theory of nationalism, but to present 'the scantiest outline' of how this might be done. He begins by remarking that 'the theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure' (1981: 329). This failure, which can be observed either in theory or in political practice, was inevitable. Moreover, it was not peculiar to Marxists; nobody could or did provide a theory of nationalism at that period simply because the time was not yet ripe for it. However, Nairn argues, we can understand nationalism in materialist terms. The primary task of the theorist is to find the right explanatory framework within which nationalism can be properly evaluated.

For Nairn, the roots of nationalism should not be sought in the internal dynamics of individual societies, but in the general process of historical development since the end of the eighteenth century. Thus, the only explanatory

framework which is of any utility is that of 'world history' as a whole. Nationalism, in this sense, is 'determined by certain features of the world political economy, in the era between the French and Industrial Revolutions and the present day' (ibid.: 332). Here, the influence of the 'dependency school' on Nairn's views, especially the work of André Gunder Frank, Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein on the international system of capitalist exploitation, is obvious (Zubaida 1978: 66).

The origins of nationalism are not located in the process of development of the world political economy as such however – in other words, nationalism is not simply an inevitable concomitant of industrialization – but the 'uneven development' of history since the eighteenth century. For many centuries, it was believed that the opposite would indeed be the case, that material civilization would develop evenly and progressively. According to this view, characteristic of the Enlightenment thought, Western European states have initiated the process of capitalist development, and managed to accumulate the necessary capital for perpetuating this process for a long period of time. The idea of 'even development' maintained that 'this advance could be straightforwardly followed, and the institutions responsible for it copied – hence the periphery, the world's countryside, would catch up with the leaders in due time' (Nairn 1981: 337). But history did not unfold as expected by Western philosophers; capitalist development was not experienced 'evenly'.

Instead, the impact of the leading countries was experienced as domination and invasion. This was in a way inevitable because the gap between the core and the periphery was too great and 'the new developmental forces were not in the hands of a beneficent, disinterested elite concerned with Humanity's advance'. The peoples of backward countries learned quickly that 'Progress in the abstract meant domination in the concrete, by powers which they could not help apprehending as foreign or alien'. However, popular expectations were not thwarted by the recognition of this fact. Since these expectations were always racing ahead of material progress itself, 'the peripheric elites had no option but to try and satisfy these demands by taking things into their own hands' (ibid.: 338–9). For Nairn, 'taking things into one's own hands' denotes a great deal of the substance of nationalism. The elites had to persuade the masses to take the short cut; they had to contest the concrete form assumed by progress as they were setting out to progress themselves. They wanted factories, schools and parliaments, so they had to copy the leaders somehow; but they had to do this in a way which rejected the direct intervention of these countries. 'This meant the conscious formation of a militant, inter-class community rendered strongly (if mythically) aware of its own separate identity *vis-à-vis* the outside forces of domination.' There was no other way of doing it. 'Mobilization had to be in terms of what was there; and the whole point of the dilemma was that there was nothing there.' Or more exactly, there was only the people with its speech, folklore, skin colour and so on. Under

these circumstances, 'the new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood' (ibid.: 340).

In short, the socio-historical cost of the rapid implantation of capitalism into world society was 'nationalism'. However, that was not the whole story. Of course, it was possible to end the story here and deduce from all this a theory of anti-imperialism whereby nationalism could be seen in a positive moral light, that is as the motor force of peripheric struggles against the imperialist forces of the West. But the story was dialectical. The process did not end with the emergence of nationalism in the peripheral countries under the impact of uneven development; once successful, nationalism reacted upon the core countries and they too fell under its spell. These countries did not invent nationalism; they did not need to since they were in front and 'possessed the things nationalism is really about'. But once the nation-state had been transformed into a compelling norm, or the 'new climate of world politics', the core countries were bound to become nationalist. In short, ' "uneven development" is not just the hard-luck tale of poor countries' (ibid.: 344). The 'founder-members' and the '*parvenus*' were forcing each other to change continuously. In the long term, core area nationalism was as inevitable as peripheric nationalism.

This picture, Nairn contends, shows clearly that it is not meaningful to make a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' nationalisms. All nationalisms contain the seeds of both progress and regress. In fact, this ambiguity is its historical *raison d'être*:

> It is through nationalism that societies try to propel themselves forward to certain kinds of goal (industrialization, prosperity, equality with other peoples, etc.) *by a certain sort of regression* – by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk heroes and myths about themselves and so on. (Ibid.: 348)

It follows that the substance of nationalism is always morally and politically ambiguous. Nationalism can in this sense be pictured as the old Roman god Janus, who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards. Nationalism is standing over the passage to modernity: 'As human kind is forced through its strait doorway, it must look desperately back into the past, to gather strength wherever it can be found for the ordeal of "development" ' (ibid.: 349).

Orthodox Marxism's greatest failure was the conviction that class is always more important in history than national differences. But, Nairn claims, the uneven, imperialist, spread of capitalism has insured that the fundamental contradiction was not that of class struggle, but that of nationality. 'As capitalism spread, and smashed the ancient social formations surrounding it, these always tended to fall apart along the fault-lines contained inside them. It is a

matter of elementary truth that these lines of fissure were nearly always ones of nationality' (ibid.: 353).

Now the time was ripe for the formulation of a Marxist theory of nationalism. Marxism should get rid of its Enlightenment foundations and become an 'authentic world-theory', that is a theory that focuses on the social development of the whole world. The 'enigma of nationalism' had displayed Marxism's Eurocentric nature. However, it could not see and overcome these theoretical limitations until they had been undermined in practice. The events of the 1960s and 1970s were crucial in that respect since they enabled Marxism to come to terms with its own failures. It was finally possible 'to separate out the durable – the "scientific", or as I chose to call it above "historical materialism" – from the ideology, the grain from the husks represented by the defeat of Western Philosophy' (ibid.: 363).

Such were Nairn's basic arguments, as articulated in *The Break-up of Britain*. Nairn abandoned this position in later years, adopting a much more sympathetic attitude towards primordialism. This led some commentators to talk about a 'metamorphosis' in his ideas on the national question between the late 1970s and early 1990s. Nairn himself is not shy about this change of heart. In the Introduction to his 2005 book *The Global Matrix* (with Paul James), he writes: 'Formerly a left half-back (reserves) with Team Modern's one-world economania, Tom Nairn switched sides in the 1990s and tentatively joined the neo-primordialists, at least for the after-match discussions' (2005: 7; see also Box 4.1). The 'new' Nairn contends that 'the remaking which features in modern nationalism is not creation *ex nihilo*' but a reformulation constrained by a determinate past (1998: 121). The key to understanding nationalism lies in 'human nature'. The intense emotionality and violence of ethnic nationalism make much more sense when traced to this particular root. What we need is a fusion of perspectives, a 'life science', which incorporates the new genetics, via 'bio-sociology' and 'palaeo-anthropology', and the sociology of the modernists (1997: 13). It is clear, however, that Nairn's preferences tilt towards the new genetics; the sole alternative, he writes, is a frankly psychological one: 'a story of "human nature", in fact, where feelings of "belonging" or extended kinship are read as the essential realities offended by the circumstances of modernity' (1998: 123).

Michael Hechter and internal colonialism

Another influential contribution to the growing literature on nationalism in the 1970s was Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (1975). Hechter's book was important in two respects. First, it introduced the concept of 'internal colonialism' to the study of nationalism. Originally coined by Russian populists to describe the exploitation of peasants by urban classes, it was later adopted by Gramsci and

Lenin to draw attention to the persisting economic underdevelopment of certain Italian and Russian regions. In this usage:

> internal colonialism refers to a process of unequal exchange between the territories of a given state that occurs either as a result of the free play of market forces or of economic policies of the central state that have intended or unintended distributional consequences for regions. Since the 1960s, however, the term has been largely reserved for regions that are simultaneously economically disadvantaged and culturally distinctive from the core regions of the host state. (Hechter 1999a: xiv)

Second, unlike many of his predecessors – a notable exception is Deutsch (1966) – Hechter made sustained use of quantitative data and multivariate statistical analysis to support his thesis. Its implicit message, writes Hechter in the Introduction to the second edition of the book in 1999, is that 'the best radical social thought has analytical rigour and deserves to be subjected to serious empirical tests' (ibid.).

BOX 4.2 **Michael Hechter**

Foundation Professor of Global Studies at Arizona State University, Michael Hechter is the author of *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (1975) and *Containing Nationalism* (2000). This is how Hechter recalls the origins of his interest in nationalism:

'My interest in nationalism – and the scientific stance that has always characterized my analysis of it – owes principally to the influence of my father. The first-born child of impoverished Orthodox Jewish immigrants from Romania in Chicago, Oscar Hechter clawed his way up the American occupational structure to become one of the leading steroid biochemists of his era. Science, which provided his ladder of mobility out of poverty, was his principal ideological talisman. But along the way he also became attracted to – and knowledgeable about – Marxism, whose strong concern to redress social injustice was largely expressed in a scientific idiom. Although my father had little use for religion, we always celebrated Passover, a story which probably resonated with his ascent out of his own Egypt on Chicago's West Side. The Passover story is quintessentially nationalist, and it made quite an impression on me. In my father's version of it, Moses employed Leninist tactics, making sure that the exiled Jews wandered forty years in the desert so that the elderly, with their slavish ways, would expire before reaching the Promised Land. Later, during my early teenage years, my father became a consultant to a pharmaceutical firm based in Montreal. The tales he brought back about Québec's quiet revolution and incipient Francophone nationalism made me aware of the generality of national liberation movements. I have been fascinated by nationalist issues ever since' (personal correspondence).

Hechter's point of departure was the problems of ethnic conflict and assimilation which preoccupied American politics since the 1960s. Broadly speaking, there were two alternative ways of solving these problems in the scholarly literature on intergroup relations: 'assimilationism' and 'nationalism'. Hechter notes that the majority of academics endorsed the assimilationist position at the time. Briefly, assimilationists held that ethnic/racial minorities were poor and frustrated because they were isolated from the national culture; the norms and values of ghetto communities were dysfunctional in the wider society. This implied that if the governments were to invest the necessary resources to educate and socialize the ghetto children, then the problems of maladjustment and the so-called 'culture of poverty' would cease (1975: xiv–xv).

According to Hechter, a particular model of national development underlies the assimilationist perspective. He calls this the 'diffusion model of development'. This model identifies three stages in the process of national development. The first stage is pre-industrial. At this stage, there is no relationship between the core and the periphery; they exist in virtual isolation from one another. Moreover, there are fundamental differences in their economic, cultural and political institutions. Increased contact between the core and peripheral regions leads to the second stage of national development, which is generally associated with the process of industrialization. 'As a rule, the diffusionist view holds that from interaction will come commonality' (ibid.: 7). It was believed that the institutions of the developing core will, after some time, 'diffuse' into the periphery. The cultural forms of the periphery, evolved in complete isolation from the rest of the world, will renew, or in Hechter's words 'update' themselves as a result of increased contact with the modernizing core. True, massive social dislocation brought about by industrialization and expansion of regional interaction might initially lead to an increased sense of cultural separateness in the periphery, inducing those who suffer from this process of rapid change to cling to their familiar cultural patterns. However, this 'traditional behaviour' is temporary; it will tend to decline as industrialization promotes the general welfare and reduces the initial regional differences. The model posits that the core and peripheral regions will become culturally homogeneous in the long run as the economic, political and cultural bases of ethnic differentiations will disappear. In the third and final stage, regional wealth will become equal; cultural differences will no longer be socially meaningful; and political processes will be conducted within a framework of national parties (ibid.: 7–8).

Hechter argues that this is an 'over-optimistic' model of social change. For him, the model which seems to be more realistic is what he calls the 'internal colonial model'. This model holds that an altogether different relationship will ensue from increased core–periphery contact. The core will dominate the periphery politically and exploit it economically. With the exception of a small number of cases, industrialization and increased regional contact will not lead to national development (ibid.: 8–9).

The main assumptions of this model can be summarized as follows. The uneven wave of modernization over state territories creates 'advanced' and 'less advanced' groups. As a result of this initial fortuitous advantage, resources and power are distributed unequally between the two groups. The more powerful group, or the core, tries to stabilize its advantages through the institutionalization of the existing stratification system. The economy of the core is characterized by a diversified industrial structure, whereas the peripheral economy is dependent and complementary to that of the core:

> Peripheral industrialization, if it occurs at all, is highly specialized and geared for export. The peripheral economy is, therefore, relatively sensitive to price fluctuations in the international market. Decisions about investment, credit, and wages tend to be made in the core. As a consequence of economic dependence, wealth in the periphery lags behind the core. (Ibid.: 9–10)

On the other hand, the advanced group regulates the allocation of social roles in such a way that the more prestigious roles are reserved for its members. Conversely, the members of the less advanced group are denied access to these roles. Hechter calls this system of stratification the 'cultural division of labour'. This system may be enforced *de jure*, when the state actively intervenes to deny certain roles to the members of the disadvantaged collectivity. Alternatively, it may be preserved *de facto*, through discriminatory policies, that is by providing differential access to institutions conferring status in the society, such as educational, religious or military institutions (ibid.: 39–40). The cultural division of labour leads individuals to identify themselves with their groups and contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identification. 'Social actors come to define themselves and others according to the range of roles each may be expected to play. They are aided in this categorization by the presence of visible signs' (ibid.: 9). Such visible signs increase group solidarity and unite them around a certain commonality of definitions.

Hechter identifies two further conditions for the emergence of group solidarity. First, there must be substantial economic inequalities between individuals such that these individuals may come to see this inequality as part of a pattern of collective oppression. But this in itself is not sufficient for the development of collective solidarity since there must also be 'an accompanying social awareness and definition of the situation as being unjust and illegitimate', hence the second condition: there must be adequate communication among members of the oppressed group (ibid.: 42). These general observations can be summed up by three propositions:

1. The greater the economic inequalities between collectivities, the greater the probability that the less advantaged collectivity will be status solidary, and hence, will resist political integration.

2. The greater the frequency of intra-collectivity communication, the greater the status solidarity of the peripheral collectivity.
3. The greater the intergroup differences of culture, particularly in so far as identifiability is concerned, the greater the probability that the culturally distinct peripheral collectivity will be status solidary. (Ibid.: 43)

In short, when objective cultural differences are superimposed upon economic inequalities, leading to a cultural division of labour, and when an adequate degree of intra-group communication exists, the chances for successful political integration of the peripheral collectivity into the national society are minimized. The members of the disadvantaged group may start to assert that their culture is equal or superior to that of the advantaged group, claim the separateness of their nation and seek independence (ibid.: 10).

The picture drawn by the model of internal colonialism is in many ways similar to that of the overseas colonial situation. The peripheral/colonial economy is forced into complementary development to that of the core/metropolis and therefore becomes dependent on international markets. The movement of labour in the periphery/colony is determined by the decisions made in the core/metropolis. This economic dependence is reinforced through political and military measures. There is a lower standard of living in the periphery/colony and a stronger sense of deprivation. Discrimination on the basis of language, religion or other cultural forms are routine, daily occurrences (ibid.: 31–4).

Hechter maintains that the internal colonial model provides a much more adequate explanation of the process of national development than the diffusion model. It accounts for the persistence of backwardness in the midst of industrial society and the volatility of political integration. Moreover, by linking economic and occupational differences between groups to their cultural differences, it suggests an explanation for the resilience of peripheral cultures (ibid.: 34).

The model of internal colonialism developed by Hechter has been subject to a number of criticisms (see below for a more detailed discussion). The most important objection to the theory concerned its factual (in)adequacy; certain cases did not seem to fit the model. Scotland, in particular, constituted an anomaly for Hechter's account since the Scots were not relegated to inferior social positions in Britain, and Scotland has been as industrialized as Britain from the eighteenth century onwards. In the light of these criticisms, Hechter made an important amendment to his theory (1985).

The inspiration for the amendment comes from American Jews. As might be recalled, Hechter argues in his original theory that economic inequalities increase group solidarity. On the other hand, the Jews in America also had high solidarity, but 'in no sense could they be regarded as materially disadvantaged'. Hechter explains this anomaly by pointing to the high degree of 'occupational specialization' among the Jews. The clustering of Jews in specific occupational

niches contributed to group solidarity by promoting status equality and a commonality of economic interests within group boundaries. Drawing on this observation, Hechter concludes that the cultural division of labour had at least two separate and independent dimensions: 'a hierarchical dimension, in which the various groups were vertically distributed in the occupational structure, and a segmental one, in which the groups were occupationally specialized at any level of the structure' (1985: 21; see also 1999a: xix).

Hechter holds that this second dimension enables us to make sense of the Scottish case. Scotland did not experience internal colonialism to any great degree, but instead had a high level of 'institutional autonomy'. According to The Act of Union signed in 1707 between England and Scotland, the latter had the right to establish its own educational, legal and ecclesiastical institutions. Hechter argues that this institutional autonomy created a potential basis for the development of a 'segmental' cultural division of labour. The Scots were clustered in the specific occupational niches created by Scotland's institutional autonomy. Let alone being discriminated against for their cultural distinctiveness, they often owed their very jobs to the existence of this distinctiveness. Moreover, these jobs were not less prestigious than the ones found in England. The existence of these institutions helped those in the periphery to identify with their culture and provided a strong incentive for the reproduction of this culture through history (ibid.: 21–2).

In his more recent work, Hechter moves to a rational choice analysis of intergroup relations, focusing in particular on the question of how to contain nationalist violence. A good deal of nationalist violence which, on the face of it, seems to be irrational has a plausible rational account, says Hechter. And if it is largely, if not wholly, the outcome of rational action, then under certain conditions it can indeed be contained 'because rational actors will respond to institutional incentives' (2000a: 6; see also Hechter and Levi 1979 and Banton 2001). This is the burden of Hechter's later *Containing Nationalism* (2000b). In this book, Hechter defines nationalism as 'collective action designed to render the boundaries of the nation congruent with those of its governance unit'. To the extent that a group strives for something less than complete sovereignty, writes Hechter, 'it is perforce less nationalist' (2000b: 7–8). It follows that the demand for nationalism can only exist when the boundaries between the nation and the governance unit are not congruent. This in turn explains the modernity of nationalism since prior to the last two centuries, most states were not governance units as we understand them today. 'Before the advent of modern communications technology, no central ruler had the capacity to enforce his will on territories at a spatial remove.' And for regions at a distance, the rulers were compelled to rely on some form of 'indirect rule'. The logic behind indirect rule is simple: the central ruler of a geographically extensive state delegates authority to local agents in return for compensation which may take the form of a tribute, taxes or payments in kind and the obligation to provide military

service in the event of war (ibid.: 27). This was the only way to exert at least limited control over extensive territories and populations in pre-modern times, that is before the advent of industrialization and the development of modern communications technology. Yet indirect rule thwarts nationalism, and it does so on the basis of two mechanisms:

> Whereas one mechanism inhibits nationalism by reducing the demand for sovereignty among the members of culturally distinct groups, the other merely increases the cost of collective action across the board. Both mechanisms lead to the same result. It follows that nationalism is most likely to emerge following the breakdown of indirect rule. Indirect rule can be eroded in two quite different ways: due to the rise of direct rule, and due to the collapse of the centre in a multinational empire. (Ibid.: 28)

This also provides Hechter's answer to the book's guiding question, namely 'how can nationalism be contained?'. For him, nationalist conflict will decline under three types of conditions: those that increase the costs of collective action, those that reduce the salience of national identity and those that decrease the demand for national sovereignty. The costs of collective action is highest in repressive regimes, but repression is growing more difficult in the global age we live in, and there are certainly no signs of national identities abating. Given these, the best hope for containing nationalist violence seems to hinge on conditions that decrease the demand for sovereignty among national groups (ibid.: 134–6). This can only be done, Hechter concludes, by re-introducing some form of indirect rule, by creating institutions which provide decentralized decision-making within multinational states (ibid.: 33).

Political transformations

Another variant of modernism has been propounded by scholars who focus on political transformations, for example the rise of the modern bureaucratic state, the extension of suffrage, the growing role of elites and their power struggles, or the changing nature of warfare, to explain nationalism. In what follows, I will discuss the contributions of three scholars who espoused the 'political transformations' approach, namely John Breuilly, Paul R. Brass and Eric J. Hobsbawm.

John Breuilly and nationalism as a form of politics

John Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* has become established as one of the key texts on nationalism since its initial publication in 1982. Breuilly's massive historical survey differs from the historical studies of earlier periods, which

were mainly chronological narratives of particular nationalisms, by its insistence in combining historical perspectives with theoretical analysis. Through the comparative analysis of a wide variety of cases, Breuilly introduces a new conception of nationalism, that is nationalism as a form of politics, and constructs an original typology of nationalist movements. The breadth of his book, which covers more than thirty individual cases of nationalism from different continents and historical periods, is even appreciated by critical reviewers, who concede that the book is a 'valuable and useful' source of information (Symmons-Symonolewicz 1985b: 359).

It should be stressed at the outset that Breuilly's historical analysis does not amount to a 'theory of nationalism'. Rather his aim is to outline and apply a general procedure for the study of nationalism (1993a: 1). He states clearly that he is sceptical of 'grand' theories or studies which develop a general argument, using examples only in an illustrative fashion, as such examples are unrepresentative and removed from their historical context. For him, a general framework of analysis is only acceptable if it permits an effective analysis of particular cases. This requires two things. First, it is necessary to develop a typology of nationalisms, since nationalisms are too varied to be explained by a single method of investigation. Thus, any study should begin by identifying various types of nationalism which can be considered separately. Second, each type should be investigated by the method of comparative history. In the light of these observations, Breuilly first develops a typology, then selects a few cases from each category and analyses them at length, using the same methods and concepts. This procedure, he argues, enables him to compare and contrast these various types systematically (ibid.: 2).

Breuilly characterizes the principal features of his argument as state-oriented and modernist (2001: 32). For him, nationalism refers to 'political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments'. A nationalist argument in turn is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions:

1. There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
2. The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
3. The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty. (1993a: 2)

Breuilly notes that nationalism has been variously explained in the literature by reference to ideas, class interest, economic modernization, psychological needs or culture. But for him, although particular nationalisms can be illuminated with respect to this or that class, idea or cultural achievement, none of these factors can help us understand nationalism generally. He contends that all these approaches overlook a crucial point, namely that nationalism is above all about

BOX 4.3 **John Breuilly**

Chair in Nationalism and Ethnicity at the London School of Economics and Political Science, John Breuilly formerly taught modern history at the Universities of Birmingham and Manchester between 1972 and 2004. Breuilly's main contribution to the field of nationalism studies is his monumental *Nationalism and the State* (1982).

'My interest in nationalism developed through teaching in the first instance', says Breuilly. **'A young group of modern historians at Manchester University in the mid-1970s wanted to teach general courses in terms of themes rather than places and periods. I volunteered to teach on the themes of state and nation in European history since 1500. For a number of years, as I prepared lectures, conducted seminars and marked essays and exams, I looked for a work of comparative political history which focused on the state/nation relationship to use as the central text. Eventually I decided it did not exist and I should write it myself. I completely failed to produce a very useful undergraduate textbook as the process of writing caused me to shift from nation to nationalism, to extend my case studies beyond Europe, and to spell out a general approach and view on the subject. When the book was published in 1982, there was still not a great deal of interest in nationalism and I largely returned to my other interests in nineteenth century Germany and comparative social and intellectual and urban history. Things changed quickly after 1989 for obvious reasons and now my main problem is to find time for subjects other than nationalism!'** (personal correspondence).

politics and politics is about power. 'Power, in the modern world, is principally about control of the state.' Our central task therefore is 'to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power. We need to understand why nationalism has played a major role in the pursuit of those objectives' (ibid.: 1). In other words, we need to find out what it is about modern politics that makes nationalism so important. Only then might we go on to consider the contributions of other factors such as class, economic interests or culture. It follows that the first step in formulating an analytical framework to study nationalism is to consider it as a form of politics. Breuilly argues that such an approach will also enable us to assess the importance of the subject, since it is possible to ask how much support nationalist movements are able to tap within their society, whereas it is very difficult to estimate the significance of ideas or sentiments (1996: 163).

The next step consists of relating nationalism to the process of modernization. Breuilly conceives of modernization as involving a fundamental change in the 'generic division of labour'. The most important stage of this change is the transition from a 'corporate' to a 'functional' division of labour. The former exists in a society where a collection of functions are performed by particular

institutions, usually on behalf of some distinct group. Breuilly refers to guilds as an example of such institutions. An ideal-typical guild will perform economic functions (regulating production and distribution of goods and services); cultural functions (education of apprentices, organizing recreational or ceremonial activities for the members of the guild); and political functions (running courts which impose sanctions upon unruly behaviour, sending members to town governments). In such an order, churches, lordships, peasant communes and even the monarchs are multifunctional. Breuilly argues that this order was increasingly criticized from the eighteenth century onwards and was crumbling in many parts of Western and Central Europe. The new order was based on a different division of labour, with each major social function carried out by a particular institution. Economic functions were handed over to individuals or firms competing in a free market; churches became free associations of believers; and political power was delegated to specialized bureaucracies controlled by elected parliaments or enlightened despots (ibid.: 163–4).

Historically, this transformation was not smooth. It developed at different paces and in different ways. The linking of this transformation to nationalist politics constitutes the third step of Breuilly's general framework. He argues that this requires focusing on one aspect of the transformation, namely the development of the modern state (ibid.: 164).

According to Breuilly, the modern state originally developed in a liberal form. Thus, 'public' powers were handed over to specialized state institutions (parliaments, bureaucracies) and many 'private' powers were left under the control of non-political institutions (free markets, private firms, families and so on). This involved a double transformation: 'institutions such as the monarchy lost "private" powers … other institutions such as churches, guilds, and lordships lost their "public" powers to government' (1993b: 22). In this way, Breuilly continues, the distinction between the state as 'public' and civil society as 'private' became clearer.

On the other hand, with the breakdown of corporate division of labour, there was now a new emphasis upon people as individuals rather than as members of particular groups. Under such circumstances, the main problem was how to establish the state–society connection, or to put it differently, how to reconcile the public interests of citizens and the private interests of selfish individuals. It was precisely at this juncture that nationalist ideas came on the scene. Breuilly holds that the answers provided to this critical question took two major forms and nationalism played a crucial role in both (1996: 165; 1993b: 23).

The first answer was 'political' and rested on the idea of citizenship. In this case, Breuilly observes, the society of individuals was simultaneously defined as a polity of citizens. According to this view, commitment to the state could only be generated by participating in democratic and liberal institutions. The 'nation' was simply the body of citizens and only the political rights of the citizens – not

their cultural identities – mattered. Breuilly claims that such a conception of nationality underlaid the programmes of eighteenth century patriots. In its most extreme form, it equated freedom with the implementation of the 'general will' (1996: 165).

The second answer, on the other hand, was 'cultural'; it consisted of stressing the collective character of society. This was initially formulated by political elites confronted both by an intellectual problem (how did one legitimize state action?) and by a political problem (how could one secure the support of the masses?). Subsequently, this solution was standardized and became the major way of providing an identity to members of different social groups (ibid.).

Breuilly maintains that liberalism's inability to cope with collective or community interests was very crucial in this context. Moreover, many groups were not attracted to liberalism, 'the first major political doctrine of modernity' in Breuilly's words, since the system it gave birth to was largely based on socially structured inequality. According to Breuilly, such groups were easy prey for nationalist ideologues. But the picture was not that simple. What complicated matters further was the 'modern' need to develop political languages and movements which could appeal to a wide range of groups. This could best be done by nationalism which has been a 'sleight-of-hand ideology' connecting the two solutions, that is the nation as a body of citizens and as a cultural collectivity, together (ibid.: 166; 1993b: 23–4).

Breuilly argues that the general picture sketched so far does not enable us to analyse particular nationalist movements, mainly because, being politically neutral, nationalism has assumed a bewildering variety of forms. To investigate all these different forms, a typology and auxiliary concepts which draw our attention to the different functions performed by nationalist politics are required. Breuilly concentrates on two aspects of nationalist movements when developing his typology. The first of these concerns the relationship between the movement and the state to which it either opposes or controls. In a world where the basic source of political legitimacy was not yet the nation, such movements were necessarily oppositional: 'it was only at a later stage that governments, either formed by the success of nationalist oppositions or taking on board the ideas of those oppositions, would themselves make nationalist arguments the basis of their claims to legitimacy' (1996: 166).

The second aspect concerned the goals of nationalist movements; hence, a nationalist opposition can strive to break away from the present state (separation), to reform it in a nationalist direction (reform), or to unite it with other states (unification). In addition to these two aspects, Breuilly notes, the state which is opposed may or may not define itself as a nation-state. The typology should mirror this distinction as well since this will have certain implications for the nature of the conflict between the state and the relevant nationalist movement. Having made these specifications, Breuilly introduces his typology (1993a: 9):

	Opposed to non-nation-states	*Opposed to nation-states*
Separation	Magyar, Greek, Nigerian	Basque, Ibo
Reform	Turkish, Japanese	Fascism, Nazism
Unification	German, Italian	Arab, Pan-African

Finally, Breuilly identifies three different functions performed by nationalist ideas: 'coordination', 'mobilization' and 'legitimacy'. By coordination he means the use of nationalist ideas 'to promote the idea of common interests amongst a number of elites which otherwise have rather distinct interests in opposing the existing state'. By mobilization he means the use of nationalist ideas 'to generate support for the political movement from broad groups hitherto excluded from the political process'. And by legitimacy he means the use of nationalist ideas 'to justify the goals of the political movement both to the state it opposes and also to powerful external agents, such as foreign states and their public opinions' (1996: 166–7).

Having outlined this framework, Breuilly examines the development of nationalism in a number of cases. As noted above, he covers a wide range of nationalist movements from Europe to the Arab world, from Africa to the Indian subcontinent and a large time span, from the eighteenth century to 1989. Since a review of his findings will be beyond the scope of this book, let us now turn to Brass's analysis of nation-formation.

Paul R. Brass and instrumentalism

Paul R. Brass is best known in the literature on nationalism for his stress on the 'instrumental' nature of ethnicity and nationality. Broadly speaking, instrumentalism explains the genesis of and continuing support for nationalism by the interests it is alleged to serve. In this view, ethnic and national identities become convenient tools at the hands of competing elites for generating mass support in the universal struggle for wealth, power and prestige (O'Leary 2001: 148; Smith 1986: 9). In stark contrast to primordialists who treat ethnicity as a 'given' of the human condition, they argue that ethnic and national attachments are continually redefined and reconstructed in response to changing conditions and the machinations of political elites. It follows that:

> the study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced cultural change. More precisely, it is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups. (Brass 1979: 40–1; see also Box 4.4)

BOX 4.4 **Paul R. Brass**

Professor Emeritus of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, Paul R. Brass has published extensively in the areas of comparative and South Asian politics, ethnic politics and collective violence – based on field research in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Assam in India during numerous visits since 1961. Brass's main publications include *Ethnic Groups and the State* (1985), *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (1991), *Riots and Pogroms* (1996) and *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (1997).

His fieldwork has led Brass to conclude that '**ethnicity and nationalism are not "givens", but are social and political constructions. They are creations of elites, who draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves. Moreover, both ethnicity and nationalism are modern phenomena inseparably connected with the activities of the modern centralizing state'. 'These arguments separate my position'**, says Brass, '**from writers in the field who consider ethnicity and nationalism to be reflections of primordial identities and who have searched the past to find evidence of the existence of ethnic identities and nationalism throughout recorded history. My position, on the contrary, is that ethnic identity and modern nationalism arise out of specific types of interactions between the leaderships of centralizing states and elites from non-dominant ethnic groups, especially but not exclusively on the peripheries of those states**' (Brass 1991: 8–9).

These views led Brass to a fierce debate with Francis Robinson about the role of political elites in the process culminating in the formation of two separate nation-states in the Indian subcontinent, India and Pakistan. Leaving this exchange to the section on criticisms, I will now turn to Brass's account of nationalism, which is generally considered as the quintessential example of the instrumentalist position.

Brass's theoretical framework is built upon a number of basic assumptions. The first concerns the variability of ethnic identities. For Brass, there is nothing inevitable about the rise of ethnic identities and their transformation into nationalism. To the contrary, the politicization of cultural identities is only possible under specific conditions which need to be identified and analysed carefully. Second, ethnic conflicts do not arise from cultural differences, but from the broader political and economic environment which also shapes the nature of the competition between elite groups. Third, this competition will also influence the definition of the relevant ethnic groups and their persistence. This is because the cultural forms, values and practices of ethnic groups become

political resources for elites in their struggle for power and prestige. They are transformed into symbols which can facilitate the creation of a political identity and the generation of greater support; in other words, their meanings and contents are dependent on political circumstances. Finally, all these assumptions show that the process of ethnic identity formation and its transformation into nationalism is reversible. Depending on political and economic circumstances, elites may choose to downplay ethnic differences and seek cooperation with other groups or state authorities (Brass 1991: 13–16; see also Box 4.4).

Having laid down his basic assumptions, Brass sets out to develop a general framework of analysis that focuses on processes of identity formation and identity change. He begins by defining what he calls an 'ethnic category'. In the words of Brass:

> Any group of people dissimilar from other peoples in terms of objective cultural criteria and containing within its membership, either in principle or in practice, the elements for a complete division of labour and for reproduction forms an ethnic category. (Ibid.: 19)

However, Brass is quick to stress that these 'objective cultural criteria' are not fixed, but susceptible to change and variation. Moreover, he adds, in premodern societies where the process of ethnic transformation (into nationalism) has not yet begun or in post-industrial societies where a great deal of cultural assimilation has already taken place, the boundaries separating various ethnic categories are not so clear.

The boundaries in question become clearer and sharper in the process of ethnic transformation. In this process, which should be distinguished from the mere persistence of ethnic differences in a population:

> cultural markers are selected and used as a basis for differentiating the group from other groups, as a focus for enhancing the internal solidarity of the group, as a claim for a particular social status, and, if the ethnic group becomes politicized, as justification for a demand for either group rights in an existing political system or for recognition as a separate nation. (Ibid.: 63)

Brass notes that the existence of objective cultural markers – here, read ethnic differences – in a given population is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the process of ethnic transformation to begin.

Another necessary, but still not sufficient condition, is the presence of elite competition for the leadership of an ethnic group or for control over various tangible and/or intangible resources. According to Brass, competition for local control may take four different forms: those between local land controllers and alien authorities, between competing religious elites, between local religious elites and collaborationist native aristocracies, and between native religious

elites and alien aristocracies. Another general type of competition arises from the uneven processes of modernization and takes the form of competition for jobs in the government, industry and universities (ibid.).

However, neither the existence of ethnic differences nor elite competition are sufficient conditions for the inception of the process of ethnic transformation. The sufficient conditions, Brass argues, are:

> the existence of the means to communicate the selected symbols of identity to other social classes within the ethnic group, the existence of a socially mobilized population to whom the symbols may be communicated, and the absence of intense class cleavage or other difficulties in communication between elites and other social groups and classes. (Ibid.)

Brass cites growth in literacy rates, the development of media of mass communication, particularly newspapers, the standardization of local languages, the existence of books in local languages and the availability of schools where the medium of instruction is the native language among the factors necessary to promote such interclass communication. Referring to Deutsch, he contends that the growth of communication facilities should be complemented by the emergence of new groups in the society who are 'available' for more intense communication, and who demand education and new jobs in the modern sectors of the economy. In other words, demand is as important as supply.

Brass notes in passing that a high degree of communal mobilization will be achieved most easily in two types of situations: (a) where there is a local religious elite controlling the temples, shrines or churches and the lands attached to them as well as a network of religious schools; and (b) where the local language has been recognized by the state authorities as a legitimate medium of education and administration, thereby providing the native intelligentsia the means to satisfy the new social groups aspiring to education and job opportunities (ibid.: 63–4).

According to Brass, the necessary and sufficient conditions for ethnic transformation are also the preconditions for the development of a successful nationalist movement. He claims that nationalism as an elite phenomenon may arise at any time, even in the early stages of ethnic transformation. However, for it to acquire a mass base, it should go beyond mere elite competition:

> The mass base for nationalism may be created when widespread intraclass competition occurs brought about by the movement of large numbers of people from either a previously overwhelmingly rural group or from a disadvantaged group into economic sectors occupied predominantly by other ethnic groups. If such a movement is resisted by the dominant group, supported openly or tacitly by state authorities, then the aspirant group will be easily mobilized by nationalist appeals that challenge the existing economic structure and the cultural values associated with it. (Ibid.: 65)

On the other hand, if the dominant group perceives the aspirations of the disadvantaged group as a threat to its status, then it may develop a nationalist movement of its own. Brass argues that uneven distribution of ethnic groups in urban and rural areas may exacerbate the situation since this will lead to a fierce competition over scarce resources and/or for control of the state structure.

While the mass base of nationalism is provided by ethnic competition for economic opportunities, or what Brass calls 'sectorally-based competition for control over state power', the demands that are articulated and the success of a nationalist movement depend on political factors. Brass cites three such factors: the existence of and the strategies pursued by nationalist political organizations, the nature of government response to ethnic group demands, and the general political context (ibid.).

Political organization

According to Brass, nationalism is by definition a political movement. Thus, it requires healthy organization, skilled leadership and resources to compete effectively in the system. Brass puts forward five propositions with regard to political organizations. First, organizations that control community resources are likely to be more effective than those that do not. Second, organizations that succeed in identifying themselves with the community as a whole are likely to be more effective than those that 'merely' represent the community or those pursuing their own interests. Third, effective nationalist organizations must be able to shape the identity of the groups they lead. Fourth, they must be able to provide continuity and to withstand changes in leadership. Finally, for a nationalist movement to be successful, one political organization must be dominant in representing the interests of the ethnic group against its rivals (ibid.: 48–9).

Government policies

Brass maintains that institutional mechanisms in a given polity and the responses of governments to ethnic demands may be very crucial in determining a particular group's capacity to survive, its self-definition and its ultimate goals. The strategies adopted by governments to prevent the 'rekindling of ethnic fires' display a great diversity. They range from the most extreme forms of repression (genocide, deportation) to policies designed to undermine the mass base of ethnic groups (assimilation through schooling, integration of ethnic group leaders into the system). Alternatively, governments may attempt to satisfy ethnic demands by following explicitly pluralist policies. These may include the establishment of political structures such as federalism or some special concessions such as the right to receive education in the native language (ibid.: 50).

Political context

The third factor that may influence the success of nationalist movements is the general political context. According to Brass, three aspects of the political

context are particularly important: 'the possibilities for realignment of political and social forces and organizations, the willingness of elites from dominant ethnic groups to share power with aspirant ethnic group leaders, and the potential availability of alternative political arenas' (ibid.: 55).

Brass notes that the need for political realignment may not arise in early modernizing societies where the first groups to organize politically are ethnic groups, or where the leading organizations articulate local nationalisms. Such a need arises when existing political organizations are not able to cope with social changes that erode their support bases or in times of revolutionary upheaval. Brass argues that a general political realignment will lead to the establishment of new nationalist organizations and present them with new opportunities to secure mass support.

On the other hand, the willingness of elites from dominant ethnic groups to share political power determines the way ethnic conflicts are resolved: 'Where that willingness does not exist, the society in question is headed for conflict, even civil war and secessionism. However, where such willingness does exist, the prospects for pluralist solutions to ethnic group conflicts are good' (ibid.: 57–8).

The third crucial aspect of the general political context is the availability of alternative political arenas and the price to be paid by ethnic groups for shifting to such arenas. Brass contends that unitary states containing geographically concentrated minorities will definitely face at some point demands for administrative and/or political decentralization, if the political needs of these minorities are not adequately satisfied by the state authorities. Under such circumstances, governments may opt for the reorganization of old political arenas or the construction of new ones to satisfy ethnic demands. According to Brass, the use of these strategies works best under the following conditions: where there is a relatively open system of political bargaining and competition; where there is a rational distribution of power between the federal and local units so that the capture of power at one level by one ethnic group does not close all significant avenues to power; where there are more than two or three ethnic groups; where ethnic conflicts do not overlap with ideological disagreements between unitarists and federalists; and where external powers are not willing to intervene (ibid.: 60–1).

Brass claims that where any of these conditions are lacking, pluralist (or federalist) solutions may fail and civil war or secession may ensue. However, Brass adds, secessionism is a high-cost strategy which most political elites will not adopt unless all other alternatives are exhausted and there is a reasonable prospect of external intervention in their favour (ibid.: 61). As a result, secession has been the least adopted strategy of ethnic conflict resolution in the period following the Second World War.

It is hard to do justice to this sophisticated theory in a few pages. Suffice it to say that for Brass, or in that respect for any 'instrumentalist', elite competition and manipulation remain the key to an understanding of nationalism.

Eric J. Hobsbawm and the invention of tradition

The distinguished Marxist historian Eric J. Hobsbawm is another scholar highlighting the role of political transformations in understanding nationalism. Hobsbawm's views on nationalism form part of his broader project of writing the history of modernity (see Box 4.5). Hobsbawm assembled his theses in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), which he co-edited with Terence Ranger, and *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990) which consists of the Wiles Lectures he delivered at the Queen's University of Belfast in 1985.

According to Hobsbawm, both nations and nationalism are products of 'social engineering'. What deserves particular attention in this process is the case of 'invented traditions' by which he means 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (1983: 1).

Hobsbawm argues that 'the nation' and its paraphernalia are the most pervasive of such invented traditions. Despite their historical novelty, they establish continuity with a suitable past and 'use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion' (ibid.: 12). For him, this continuity is largely factitious. Invented traditions are 'responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations'. He cites the deliberate choice of the Gothic style for the rebuilt British parliament in the nineteenth century to illustrate this point (ibid.: 2).

Hobsbawm distinguishes between two processes of invention, namely the adaptation of old traditions and institutions to new situations, and the deliberate invention of 'new' traditions for quite novel purposes. The former can be found in all societies, including the so-called 'traditional' ones as was the case with the Catholic Church faced with new ideological and political challenges or professional armies faced with conscription. The latter, however, occurs only in periods of rapid social change when the need to create order and unity becomes paramount. This explains the importance of the idea of 'national community' which can secure cohesion in the face of fragmentation and disintegration caused by rapid industrialization (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Chapter 7).

According to Hobsbawm, the period from 1870 to 1914, which coincides with the emergence of mass politics, can be considered as the apogee of invented traditions. The incursion of hitherto excluded sections of the society into politics created unprecedented problems for the rulers who found it increasingly difficult to maintain the obedience, loyalty and cooperation of their subjects – now defined as citizens whose political activities were recognized as something to be taken into account, if only in the form of elections (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 264–5). The 'invention of tradition' was the main strategy adopted by the ruling elites to counter the threat posed by mass democracy.

BOX 4.5 **Eric J. Hobsbawm**

Considered by many as the foremost Marxist historian of the twentieth century, Eric J. Hobsbawm taught economic and social history at Birkbeck College, University of London, until his retirement in 1982, and after that at The New School for Social Research in New York. The author of 23 history books, including a highly regarded trilogy on the nineteenth century, Hobsbawm's main theses on nationalism are spelled out in *The Invention of Tradition* (co-edited with Terence Ranger, 1983) and *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990).

'All my life I have belonged to untypical minorities', writes Hobsbawm in his autobiography *Interesting Times* (2002), **'starting with the enormous advantage of a background in the old Habsburg Empire. I recognize myself in E. M. Forster's phrase about C. P. Cavafy, the Anglophone Greek poet from my native Alexandria, who "stood at a slight angle to the universe" … For most of my life this has been my situation: typecast from a birth in Egypt, which has no practical bearing on my life-history, as someone from elsewhere. I have been attached to and felt at home in several countries and seen something of many others. However, in all of them, including the one into whose citizenship I was born, I have been, not necessarily an outsider, but someone who does not wholly belong to where he finds himself, whether as an Englishman among the central Europeans, a continental immigrant in Britain, a Jew everywhere – even, indeed particularly, in Israel – an anti-specialist in the world of specialists, a polyglot cosmopolitan, an intellectual whose politics and academic work were devoted to the non-intellectual, even, for much of my life, an anomaly among communists, themselves a minority of political humanity in the countries I have known. This has complicated my life as a human being, but it has been a professional asset for the historian'** (Hobsbawm 2002: 415–16; see also Hunt 2002; Anderson 2002; Crace 2007).

Hobsbawm singles out three major innovations of the period as particularly relevant: the development of primary education, the invention of public ceremonies (like Bastille Day), and the mass production of public monuments (ibid.: 270–1). As a result of these processes, 'nationalism became a substitute for social cohesion through a national church, a royal family or other cohesive traditions, or collective group self-presentations, a new secular religion' (ibid.: 303). Since:

> so much of what subjectively makes up the modern 'nation' consists of such constructs and is associated with appropriate and, in general, fairly recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as 'national' history), the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the 'invention of tradition'. (Ibid.: 14)

In the light of these observations, Hobsbawm assents to Gellner's definition of nationalism in his later work – 'a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent' (1990: 9; Gellner 1983: 1; see below for Gellner's theory of nationalism). For him, this principle also implies that the political duties of citizens to the nation override all other obligations. This is what distinguishes modern nationalism from earlier forms of group identification which are less demanding. Such a conception of nationalism overrules 'primordialist' understandings of the nation which treat it as a 'given' and unchanging category. Hobsbawm argues that nations belong to a particular, historically recent, period. It does not make sense to speak of nations before the rise of the modern territorial state as these two are closely related to each other (1990: 9–10). Here, Hobsbawm once again defers to Gellner:

> Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality, and in general an inescapable one. (Gellner 1983: 48–9)

In short, 'nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round' (Hobsbawm 1990: 10).

According to Hobsbawm, the origins of nationalism should be sought at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation. Nations are not only the products of the quest for a territorial state; they can only come into being in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development. For instance, national languages cannot emerge as such before the invention of printing and the spread of literacy to large sections of the society, hence mass schooling. According to Hobsbawm, this shows that nations and nationalism are dual phenomena, 'constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist' (ibid.).

Hobsbawm finds Gellner's account wanting in that respect since it does not pay adequate attention to the view from below. Obviously, the views and needs of ordinary people are not easy to discover. But, Hobsbawm continues, it is possible to reach preliminary conclusions from the writings of social historians. He suggests three such conclusions. First, official ideologies of states and movements are not reliable guides as to what ordinary people, even the most loyal citizens, think. Second, we cannot assume that for most people national identification is always or ever superior to other forms of identification which constitute the social being. And third, national identification and what it means to each individual can shift in time, even in the course of short periods (ibid.: 10–11).

Broadly speaking, Hobsbawm identifies three stages in the historical

evolution of nationalism. The first stage covers the period from the French Revolution to 1918 when nationalism was born and gained rapid ground. Hobsbawm makes a distinction between two kinds of nationalism in this stage: the first, which transformed the map of Europe between 1830 and 1870, was the democratic nationalism of the 'great nations' stemming from the ideals of the French Revolution; the second, which came to the fore from 1870 onwards, was the reactionary nationalisms of the 'small nations', mostly against the policies of the Ottoman, Habsburg and Tsarist empires (ibid.: Chapter 1).

Hobsbawm's second stage covers the period from 1918 to 1950. For him, this period was the 'apogee of nationalism', not because of the rise of fascism, but the upsurge of national sentiment on the left, as exemplified in the course of the Spanish Civil War. Hobsbawm claims that nationalism acquired a strong association with the left during the anti-fascist period, 'an association which was subsequently reinforced by the experience of anti-imperial struggle in colonial countries'. For him, militant nationalism was nothing more than the manifestation of despair, the utopia of 'those who had lost the old utopias of the age of Enlightenment' (ibid.: 144, 148).

The late twentieth century constitutes Hobsbawm's last stage. He argues that the nationalisms of this period were functionally different from those of the earlier periods. Nationalisms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were 'unificatory as well as emancipatory' and they were a 'central fact of historical transformation'. However, nationalism in the late twentieth century was no longer 'a major vector of historical development' (ibid.: 163). They are:

> essentially negative, or rather divisive … In one sense they may be regarded as the successors to, sometimes the heirs of, the small-nationality movements directed against the Habsburg, Tsarist and Ottoman empires … Time and again they seem to be reactions of weakness and fear, attempts to erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world. (Ibid.: 164)

Hobsbawm cites Québec, Welsh and Estonian nationalisms to illustrate this claim and argues that 'in spite of its evident prominence, nationalism is historically less important'. After all, the fact that historians are now making rapid progress in analysing nationalism means that the phenomenon is past its peak. He concludes: 'The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism' (ibid.: 181, 183; see also Matthews 2008: 87–94).

Social/cultural transformations

The last group of theories I will consider in this chapter stresses the importance of social/cultural transformations in understanding nationalism. The influential

analyses of Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson will be reviewed in this section. The section will conclude with an assessment of Miroslav Hroch's account of the rise of national movements among the 'small nations' of Central and Eastern Europe.

Ernest Gellner and high cultures

Gellner's theory is generally considered as the most important attempt to make sense of nationalism. The originality of his analysis is conceded even by his staunchest critics. Thus, Tom Nairn calls Gellner's *Thought and Change* (1964) 'the most important and influential recent study in English' (1981: 96). Anthony D. Smith, who wrote his PhD dissertation under the supervision of Gellner in 1966, considers his theory to be 'one of the most complex and original attempts to come to grips with the ubiquitous phenomenon of nationalism' (1983: 109). In his Introduction to the second edition of *Nations and Nationalism* (2006), John Breuilly asserts that 'Gellner's work still represents the single most important attempt to provide a theory of nationalism as a whole' (2006: liii). The English edition of the latter has gone through nineteen reprints and sold over 160,000 copies since its original publication in 1983, not to mention several critical surveys devoted to Gellner's theory or his more general work (Hall and Jarvie 1996; Hall 1998b; Malešević and Haugaard 2007; for the sales figures see Breuilly 2006: xiii).

The originality of Gellner's analysis lies in its broad theoretical sweep. The theses he first advanced in the seventh chapter of *Thought and Change* surpassed those of its predecessors in terms of both scope and detail. However, the sweep of his analysis also made him the target of a large number of criticisms. It is indeed true that Gellner was not modest when presenting his theory. 'A theoretical model is available', he says, 'which, starting from generalizations which are eminently plausible and not seriously contested, in conjunction with available data concerning the transformation of society in the nineteenth century, does explain the phenomenon in question.' After providing a brief summary of his model, he concludes:

> The argument … seems to me virtually Euclidean in its cogency. It seems to me impossible to be presented with these connections clearly and not to assent to them … As a matter of regrettable fact, an astonishing number of people have failed to accept the theory even when presented with it. (1996a: 98, 110–11)

Gellner's theory can be better understood within the context of a long-standing sociological tradition whose origins go back to Durkheim and Weber. The cardinal feature of this tradition is a distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies. Following in the footsteps of the founding fathers of sociology,

BOX 4.6 **Ernest Gellner**

Born in 1925 in Paris and brought up in Prague, anthropologist, sociologist and philosopher Ernest Gellner became a Professor of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method at The London School of Economics and Political Science in 1962. Following a successful decade as William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology at Cambridge, he retired in 1993 to head a new Centre for the Study of Nationalism at the Central European University in Prague. He died at Prague airport in 1995. Gellner's writings on nationalism include *Thought and Change* (1964), *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), *Encounters with Nationalism* (1995) and the posthumous *Nationalism* (1997).

'The circumstances of Gellner's life … made it utterly impossible for him ever to have neglected nationalism', says John A. Hall in his Introduction to *The State of the Nation* (1998a: 1), a collection of essays on Gellner's theory of nationalism. Gellner confirms: '**I *am* deeply sensitive to the spell of nationalism. I can play about thirty Bohemian folk songs (or songs presented as such in my youth) on my mouth organ. My oldest friend, whom I have known since the age of three or four and who is Czech and a patriot, cannot bear to hear me play them because he says I do it in such a schmaltzy way, "crying into the mouth organ". I do not think I could have written the book on nationalism which I did write, were I not capable of crying, with the help of a little alcohol, over folk songs, which happen to be my favourite form of music. I attend folklore performances from choice, but go to Covent Garden or the Narodni Divadlo only from social obligation or snobbery**' (1996c: 624–5). '**The intensity and depth of the feeling is not denied, or even spurned**', he writes elsewhere. '**On the contrary, it constitutes one of the key premises of the entire position. It is precisely this which is fully recognized, and it is this which must be explained … The explanation to be offered may or may not be valid: that is another matter, to be left to the judgement of others. But it is simply not the case that the intensity and genuineness of the feeling of nationalism is denied or ignored**' (Gellner 1997: 12; see also The Ernest Gellner Resource Site 1999).

Gellner posits three stages in human history: the hunter-gatherer, the agro-literate and the industrial. This distinction forms the basis of Gellner's explanation which he presents as an alternative to 'false theories of nationalism'. He identifies four such theories: the nationalist theory which sees nationalism as a natural, self-evident and self-generating phenomenon; Kedourie's theory which treats it as 'an artificial consequence of ideas which did not need ever to be formulated, and appeared by a regrettable accident'; 'the wrong address theory' favoured by Marxists which holds that the 'awakening message was intended for *classes*, but by some terrible postal error was delivered to *nations*'; and 'dark Gods theory' shared by both lovers and haters of nationalism which regards it as 'the re-emergence of the atavistic forces of blood or territory' (1983: 129–30).

For Gellner, on the other hand, 'nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (ibid.: 1). It is also a fundamental feature of the modern world since in most of human history political units were not organized along nationalist principles. The boundaries of city-states, feudal entities or dynastic empires rarely coincided with those of nations. In pre-modern times, the nationality of the rulers was not important for the ruled; what mattered for them was whether the rulers were more just and merciful than their predecessors (1964: 153). Nationalism became a sociological necessity only in the modern world, and the task of a theory of nationalism is to explain how and why did this happen (1983: 6; 1996a: 98).

Gellner tries to account for the absence of nations and nationalisms in pre-modern times by referring to the relationship between 'power' and 'culture'. He does not dwell too much on the first, hunter-gatherer, phase as there are no states at this stage, hence no room for nationalism which intends to endow the national culture with a political roof. Agro-literate societies, on the other hand, are characterized by a complex system of fairly stable statuses: 'the possession of a status, and access to its rights and privileges, is by far the most important consideration for a member of such a society. A man is his rank' (1996a: 100–1). In such a society, power and culture, two potential partners destined for each other according to nationalist theory, do not have much inclination to come together; the ruling class, consisting of warriors, priests, clerics, administrators and burghers, uses culture to differentiate itself from the large majority of direct agricultural producers who are confined to small local communities where culture is almost invisible (1983: 9–10, 12). Communication in these self-enclosed units is 'contextual', in contrast to the 'context-free' communication of the literate strata. Thus, this kind of society is marked by 'a discrepancy, and sometimes conflict, between a high and a low culture' (1996a: 102). There is no incentive for rulers to impose cultural homogeneity on their subjects; on the contrary, they derive benefit from diversity. The only class that might have an interest in imposing certain shared cultural norms is the clerisy, but they do not have the necessary means for incorporating the masses in a high culture (1983: 11). The overall conclusion for Gellner is straightforward: since there is no cultural homogenization in agro-literate societies, there can be no nations.

Gellner postulates an altogether different relationship between power and culture in industrial societies. Now, 'a high culture pervades the whole of society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity' (1983: 18). Shared culture is not essential to the preservation of social order in agro-literate societies since status, that is an individual's place in the system of social roles, is ascriptive. In such societies, culture merely underlines structure and reinforces existing loyalties. Conversely, culture plays a more active role in industrial societies which are characterized by high levels of social mobility, and in which roles

are no longer ascribed. The nature of work is quite different from that of agro-literate societies:

> Physical work in any pure form has all but disappeared. What is still called manual labour does not involve swinging a pick-axe or heaving soil with a spade … it generally involves controlling, managing and maintaining a machine with a fairly sophisticated control mechanism. (1996a: 106)

This has profound implications for culture in that the system can no longer tolerate the dependence of meaning on 'local dialectical idiosyncrasy', hence the need for impersonal, context-free communication and a high level of cultural standardization. For the first time in history, culture becomes important in its own right. It 'does not so much underline structure: rather it replaces it' (Gellner 1964: 155).

There is, however, another factor making for the standardization of culture. Industrial society is based on the idea of 'perpetual growth' and this can only be sustained by a continuous transformation of the occupational structure:

> This society simply cannot constitute a stable system of ascribed roles, as it did in the agrarian age … Moreover, the high level of technical skill required for at least a significant proportion of posts … means that these posts have to be filled 'meritocratically'. (Gellner 1996a: 108)

The immediate upshot of this is 'a certain kind of egalitarianism'. The society is egalitarian because it is mobile, and in a way, it has to be mobile. The inequalities that continue to exist tend to be camouflaged rather than flouted.

On the other hand, the industrial society is also a highly specialized society. But the distance between its various specialisms is far less great. This explains why we have 'generic training' before any specialized training on and for the job:

> A modern society is, in this respect, like a modern army, only more so. It provides a very prolonged and fairly thorough training for all its recruits, insisting on certain shared qualifications: literacy, numeracy, basic work habits and social skills … The assumption is that anyone who has completed the generic training common to the entire population can be re-trained for most other jobs without too much difficulty. (1983: 27–8)

This system of education is quite different from the one-to-one or on-the-job principle found in pre-modern societies: 'men are no longer formed at their mother's knee, but rather in the *école maternelle*' (1996a: 109). A very important stratum in agro-literate societies was that of the clerks who can transmit literacy. In industrial society where exo-education becomes the norm, every

man is a clerk; they are and must be 'mobile, and ready to shift from one activity to another, and must possess the generic training which enables them to follow the manuals and instructions of a new activity or occupation' (1983: 35). It follows that:

> the employability, dignity, security and self-respect of individuals … now hinges on their *education* … A man's education is by far his most precious investment, and in effect confers identity on him. Modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture. (Ibid.: 36)

Obviously, this educational infrastructure is large and exceedingly expensive. The only agency capable of sustaining and supervising such a vast system is the central state:

> Given the competition of various states for overlapping catchment areas, the only way a given culture can protect itself against another one, which already has its particular protector-state, is to acquire one of its own, if it does not already possess one. Just as every girl should have a husband, preferably her own, so every culture must have its state, preferably its own. (1996a: 110)

This is what brings state and culture together: 'The imperative of exo-socialization is the main clue to why state and culture *must* now be linked, whereas in the past their connection was thin, fortuitous, varied, loose, and often minimal … That is what nationalism is about' (1983: 38).

In short, nationalism is a product of industrial social organization. This explains both its weakness and its strength. It is weak in the sense that the number of potential nations far exceeds the number of those that actually make the claim. Most cultures enter the age of nationalism without even the 'feeblest effort' to benefit from it themselves (ibid.: 47). They prefer to remain as 'wild' cultures, producing and reproducing themselves spontaneously, without conscious design, supervision or special nutrition. By contrast, the cultures that characterize the modern era are 'cultivated' or 'garden' cultures which are usually sustained by literacy and specialized personnel and would perish if deprived of their distinctive nourishment (ibid.: 50).

On the other hand, nationalism is strong because 'it determines the norm for the legitimacy of political units in the modern world'. The modern world can be depicted as a kind of 'giant aquarium' or 'breathing chamber' designed to preserve superficial cultural differences. The atmosphere and water in these chambers are specifically tailored to the needs of a new species, the industrial man, which cannot survive in the nature-given atmosphere. But the maintenance of this life-preserving air or liquid is not automatic: 'it requires a special plant. The name for this plant is a national educational and communications system' (ibid.: 49, 51–2).

That is what underlies Gellner's contention that 'nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism'. Nations can emerge 'when general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities'. Hence, 'it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round' (ibid.: 55):

> Nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population … It is the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind. (Ibid.: 57)

How do small local groups become conscious of their own 'wild' culture and why do they seek to turn it into a 'garden' culture? Gellner's answer to this question is simple: labour migration and bureaucratic employment disclosed 'the difference between dealing with a co-national, one understanding and sympathizing with their culture, and someone hostile to it'. This concrete experience taught them to be aware of their culture, and to love it. Thus, in conditions of high social mobility, 'the culture in which one has been *taught* to communicate becomes the core of one's identity' (ibid.: 61).

This is also one of the two important principles of fission in industrial society. Gellner calls this 'the principle of barriers to communication', barriers based on pre-industrial cultures. The other principle is what he terms 'entropy-resistant traits' like skin colour, deeply ingrained religious and cultural habits which tend not to become, even with the passage of time, evenly dispersed throughout the entire society (ibid.: 64). Gellner holds that in the later stages of industrial development, when 'the period of acute misery, disorganization, near-starvation, total alienation of the lower strata is over', it is the persistent 'counter-entropic' traits (whether they be genetic or cultural) which become the source of conflict. In the words of Gellner, 'resentment is now engendered less by some objectively intolerable condition … it is now brought about above all by the non-random social distribution of some visible and habitually noticed trait' (ibid.: 74–5). This conflict may give rise to new nations organized around either a high or a previously low culture.

I have tried to offer a relatively full account of Gellner's theory by concentrating mostly on *Nations and Nationalism*, referring to the earlier chapter in *Thought and Change* and other writings only where appropriate. Gellner later reworked his theory and postulated five stages on the path from a world of non-ethnic empires and micro-units to one of homogeneous nation-states (1995, 1996a):

1. *Baseline*. At this stage, ethnicity is not yet important and the idea of a link between it and political legitimacy is entirely absent.

2. *Nationalist irredentism*. The political boundaries and structures of this stage are inherited from the previous era, but ethnicity – or nationalism – as a political principle begins to operate. The old borders and structures are under pressure from nationalist agitation.
3. *National irredentism triumphant and self-defeating*. At this stage, multi-ethnic empires collapse and the dynastic-religious principle of political legitimation is replaced by nationalism. New states emerge as a result of nationalist agitation. But, Gellner contends, this state of affairs is self-defeating since these new states are just as 'minority-haunted' as the larger ones they replaced.
4. *Nacht und Nebel*. This is an expression used by the Nazis to depict some of their secret operations in the course of the Second World War. At this stage, all moral standards are suspended and the principle of nationalism, which demands homogeneous national units, is implemented with a new ruthlessness. Mass murder and forcible transplantation of populations replace more benign methods such as assimilation.
5. *Post-industrial stage*. This is the post-1945 period. High level of satiation of the nationalist principle, accompanied by general affluence and cultural convergence, leads to a diminution, though not the disappearance, of the virulence of nationalism. (1996a: 111–12)

For Gellner, these five stages represent a plausible account of the transition from a non-nationalist order to a nationalist one. However, this schema is not universally applicable, even in Europe. He observes that the stages he postulated played themselves out in different ways in various time zones. He identifies four such zones in Europe.

Going from West to East, there is first the Atlantic sea-coast. Here, from pre-modern times, there were strong dynastic states. The political units based on Lisbon, London, Paris and Madrid corresponded roughly to homogeneous cultural-linguistic areas. Thus, when the age of nationalism came, relatively little redrawing of frontiers was required. In this zone, one hardly finds 'ethnographic nationalism', that is 'the study, codification, idealization of peasant cultures in the interest of forging a new national culture' (1995: 29). The problem was rather that of turning peasants into citizens, not so much that of inventing a new culture on the basis of peasant idiosyncrasy (ibid.; 1996a: 127–8).

The second time zone corresponds to the territory of the erstwhile Holy Roman Empire. This area was dominated by two well-endowed high cultures which existed since the Renaissance and the Reformation, namely the German and Italian cultures. Thus, those who tried to create a German literature in the late eighteenth century were merely consolidating an existing culture, not creating a new one. In terms of literacy and self-awareness, the Germans were not inferior to the French and a similar relationship existed between the Italians and

the Austrians. All that was required here was to endow the existing high culture with its political roof (1995: 29–30; 1996a: 128–9).

Things were more complicated in the third time zone further east. This was the only area where all five stages played themselves out to the full. Here, there were neither well-defined high cultures, nor states to cover and protect them. The area was characterized by old non-national empires and a multiplicity of folk cultures. Thus, for the marriage between culture and polity required by nationalism to take place, both partners had to be created. This made the task of the nationalists more difficult and 'hence, often, its execution more brutal' (1995: 30; 1996a: 129).

Finally, there is the fourth time zone. Gellner maintains that this zone shared the trajectory of the previous one until 1918 or the early 1920s. But then, the destinies of the two zones diverged. While two of the three empires covering the fourth zone, the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, disintegrated, the third one was dramatically revived under a new management and in the name of a new, inspiring ideology. Gellner notes that the victorious advance of the Red Army in 1945 and the incorporation of a considerable portion of zone three into zone four complicated matters still further. The new regime was able to repress nationalism at the cost of destroying civil society. Hence, when the system was dismantled, nationalism emerged with all its vigour, but few of its rivals. Having been artificially frozen at the end of the second stage, the fourth time zone can resume its normal course at stage three (irredentist nationalism), four (massacres or population transfers) or five (diminution of ethnic conflict). Which of these options will prevail – that is the crucial question facing the territories of the former Soviet Union (1995: 30–1; 1996a: 129–32).

Benedict Anderson and imagined communities

The year 1983 saw the publication of yet another very influential book on nationalism, along with Gellner, and Hobsbawm and Ranger's books, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* by Benedict Anderson. The initial impetus for writing this book, its author later recalls, came from 'the triangular warfare between the *soi-disant* revolutionary states of China, Vietnam, and Cambodia at the end of the 1970s'. 'These wars struck me', writes Anderson, 'as clear evidence that transnational socialism was being trumped by nationalism and that this was an ominous portent for the future'. On the other hand, the book was written for a specific audience and with 'specific and self-conscious prejudices': 'It was aimed polemically at the United Kingdom, not the United States, and was meant to be a sort of response to Tom Nairn's terrific *The Break-up of Britain*' (2003: 226, 238). Anderson says he believed it was necessary to widen the scope of Nairn's criticisms, which were mainly directed at classical Marxism, as the latter's failure to grasp nationalism was in no way idiosyncratic, but characterized liberal and conservative

accounts of the time as well. More importantly, the theoretical study of nationalism had to be 'de-Europeanized' – hence the book's focus on non-European societies such as Indonesia or Thailand/Siam (2006: 208–9). The book had an – unexpectedly, according to its author – wide appeal; and Anderson's memorable description of nations as 'imagined communities' – 'a pair of words from which the vampires of banality have by now sucked almost all the blood' (Anderson 2006: 207) – has become 'a mantra' in academic discussions of nationalism, something of 'the rightness and efficiency of a classic ("why hadn't anyone realized this before?")' (Redfield 2003: 77; Culler 2003: 30; see also Box 4.7).

Anderson's point of departure is that nationality and nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly, we need to find out how they have come into being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time and why they command such profound emotional legitimacy. Anderson argues that nationalism emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the 'spontaneous distillation of a complex "crossing" of discrete historical forces' and once created, they became models which could be emulated in a great variety of social terrains, by a correspondingly wide variety of ideologies (1991: 4). For him, a persuasive explanation of nationalism should not confine itself to specifying the cultural and political factors which facilitate the growth of nations. The real challenge lies in showing why and how these particular cultural artefacts have aroused such deep attachments. In other words, the crucial question is: 'what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices' (ibid.: 7)? He begins by offering a workable definition of the term 'nation'.

For Anderson, the terminological confusion surrounding the concept of nation is partly caused by the tendency to treat it as an ideological construct. Things would be easier if it is seen as belonging to the same family as 'kinship' or 'religion'; hence his definition of the nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'. It is imagined because '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'. It is imagined as limited because each nation has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations. It is imagined as sovereign because it is born in the age of Enlightenment and revolution, when the legitimacy of divinely ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm was rapidly waning; the nations were dreaming of being free, and if under God, then at least directly so. Finally, it is imagined as a community because, 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'. According to Anderson, it is ultimately this sense of fraternity which makes it possible for so many millions of people to willingly lay down their lives for their nation (ibid.: 6–7).

BOX 4.7 **Benedict Anderson**

Aaron L. Binenkorb Professor of International Studies, Emeritus, at Cornell University, Benedict Anderson is one of the world's leading experts on Southeast Asia, especially the history and politics of Indonesia and Thailand. Anderson was banned from Indonesia during Suharto's rule after producing in 1971, with Ruth McVey, what was then know as 'the Cornell paper', questioning Suharto's involvement in the alleged coup attempt by communist soldiers in 1965. He returned to Indonesia in 1999 following Suharto's death. Anderson's main publication on nationalism is *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983), already a classic published in 33 countries and in 29 languages. Anderson's other publications in the field include *The Spectres of Comparison: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (1998) and *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (2005).

'I have a relationship to [*Imagined Communities*]', says Anderson in an interview he gave in 2005, '**as to a daughter who has grown up and run off with a bus driver: I see her occasionally but, really, she has gone her own merry way. I can wish her good luck, but now she belongs with someone else. What would I change in the book? Well, should I try to change my daughter?'** (Khazaleh 2005). In reply to the question, 'So you are a little nationalistic – despite the revealing books you have written about nationalism', he says: **'Yes, absolutely. I must be the only one writing about nationalism who doesn't think it ugly. If you think about researchers such as Gellner and Hobsbawm, they have quite a hostile attitude to nationalism. I actually think that nationalism can be an attractive ideology. I like its utopian elements … You follow the laws because they are your laws – not always, because you perhaps cheat on your tax forms, but normally you do. Nationalism encourages good behaviour. For Billig** (see Chapter 6) **nationalism is like the human body. Sometimes it is healthy, but occasionally it might become sick, feverous and do ill things. But normal body temperature is not 41 degrees Celcius but 36.5 degrees Celcius'** (ibid.; see also Anderson 2006).

At this point, it is worth stressing that for Anderson, 'imagining' does not imply 'falsity'. He makes this point quite forcefully when he accuses Gellner of assimilating 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation', with the intention of showing that nationalism masquerades under false pretences. Such a view implies that there are 'real' communities which can be advantageously compared to nations. In fact, however, all communities larger than small villages of face-to-face contact (perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities, Anderson concludes, should not be distinguished by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (ibid.: 6).

Anderson then turns to the conditions which give rise to such imagined communities. He begins with the cultural roots of nationalism, arguing that

'nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being' (ibid.: 12). He cites two such systems as relevant, the religious community and the dynastic realm, which held sway over much of Europe until the sixteenth century. Their gradual decline, which began in the seventeenth century, provided the historical and geographical space necessary for the rise of nations.

The decline of the 'great religiously imagined communities' was particularly important in this context. Anderson emphasizes two reasons for this decline. The first was the effect of the explorations of the non-European world which widened the general cultural and geographical horizon, and showed the Europeans that alternative forms of human life were also possible. The second reason was the gradual decay of the sacred language itself. Latin was the dominant language of a pan-European high intelligentsia, and in fact, the only language taught in medieval Western Europe. But by the sixteenth century all this was changing fast. More and more books were coming out in the vernacular languages and publishing was ceasing to be an international enterprise (ibid.: 12–19).

What was the significance of all these developments for the emergence of the idea of nation? The answer lies, Anderson argues, in the crucial role played by traditional religions in human life. First and foremost, they soothed the sufferings resulting from the contingency of life ('Why is my best friend paralysed? Why is my daughter retarded?') by explaining them away as 'destiny'. At a more spiritual level, on the other hand, they provided salvation from the arbitrariness of fatality by turning it into continuity (life after death), by establishing a link between the dead and the yet unborn. Predictably, the ebbing of religious worldviews have not led to a corresponding decline in human suffering. In fact, now, fatality was more arbitrary than ever. 'What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning'. Nothing was better suited to this end than the idea of nation which always looms out of an immemorial past, and more importantly, glides into a limitless future: 'It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny' (ibid.: 11, 12).

It would be too simplistic, however, to suggest that nations grew out of and replaced religious communities and dynastic realms. Beneath the dissolution of these sacred communities, a much more fundamental transformation was taking place in the modes of apprehending the world. This change concerns the medieval Christian conception of time which is based on the idea of simultaneity. According to such a conception, events are situated simultaneously in the present, past and future. The past prefigures the future, so that the latter 'fulfils' what is announced and promised in the former. The occurrences of the past and the future are linked neither temporally nor causally, but by Divine Providence which alone can devise such a plan of history. In such a view of things, Anderson notes, 'the word "meanwhile" cannot be of real significance'

(ibid.: 24). This conception of 'simultaneity-along-time' was replaced by the idea of 'homogeneous empty time', a term Anderson borrows from Walter Benjamin. Simultaneity is now understood as being transverse, cross-time, marked by temporal coincidence and measured by clock and calendar. The new conception of time made it possible to 'imagine' the nation as a 'sociological organism' moving steadily down (or up) history (ibid.: 26). To illustrate this point, Anderson examines two popular forms of imagining, the novel and the newspaper.

He first considers a simple novel-plot consisting of four characters: a man (A) has a wife (B) and a mistress (C), who in turn has a lover (D). Assuming that (C) has played her cards right and that (A) and (D) never meet, what actually links these two characters? First, that they live in 'societies' (Lübeck, Los Angeles). 'These societies are sociological entities of such firm and stable reality that their members (A and D) can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected' (ibid.: 25). Second, that they are connected in the minds of the readers. Only the readers could know what (A) and (D) are doing at a particular moment in time. According to Anderson, 'that all these acts are performed at the same clocked, calendrical time, but by actors who may be largely unaware of one another, shows the novelty of this imagined world conjured up by the author in his readers' mind'. This has profound implications for the idea of nation. An American would probably never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his fellow-Americans. He would have no idea of what they are doing at any one time. Yet he has complete confidence in their existence and their 'steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity' (ibid.: 26).

A similar link is established by the newspaper which embodies a profound fictiveness. If we take a quick glance at the front page of any newspaper, we will discover a number of, seemingly independent, stories. 'What connects them to each other?', Anderson asks. First, calendrical coincidence. The date at the top of the newspaper provides the essential connection: 'Within that time, "the world" ambles sturdily ahead.' If, for example, Mali disappears from the front pages of newspapers, we do not think that Mali has disappeared altogether. 'The novelistic format of the newspaper assures them that somewhere out there the "character" Mali moves along quietly, awaiting its next appearance in the plot' (ibid.: 33).

The second connection is provided by the simultaneous mass consumption of newspapers. In that sense, the newspaper can be considered as an 'extreme form of the book', a 'book sold on a colossal scale' or 'one-day best-sellers'. We know that a particular edition will be read between this and that hour, only on this day, not that. This is, in a way, a mass ceremony, a ceremony performed in silent privacy, 'Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest

notion' (ibid.: 33–5). It is difficult to envision a more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked imagined community. Moreover, observing that the exact replicas of his own newspaper are consumed by his neighbours, in the subway or barbershop, the reader is continually reassured that the imagined world is rooted in everyday life: 'fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations' (ibid.: 36).

To recapitulate, the cultural origins of the modern nation could be located historically at the junction of three developments: a change in the conceptions of time, the decline of religious communities and of dynastic realms. But the picture is not complete yet. The missing ingredient is provided by commercial book publishing on a wide scale, or what Anderson calls 'print-capitalism'. This made it possible, more than anything else, for rapidly growing numbers of people to think of themselves in profoundly new ways.

The initial market for capitalist book publishing was the thin stratum of Latin readers. This market, Anderson notes, was saturated in 150 years. However, capitalism needed profit, hence new markets. The inherent logic of capitalism forced the publishers, once the elite Latin market was saturated, to produce cheap editions in the vernaculars with the aim of reaching the monoglot masses. This process was precipitated by three factors. The first was a change in the character of Latin. Thanks to the Humanists, the literary works of pre-Christian antiquity were discovered and spread to the market. This generated a new interest in the sophisticated writing style of the ancients which further removed Latin from ecclesiastical and everyday life. Second was the impact of the Reformation, which owed much of its success to print-capitalism. The coalition between Protestantism and print-capitalism quickly created large reading publics and mobilized them for political/religious purposes. Third was the adoption of some vernaculars as administrative languages. Anderson remarks that the rise of administrative vernaculars predated both print and the Reformation, hence must be regarded as an independent factor. Together, these three factors led to the dethronement of Latin and created large reading publics in the vernaculars (ibid.: 38–43).

Anderson argues that these print-languages laid the bases for national consciousnesses in three ways. First, they created 'unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars'. Second, print-capitalism gave a new fixity to language which helped to build the image of antiquity so central to the idea of the nation. And third, print-capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from the earlier administrative vernaculars. In short, what made the new communities imaginable was 'a half-fortuitous, but explosive, interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human diversity' (ibid.: 42–4).

Having specified the general causal factors underlying the rise of nations,

Anderson turns to particular historical/cultural contexts with the aim of exploring the 'modular' development of nationalism. He begins by considering Latin America. This section contains one of the most controversial arguments of the book, namely that the *creole* communities of the Americas developed their national consciousnesses well before most of Europe. According to Anderson, two aspects of Latin American nationalisms separated them from their counterparts in Europe. First, language did not play an important role in their formation since the colonies shared a common language with their respective imperial metropoles. Second, the colonial national movements were led by creole elites and not by the intelligentsia. On the other hand, the factors that incited these movements were not limited to the tightening of Madrid's control and the spread of the liberalizing ideas of the Enlightenment. Each of the South American Republics had been an administrative unit between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. This led them to develop a 'firmer reality' over time, a process precipitated by 'administrative pilgrimages', or what Anderson calls the 'journey between times, statuses and places'. Creole functionaries met their colleagues, 'fellow-pilgrims', from places and families they have scarcely heard of in the course of these pilgrimages and, in experiencing them as travelling-companions, developed a consciousness of connectedness (why are *we … here … together?*) (ibid.: 50–6).

The close of the era of successful national movements in the Americas, Anderson argues, coincided with the onset of the age of nationalism in Europe. The earlier examples of European nationalisms were different from their predecessors in two respects: national print-languages were an important issue in their formation and they had 'models' they could aspire to from early on. Anderson cites two developments which speeded up the rise of classic linguistic nationalisms. The first was the discovery of distant 'grandiose' civilizations, such as the Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Aztec or Incan, which allowed Europeans to think of their civilizations as only one among many, and not necessarily the Chosen or the best (ibid.: 69–70). The second was a change in European ideas about language. Anderson observes that the scientific comparative study of languages got under way from the late eighteenth century onwards. In this period, vernaculars were revived, dictionaries and grammar books were produced. This had profound implications for the old, sacred languages which were now considered to be on an equal footing with their vernacular rivals. The most visible manifestation of this egalitarianism was 'bilingual dictionaries', for 'whatever the political realities outside, within the covers of the Czech-German/German-Czech dictionary the paired language had a common status' (ibid.: 71). Obviously, this 'lexicographic revolution' was not experienced in a vacuum. The dictionaries or grammar books were produced for the print-market, hence consuming publics. The general increase in literacy rates, together with a parallel growth in commerce, industry and communications, created new impulses for vernacular linguistic unification. This, in turn, made the task of nationalism easier.

On the other hand, these developments created increasing political problems for many dynasties in the course of the nineteenth century because the legitimacy of most of them had nothing to do with 'nationalness'. The ruling dynastic families and the aristocrats were threatened with marginalization or exclusion from the nascent 'imagined communities'. This led to 'official nationalisms', a term Anderson borrows from Seton-Watson, which provided:

> a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains accumulated since the Middle Ages, or, to put it another way, for stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire. (Ibid.: 86)

Anderson stresses that official nationalisms developed after, and in reaction to, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s. Thus, they were historically 'impossible' until after the appearance of the latter. Moreover, these nationalisms were not confined to Europe. Similar policies were pursued in the vast Asian and African territories subjected in the course of the nineteenth century. They were also picked up and imitated by indigenous ruling elites in areas which escaped subjection (ibid.: 109–10).

This brings Anderson to his final stop, namely anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa. This 'last wave' of nationalisms, he contends, was largely inspired by the example of earlier movements in Europe and the Americas. A key part was played in this process by official nationalisms which transplanted their policies of 'Russification' to their extra-European colonies. Anderson claims that this ideological tendency meshed with practical exigencies as the late nineteenth-century empires were too large and too far-flung to be ruled by a handful of nationals. Moreover, the state was rapidly multiplying its functions in both the metropoles and the colonies. What, then, was required was well-educated subordinate cadres for state and corporate bureaucracies. These were generated by the new school systems, which in turn led to new pilgrimages, this time not only administrative, but also educational.

On the other hand, the logic of colonialism meant that the natives were invited to schools and offices, but not to boardrooms. Result: 'lonely, bilingual intelligentsias unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies' which became the key spokesmen for colonial nationalisms (ibid.: 140). As bilingual intelligentsias, they had access to models of nation and nationalism, 'distilled from the turbulent, chaotic experiences of more than a century of American and European history'. These models could be copied, adapted and improved upon. Finally, the improved technologies of communication enabled these intelligentsias to propagate their messages not only to illiterate masses, but also to literate masses reading different languages. In the conditions of the twentieth century, nation-building was much easier than before (ibid.).

The second edition of *Imagined Communities* contains two new chapters,

devoted to the analysis of official nationalism in the colonized worlds of Asia and Africa, which Anderson found wanting in the original edition. He thus focuses on three institutions, the census, the map and the museum, which profoundly affected the late colonial state's thinking about its dominion – 'the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry' (2006: 164). The 'warp' of this thinking, according to Anderson, was 'a totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state's real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth'. The 'weft' was what he calls 'serialization': 'the assumption that the world was made up of replicable plurals'. Thus the colonial state aspired to create a human landscape of perfect visibility under its control, but a visibility where 'everyone, everything, had (as it were) a serial number'. These replicable series were then inherited by the state's post-colonial successor: 'The final logical outcome was the logo … which by its emptiness, contextlessness, visual memorableness, and infinite reproducibility in every direction brought census and map, warp and woof, into an inerasable embrace' (ibid.: 184–5).

It is hard to do justice to Anderson's sophisticated narrative in a few pages The author himself explains the success of the book by the timeliness of its polemical thrusts. Thus *Imagined Communities* was at the time of its publication the only comparative study of nationalism written from a 'non-European' perspective; it took on British and American imperialism, although it was written in English. More importantly:

> by proposing the concept of 'imagined community' [the book] juxtaposed paradoxically a kind of *gemeinschaft* attractive to all nationalists with something unsettling, neither 'imaginary' as in 'unicorn', nor matter-of-factly 'real' as in 'TV set', but rather something analogous to Madame Bovary and Queequeg, whose existence stemmed only from the moment Flaubert and Melville imagined them for us. (2006: 227)

Finally, Anderson notes with hindsight, the book sought to combine some form of historical materialism with what later came to be called 'discourse analysis' – laying the groundwork for 'post-modernist' analyses of nationalism (ibid.; see also Box 4.7).

Miroslav Hroch and the three phases of nationalism

The last theoretical model I will discuss in this section is that of the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch. His work, compiled in *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegungen bei den kleinen Völkern Europas: Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen* (Prague 1968) and *Obrození malych evropskych národu. I: Národy severní a vychodní Evropy*

[The Revival of the Small European Nations. I: The Nations of Northern and Eastern Europe] (Prague 1971), was pioneering in many respects. Hroch was the first scholar who undertook the quantitative social-historical analysis of nationalist movements in a systematic comparative framework. 'If I had any ambitions beyond the realm of empirical research', Hroch writes, 'these lay in the fields of methods rather than theory: I tried to demonstrate the utility of comparative methods at a time when their use was not yet a commonplace in European (and even less in Czech) historiography' (1998: 91; see also Box 4.8). Second, he related nation-forming to the larger processes of social transformation, especially those associated with the spread of capitalism, but did so by avoiding economic reductionism, focusing on the effects of social and geographical mobility, more intense communication, the spread of literacy and generational change as mediating factors. His work, Hroch later tells us, was 'a critical response to the one-sided emphasis placed by [Karl] Deutsch on the role of social communication and mobility' (2006: 30).

Strikingly enough, Hroch's pathbreaking studies were not translated into English until 1985. Until then, his findings were made accessible to a wider audience through the writings of Eric J. Hobsbawm (1972) and Tom Nairn (1974) who both treated Hroch's work as an excellent piece of comparative analysis. In a similar vein, Gellner commented that the publication of *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (1985) made it difficult for him to open his mouth for fear of making some mistake (cited in Hall 1998a: 6).

Hroch begins his analysis with an empirical observation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, he says, there were eight 'state-nations' in Europe with a more or less developed literary language, a high culture and ethnically homogeneous ruling elites (including the aristocracy and an emerging commercial and industrial bourgeoisie). These eight state-nations, England, France, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, the Netherlands and later Russia, were the products of a long process of nation-building that had started in the Middle Ages. There were also two emerging nations with a developed culture and an ethnically homogeneous elite, but without a political roof, the Germans and the Italians (Hroch 1993, 1995, 1996).

At the same time, there were more than thirty 'non-dominant ethnic groups' scattered around the territories of multiethnic empires and some of the above-mentioned states. These groups lacked their own state, an indigenous ruling elite and a continuous cultural tradition in their own literary language. They usually occupied a compact territory, but were dominated by an 'exogenous' – that is belonging to a different ethnic group – ruling class. Hroch notes that although these groups have come to be identified with Eastern and Southeastern Europe, there were many similar communities in Western Europe too (1993: 5). Sooner or later, some members of these groups

BOX 4.8 **Miroslav Hroch**

Professor of History at the Philosophical Faculty of Charles University in Prague, Miroslav Hroch is the author of the highly influential *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (1985) and *Comparative Studies in Modern European History: Nation, Nationalism, Social Change* (2007).

'The most important argument of my academic work, and where I disagree with the majority of contemporary research', writes Hroch in the Preface to his latest collection of essays, **'is the belief that we cannot study the process of nation-formation as a mere by-product of nebulous "nationalism". We have to understand it as a part of a social and cultural transformation and a component of the modernization of European societies, even though this modernization did not occur synchronically and had important regional specificities'** (2007: x). **'If one says that people let someone fool them into thinking they were a nation, this is nonsense'**, he says in an interview he gave in 2004. **'But if one is asserting that a certain group of politicians began accentuating the nation in order to gain power, not in terms of its actual existence, but as a postulate which allowed for a better route to power, then there is a lot of truth in this. Therefore, on the one hand it is necessary to accept the objective existence of a large social group (which can comprise a nation). On the other hand, one must be aware of the exploitation of this fact in the pursuit of power' … 'Czechoslovakia is a perfect example of how a national identity cannot be invented. The failure of Czechoslovakia shows how people – which in this instance pertains to the Slovaks – won't accept the concept of a nation that doesn't conform to reality'** (Svoboda 2004: 24, 26).

became aware of their own ethnicity and started to conceive of themselves as a potential nation. Comparing their situation with that of the established nations, they detected certain deficits, which the future nation lacked, and began efforts to overcome them, seeking the support of their compatriots. Hroch observes that this national agitation started very early in some cases, that is around 1800 (the Greeks, Czechs, Norwegians, Irish), one generation later in others (the Finns, Croats, Slovenes, Flemish, Welsh), or even as late as the second half of the nineteenth century (Latvians, Estonians, Catalans, Basques) (1996: 37).

Hroch calls these 'organized endeavours to achieve all the attributes of a fully-fledged nation' a national movement. He argues that the tendency to speak of them as 'nationalist' leads to serious confusion since nationalism *stricto sensu* is something else, namely that 'outlook which gives an absolute priority to the values of the nation over all other values and interests' (1993: 6). In that sense, nationalism was only one of many forms of national consciousness to emerge in the course of these movements. The term 'nationalist' could be applied to such representative figures as the Norwegian poet Wergeland who tried to create a language for his country or the Polish writer Mickiewicz who

longed for the liberation of his homeland, but it cannot be suggested that all the participants of these movements were 'nationalist' as such. Nationalism did of course become a significant force in these areas, Hroch admits, but as in the West, this was a later development. The programmes of the classic national movements were of a different type. According to Hroch, they included three groups of demands:

1. The development or improvement of a national culture based on the local language which had to be used in education, administration and economic life.
2. The creation of a complete social structure, including their 'own' educated elites and entrepreneurial classes.
3. The achievement of equal civil rights and of some degree of political self-administration. (1995: 66–7)

The timing and relative priority of these three sets of demands varied but the trajectory of any national movement was only completed when all were fulfilled (1993: 6).

On the other hand, Hroch distinguishes three structural phases between the starting-point of any national movement and its successful completion. During the initial period, which he calls Phase A, activists committed themselves to scholarly inquiry into the linguistic, historical and cultural attributes of their ethnic group. They did not attempt to mount a patriotic agitation or formulate any political goals at this stage, in part because they were isolated and in part they did not believe it would serve any purpose (1985: 23). In the second period, Phase B, a new range of activists emerged who intended to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible to the project of creating a nation. Hroch notes that these activists were not very successful initially, but their efforts found a growing reception in time. When the national consciousness became the concern of the majority of the population, a mass movement was formed, which Hroch terms Phase C. It was only at this stage that a full social structure could be formed (1993: 7; 1995: 67). Hroch stresses that the transition from one phase to the next did not occur at one stroke: 'between the manifestations of scholarly interest, on the one hand, and the mass diffusion of patriotic attitudes, on the other, there lies an epoch characterized by active patriotic agitation: the fermentation-process of national consciousness' (1985: 23).

This periodization, Hroch continues, permits meaningful comparisons between national movements. For him, the most important criterion for any typology of national movements is the relationship between the transition to Phase B and then to Phase C on the one hand, and the transition to a constitutional society on the other. Combining these two series of changes, he identifies four types of national movements in Europe:

1. In the first type, national agitation began under the old regime of absolutism, but it reached the masses in a time of revolutionary changes. The leaders of Phase B formulated their national programmes in conditions of political upheaval. Hroch cites the case of Czech agitation in Bohemia and the Hungarian and Norwegian movements to illustrate this type. All these movements entered Phase B around 1800. The Norwegians obtained their independence (and a liberal constitution) in 1814; the Czech and Magyar national programmes were developed in the course of the revolutions of 1848.
2. In the second type, national agitation again started under the old regime, but the transition to Phase C was delayed until after a constitutional revolution. This shift resulted either from uneven economic development, as in Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia or Croatia; or from foreign oppression, as in Slovakia or the Ukraine. Hroch notes that Phase B started in Croatia in the 1830s, in Slovenia in the 1840s, in Latvia in the late 1850s and in Lithuania not before the 1870s. This delayed the transition to Phase C to the 1880s in Croatia, the 1890s in Slovenia and the revolution of 1905 in Latvia and Lithuania. He argues that the policies of Magyarization held back the transition to Phase C in Slovakia until after 1867, as did forcible Russification in the Ukraine.
3. In the third type, a mass movement was already formed under the old regime, thus, before the establishment of a constitutional order. This model was confined to the territories of the Ottoman Empire in Europe – Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria.
4. In the final type, national agitation began under constitutional conditions in a more developed capitalist setting; this pattern was characteristic of Western Europe. In some of these cases the transition to Phase C was experienced quite early, as in the Basque lands and Catalonia, while in others it did so after a very long Phase B, as in Flanders, or not at all as in Wales, Scotland or Brittany (for these types see 1985: chapter 7; 1993: 7–8).

Hroch maintains that these patterns do not enable us to understand the origins and outcomes of various national movements as they are based on generalizations (see also Box 4.8). Any satisfactory account has to be 'multi-causal' and establish the links between the structural phases we have identified above. In the light of these considerations, Hroch tries to provide answers to the following questions: how did the experiences (and structures) of the past affect the modern nation-building process? How and why did the scholarly interests of a small number of intellectuals transform into political programmes underpinned by strong emotional attachments? What accounts for the success of some of these movements and the failure of others? He begins by considering the 'antecedents to nation-building'.

According to Hroch, the experiences of the past, or what he calls 'the prelude to modern nation-building' (that is earlier attempts at nation-building), were not only important for the 'state-nations' of the West, but also for the non-dominant ethnic groups of Central and Eastern Europe. The legacy of the past embodied three significant resources that might facilitate the emergence of a national movement. The first of these were 'the relics of an earlier political autonomy'. The properties or privileges granted under the old regime often led to tensions between the estates and the 'new' absolutism, which in turn provided triggers for later national movements. Hroch points to the resistance of Hungarian, Bohemian and Croatian estates to Josephine centralism to illustrate his argument. A second resource was 'the memory of former independence or statehood'. This could also play a stimulating role as the cases of Czech, Lithuanian, Bulgarian and Catalan movements demonstrate. Finally, the existence of 'a medieval written language' was crucial as this could make the development of a modern literary language easier. Hroch argues that the absence of this resource was much exaggerated in the nineteenth century, leading to a distinction between 'historical' and 'unhistorical' peoples. In fact, its salience was limited to the tempo at which the historical consciousness of the nation developed (1993: 8–9; 1995: 69).

Whatever the legacy of the past, the modern nation-building process always started with the collection of information about the history, language and customs of the non-dominant ethnic group. The ethnic archaeologists of Phase A excavated the group's past and paved the way for the subsequent formation of a national identity. But, Hroch maintains, their efforts cannot be called an organized political or social movement since they articulated no national demands as yet. The transformation of their intellectual activity into a movement seeking cultural and political changes was a product of Phase B. Hroch distinguishes three developments that precipitated this transformation:

1. a social and/or political crisis of the old order, accompanied by new tensions and horizons;
2. the emergence of discontent among significant elements of the population;
3. loss of faith in traditional moral systems, above all a decline in religious legitimacy, even if this only affected small numbers of intellectuals. (1993: 10)

On the other hand, the initiation of national agitation (Phase B) by a group of activists did not guarantee the emergence of a mass movement. Mass support and the successful attainment of the ultimate goal, that is the forging of a modern nation, depended in turn on four conditions:

1. a crisis of legitimacy, linked to social, moral and cultural strains;
2. a basic volume of vertical social mobility (some educated people must come from the non-dominant ethnic group);

3. fairly high level of social communication, including literacy, schooling and market relations;
4. nationally relevant conflicts of interest. (ibid.: 12)

Hroch takes the second and the third conditions from Deutsch. He accepts that a high level of social mobility and communication facilitates the emergence of a national movement. However, his endorsement is not unqualified. He notes that these conditions do not work in at least two cases. First, he points to the case of the district of Polesie in interwar Poland where there was minimal social mobility, very weak contacts with the market and scant literacy. The same pattern prevailed in Eastern Lithuania, West Prussia, Lower Lusatia and various Balkan regions. In all these cases, the response to national agitation was quite ardent. On the other hand, in Wales, Belgium, Brittany and Schleswig, high levels of social mobility and communication were not sufficient to generate mass support for the respective national movements (ibid.: 11).

Drawing on these observations, Hroch argues that there must be another factor that helped the transition to Phase C. This is what he terms 'a nationally relevant conflict of interest', that is 'a social tension or collision that could be mapped onto linguistic (and sometimes also religious) divisions'. According to Hroch, the best example of such a conflict in the nineteenth century was the tension between new university graduates coming from a non-dominant ethnic group and a closed elite from the ruling nation that kept a hereditary grip on leading positions in state and society. There were also clashes between peasants from the non-dominant group and landlords from the dominant one, between craftsmen from the former and large traders from the latter. Hroch stresses that these conflicts of interest cannot be reduced to class conflicts since the national movements always recruited supporters from several classes (ibid.: 11–12).

Finally, Hroch asks the following question: 'why were social conflicts of this kind articulated in national terms more successfully in some parts of Europe than others'? He claims that national agitation started earlier and made more progress in areas where the non-dominant ethnic groups lived under absolutist oppression. In such areas, the leaders of these groups – and the group as a whole – hardly had any political education and no political experience at all. Moreover, there was little room for alternative, more developed, forms of political discourse. Thus, it was easier to articulate hostilities in national categories, as was the case in Bohemia and Estonia. According to Hroch, this was precisely why these regions were different from Western Europe. The higher levels of political culture and experience in the West allowed the nationally relevant conflicts of interest to be articulated in political terms. This phenomenon was observed in the Flemish, Scottish and Welsh cases where the national programmes of the activists found it hard to win a mass following and in some cases never achieved a transition to Phase C. Hroch continues: 'The lesson is that it is not enough to consider only the formal level of social communication

reached in a given society – one must also look at the complex of contents mediated through it' (ibid.: 12). Phase C can be attained in a relatively short time if the goals articulated by agitators correspond to the immediate needs and aspirations of the majority of the non-dominant ethnic group. Let me conclude this brief review by a general observation from Hroch about the contemporary ethnic revival in Central and Eastern Europe:

> in a social situation where the old regime was collapsing, where old relations were in flux and general insecurity was growing, the members of the 'non-dominant ethnic group' would see the community of language and culture as the ultimate certainty, the unambiguously demonstrable value. Today, as the system or planned economy and social security breaks down, once again – the situation is analogous – language acts as a substitute for factors of integration in a disintegrating society. When society fails, the nation appears as the ultimate guarantee. (Cited in Hobsbawm 1996: 261)

A critique of modernism

Modernist theories have been subject to several criticisms over the years, some brought to our attention by primordialists and ethnosymbolists, who reject the main assumptions of modernist explanations, others by fellow modernists and those who subscribe to more recent theoretical perspectives who, while disagreeing with specific aspects of particular theories, remain loyal to the broader modernist framework. I will divide these criticisms again into three categories, in terms of the group of theories they are addressed to, going from general objections to more specific criticisms in each case. It needs to be stressed, perhaps more than ever, that these are not mutually exclusive categories, and the reader will detect a number of recurrent themes, that is criticisms directed at all versions of modernism, in the discussion that follows.

Economic transformations

Theories of economic transformations do not fit the facts

As several commentators have pointed out, the specific theories that prioritize economic factors in explaining nationalism do not square with realities on the ground. Breuilly, for example, argues that Nairn's theory inverts the actual sequence of events by placing the origins of nationalism within the less developed countries. For Breuilly, nationalism originates in Europe before the establishment of colonial empires in overseas areas. Hence, anti-colonial nationalisms, which can be seen as a reaction to imperialism, postdate European nationalisms. Moreover, it is not possible to account for the first nationalist movements in terms of economic exploitation or backwardness.

Breuilly cites the example of Magyar nationalism in the Habsburg Empire to support this assertion. He notes that the Magyars, who developed the first strong nationalist movement in the Habsburg Empire, were not a backward or exploited group; to the contrary, they had a number of privileges. Breuilly argues that Magyar nationalism was a reaction to the oppressive control exercised by Vienna. There were other nationalist movements as well, especially among the non-Magyar groups exploited by Magyars, but, Breuilly insists, this was a later development (1993a: 412–3). Breuilly is not the only one who questions Nairn's treatment of nationalism in the 'core' countries as a reaction to the nationalism of the periphery. According to Hobsbawm, for example, this argument neglects the historic origin and role of nationalism in the core countries of capitalist development, which provided the conceptual model for the nationalisms of the rest – England, France, the USA and Germany (1977: 14; see also Smith 1983: xvii and Cocks 2005: 86).

Orridge multiplies the number of counter-examples. He remarks that Catalonia and the Basque country, where there are strong nationalist movements, were and are the most developed regions of Spain. Similarly, Bohemia, 'the heartland of nineteenth-century Czech nationalism' in Orridge's words, was the most developed part of the Habsburg Empire. Finally, Belgium was highly industrialized at the time it separated from the Netherlands in the 1830s (Orridge 1981b: 181–2). The same goes for Scotland, says Mann, 'for Scotland has not, either historically or today, been an exploited, dependent peripheral area (apart from its Highlands)' (1978: 529). Nairn tries to circumvent these criticisms by arguing that 'uneven development' can sometimes operate in reverse and produce highly developed peripheries within backward states. However, Orridge notes, there are also 'instances of nationalism not accompanied by any great differences in developmental level from their surroundings'. Thus, there was no significant difference, as far as their developmental level is concerned, between Norway and Sweden or Finland and Russia, when the smaller countries developed their nationalisms. Similarly, when the Balkan nations won their independence in the course of the nineteenth century, they were not more developed or backward than the core region of the Ottoman Empire. Orridge maintains that it is more difficult to accommodate these cases within Nairn's theory (Orridge 1981b: 182).

A further difficulty with Nairn's account is that there are instances of 'uneven development' without strong nationalist movements. Orridge asks why there is no counterpart to the nationalisms of Scotland and Wales in Northern England or Southern Italy (ibid.). Breuilly goes one step further and argues that it is difficult to correlate the strength and intensity of a nationalist movement with the degree of economic exploitation and backwardness. He notes that nationalisms have often developed fastest in the least exploited or backward areas and that there were no significant nationalist movements in areas where the most naked forms of exploitation took place (1993a: 413).

A similar problem besets Hechter's theory of internal colonialism. Once again, the difficult cases are Catalonia and Scotland. Catalonia has never been an internal colony. On the contrary, it was, and still is, the strongest regional economy in Spain. Brand notes that Catalonia was the only industrial economy in Spain when nationalism acquired mass support, 'second only to Britain in its productive capacity and technical superiority in the textile industry' (1985: 277). Scotland, on the other hand, was a case of 'overdevelopment'; 'The Scots had long been innovators in the British context – in education, finance, technology, and the physical and social sciences' (Hechter 1985: 20; 1999a: xiii–xix; see also Stone and Trencher 2001: 159). As we have seen earlier, Hechter attempts to amend his theory by adding a second dimension to the cultural division of labour, a 'segmental' dimension, whereby the members of the disadvantaged groups cluster in specific occupational niches. In the Scottish case, this segmental division of labour operates through the mechanism of 'institutional autonomy'; the Scots, finding jobs in specifically Scottish institutions, developed a higher degree of group solidarity than would be predicted by the original theory.

But, according to the critics, this amendment does not save Hechter's theory. Brand argues that the initial version was tied into a wider Marxist model of society. The new version bears no relation to the original theory put forward by Lenin. Hence, he concludes, 'it makes no sense to call this "internal colonialism" ' (1985: 279).

More importantly, the conditions of segmentation, adduced specifically to cope with exceptional cases such as Scotland or Catalonia, did not exist in these countries. First, the proportion of Scots working in the institutions created by the Settlement of 1707 was very small. Secondly, 'even if we allow that their centrality outweighs their small size, there is very little evidence that they were important in the early regionalist and nationalist organizations' (ibid.: 281). Brand notes that these specifically Scottish institutions have not been sympathetic to nationalism. For instance, The Church of Scotland only started to support Home Rule after the Second World War and by this time, it was a rapidly waning force in Scottish society. Finally, a considerable number of Scots were employed in the colonial and administrative services of the British empire (Smith 1983: xvi). The case of Catalonia was not more promising. As mentioned above, Catalonia was a highly industrialized region. However, 'the industrial workers of Catalonia, especially those of Barcelona, were the most difficult to recruit for the Catalan cause' (Brand 1985: 282).

On the other hand, Brand notes that the occupational breakdown of the population in Scotland does not have the feature which Hechter identified among American Jews. A large proportion of Scots were engaged in agriculture. For occupational clustering to produce greater group solidarity, there must be sufficient communication among the members of the group in question. However, of all occupations, agricultural workers are the most difficult to

organize. Brand holds that much of this has to do with sheer geography since two hundred men in the factory can be contacted in half an hour, whereas this may take three weeks in the countryside (ibid.: 280). But the heart of the matter lies elsewhere. It may be conceded that individuals concentrated in particular occupations will meet regularly and share opinions. From this interaction, a point of view will probably emerge. However, 'this does not answer the question as to why a nationalist point of view specifically should grow up' (ibid.: 282).

Before concluding, let us note that Hechter's later *Containing Nationalism* has been subject to the same criticism. In his review of the book, Höijer claims that 'although he discusses many empirical cases of nationalism Hechter does not engage in any systematic testing of his theory, and to some extent he fails to consider empirical instances that appear to refute the theory'. The 1905 secession of Norway from Sweden is a good case in point, Höijer maintains, since the increase in self-governance for the Norwegians in this period preceded the development of Norwegian nationalism. Hence, it is not easy to determine the causal influence of indirect rule, as Hechter himself recognizes. Decentralization, or the introduction of indirect rule may in fact facilitate nationalist collective action by granting important political resources to local political leaders (Höijer 2000: 324–5; see also Stefanovic 2007).

Theories of economic transformations are reductionist

A common objection raised against most modernist theories of nationalism concerns their 'reductionism'. At the heart of this objection lies the belief that nationalism is too complex to be explained in terms of a single factor. Smith, for example, argues that Nairn's formula is too simple and crude to encompass the variety and timing of nationalisms. Moreover, 'we cannot simply reduce ethnic "sentiments" to "real" class interests, if only because sentiments are equally "real" and nationalism involves a good deal more than sentiments' (1983: xvii–xviii; see also Orridge 1981b: 190).

It has also been claimed that, despite the amendment to the earlier model, Hechter's theory continues to explain cultural cleavages and ethnic sentiments by purely economic and spatial characteristics. Such an account reduces nationalism to discontent caused by regional economic inequalities and exploitation. We have only to consider the cases of ethnic revival among the scattered Armenians, Jews, Blacks and Gypsies to realize the shallowness of this view. According to Smith, economic exploitation can only exacerbate a pre-existing sense of ethnic grievance (1983: xvi; cf. Orridge 1981b: 188–9).

Moreover, Smith contends, explaining nationalism by a single factor, in this case 'internal colonialism', inevitably limits the utility of the model. As such the model cannot explain why there has been cases of national revival in areas where the impact of capitalism, let alone industrialization, has been minimal

(Eritreans); why there has been a long time interval between the onset of industrialization and nationalist revival within the Western states; and why there has been no ethnic revival or a strong nationalist movement in economically backward areas like Northern England or Southern Italy (1983: xvi).

Rational choice theories have limited explanatory value

A standard criticism of all rational choice theories relates to their (alleged) inability to explain the strong passions generated by ethnic and national identities. Even its chief protagonists acknowledge the limits of rational choice theory when it comes to 'emotional' or 'irrational' behaviour. 'An account from a rational choice perspective of historical sequences after the events have occurred', Michael Banton, another exponent of rational choice theory, writes, 'will appear a common-sense interpretation and no test of theory'. But, he continues, 'it is no better to attribute events to the influence of nationalist sentiment without explaining what has evoked it or determined its strength' (2001: 263).

The problem seems to stem from the core assumption of rational choice theory, that of instrumental and interest-based rationality. Since it is not easy, if at all possible, to have an even basic understanding of actors' motivations and perceptions, rationality is 'imputed' by the theorist, in most cases 'after-the-fact', as Banton's quotation reveals. Even if we leave the 'non-instrumental' bases of action aside, how do we know that national sovereignty (or self-determination) is a universal – transhistorical and transcultural – goal embraced by all nationalist groups, as Hechter claims it is in *Containing Nationalism*? The question of 'which goals are common', critics argue, depends on the particular context, that is culture, social location or historical period – thus, collective interests and common goals are socially constructed, not fixed or universal. In a similar vein, we can ask 'why do individuals, as selfish maximizers of interests, not leave the ethnic or national groups of which they are a part even when it is more beneficial for them to do so?' The problem here, critics maintain, is that ethnic and national identities, despite a level of fluidity and individual agency, are neither freely chosen, nor easily escapable (Stefanovic 2007). O'Leary concurs, noting that 'many features of nationalism sunk costs in traditions, the tapping of the emotions as well as interests, and its expressive attributes, seem invulnerable to the ingenuity of rational choice theorists'. This might in fact be tradition's most important contribution, namely to show the limits of rationality and choice, to our understanding of nationalism (2001: 152).

This also forms the gist of the ethnosymbolist critique of rational choice theory. According to Smith, for example, Hechter leaves out the role of memory. The recent wars between Serbs and Croats show us that memories of previous bloody encounters can lead people to commit atrocities which the strategic calculations of battle could never guarantee. Similarly, Hitler's

extermination of European Jews is not easily explained by the strategic calculations of members of solidary groups (1998a: 67).

Nairn's theory is essentialist

Nairn treats the original formation of 'core' nations like France and England as a historical given, simply noting that they owe their nationalisms to a dialectical process whereby peripheric nationalisms react upon them, forcing them to become nationalist (James 1996: 111). He remains silent as to how these nations came into being in the first place. This tendency manifests itself clearly in his attitude towards Scotland, his 'homeland'. As Anderson notes, Nairn treats 'his "Scotland" as an unproblematic, primordial given' (1991: 89; see also Box 4.1). But Scotland presents an anomaly for Nairn's theory because Scottish nationalism develops at a relatively later date (Tiryakian 1995: 221). Nairn explains this by pointing to the fact that Scotland had been incorporated into the British state before the great period of industrialization. Therefore, it did not experience economic exploitation until very recently (Nairn 1974).

Nairn's tendency to treat the existence of some nations as 'given' led some commentators to accuse him of 'essentialism'. Zubaida, for example, asks how, without assuming the existence of essential nations, could 'nationality' constitute the 'fault-lines' of fissure contained within the ancient social formations (1978: 69; see the relevant quotation from Nairn above). Nairn seems to confirm this observation when he claims that England was 'a country of ancient and settled nationality' (1981: 262) or that 'nationalism, *unlike nationality or ethnic variety*, cannot be considered a "natural" phenomenon' (ibid.: 99, emphasis added). Drawing on these examples, Zubaida argues that Nairn falls prey to the fundamental assumptions of the nationalist discourse. Nairn considers nations to be 'historical super-subjects' which 'mobilize', 'aspire', 'propel themselves forward' and so on. However, 'there must be a way of systematically determining "a nation" for the fault-lines to be considered to be those of nationality' (1978: 69).

This is also what underlies the charge of 'nationalism', expressed most unequivocally by Davidson (1999) who argues that Nairn is not merely a 'theorist of nationalism', but a 'nationalist theorist'. Cocks remarks, in a similar vein, that Nairn's allegiance to Scottish nationalism leads him to fetishize ethnicity, locality and nationality and to set 'nationalism squarely on the side of progress, freedom, diversity and democracy' (2005: 74, 82, 84; for Nairn's reply see Box 4.1). Hobsbawm, on the other hand, asserts that 'the real danger for Marxists is the temptation to welcome nationalism as ideology and programme rather than realistically to accept it as a fact, a condition of their struggle as socialists'. Such a conversion, Hobsbawm continues, obstructs a realistic understanding of the world situation, Marxist or otherwise. Books like Nairn's need to be criticized because its insights are 'a symptom of the sickness of which they purport to be the cure' (1977: 14).

Political transformations

Theories of political transformations are misleading so far as the date of emergence of nations is concerned

This is the standard ethnosymbolist criticism of modernist explanations, political or otherwise. According to Smith, the leading proponent of ethnosymbolism, the problem is partly conceptual. The modernists operate with an ideal-type of the nation, derived from eighteenth to nineteenth-century Western experience, which stands in 'for the whole range of ideas covered by that concept, a version that bears all the hallmarks of the culture of a particular time and place'. This also means that:

> the assertion of the modernity of the nation is no more than a tautology, one which rules out any rival definition of the nation, outside of modernity and the West. The Western conception of the *modern* nation has become the measure of our understanding of the concept of the nation *per se*, with the result that all other conceptions become illegitimate. (2008: 13–14, original emphasis)

A similar observation comes from Gorski who argues that even modern nationalisms would fail to fulfil the criteria set by modernist scholars. Genuine nationalism is expected to be wholly secular and democratic, Gorski claims, and it is easy to show that pre-modern movements fall short of this criteria. But few, if any, examples of modern nationalism would meet it either. Modernists have painted themselves into a corner by trying to draw too sharp a line between modern nationalism and pre-modern sentiments and discourses. The test of nationalism they constructed is so stringent that even modern nationalisms do not pass them (2006: 152–3).

As we will see in more detail in the next chapter, ethnosymbolists claim that the first examples of nations and nationalism can be found much earlier than the eighteenth century. Nationalism as an ideology and a movement may be a fairly recent phenomenon, but the origins of national sentiments can be traced back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in many states of Western Europe. According to Smith, the small clerical and bureaucratic classes of France, England, Spain and Sweden began to feel a strong attachment to their nation, which they conceived as a territorial-cultural community, from the fifteenth century onwards. And a wider 'middle-class' nationalism was already in place by the sixteenth century, especially in England and the Netherlands (1995: 38).

Theories of political transformations fail to account for the persistence of pre-modern ethnic ties

A corollary of the above criticism is the claim that theories of political transformations cannot explain the continuing relevance of pre-modern ethnic

attachments. Holding that traditional structures have been eroded by the revolutions of modernity, the modernists fail to notice that the impact of these revolutions has been more marked in certain areas than others and has penetrated some strata of the population more profoundly than others. Smith argues that religion and ethnicity in particular have resisted assimilation to the 'dominant and secular ethos of modernity' (ibid.: 40–1). For him, theories which do not take the durability of ethnic ties into consideration cannot answer the following questions: 'Can such manipulations hope to succeed beyond the immediate moment? Why should one invented version of the past be more persuasive than others? Why appeal to the past at all, once the chain of tradition is seen to be beyond repair?' (1991b: 357).

Drawing on these observations, Smith objects to Hobsbawm's notion of 'invented traditions' and claims that these are in fact more akin to 'reconstruction' or 'rediscovery' of aspects of the ethnic past. Although the past can be interpreted in different ways, it is not 'any' past, but rather the 'past of that particular community, with its distinctive patterns of events, personages and milieux'. This past acts as a constraint on the manipulations of elites, hence on invention (ibid.: 358). 'New' traditions will be accepted by the masses in so far as they can be shown to be continuous with the living past.

Theories of political transformations are reductionist

The charge of reductionism has been brought against theories of political transformations as well. The ethnosymbolist version of this criticism focuses on modernists' portrayal of recent history. According to Hutchinson, for example, the modernists depict the last two centuries as shaped by a single decisive transition, characterized by political revolutions, industrial take-off and the decline of religious authority. He calls this the 'revolutionary' model of modernization. For scholars who espouse some version of the revolutionary model, nationalism is one of the by-products – albeit an important one – of this momentous transition to modernity. Hutchinson contends that this model cannot explain the much more evolutionary formation of national states in Western Europe. According to him, this process needs to be examined in *la longue durée*, covering a much larger time span (1994: 23–4; see also Llobera 1994). Smith puts this in a different way. He argues that modernist approaches underestimate the significance of local cultural and social contexts. For him, what determines the intensity, character and scope of nationalism is the interaction between the tidal wave of modernization and these local variations. He accepts that modernity played its part in generating aboriginal nationalisms in Australia just as it had done in France and Russia; but this does not tell us much about the timing, scope and character of these completely different nationalisms (1995: 42).

But the ethnosymbolists are not the only ones who raised the charge of reductionism. Puri for example accuses theorists of political transformations downplaying the role of culture in shaping nationalisms and ignoring the

contributions of non-elite, or ordinary, people. The political approaches of these theorists, she says, cannot make sense of the contentiousness of nationalisms, the fragmented aspects of the state, inconsistencies between state institutions and dominant nationalisms, and the gendered and racialized inclusions and exclusions of nationalisms (2004: 53, 55). McCrone, on the other hand, stresses the autonomy of cultural nationalisms, refusing to treat it, as he believes political modernists do, as a cover for political nationalism (1998: 101).

Theories of political transformations cannot explain the passions generated by nationalism

Ethnosymbolists also take issue with the instrumentalism of these theories. For them, such accounts are unable to explain why millions of people have sacrificed their lives for their nations. Smith argues that this failure stems from the 'top-down' method employed by most modernist theorists: 'They concentrate, for the most part, on elite manipulation of "the masses" rather than on the dynamics of mass mobilisation *per se*.' As a result of this, they do not pay enough attention to the needs, interests, hopes and longings of ordinary people (1995: 40). This also applies to Hobsbawm who criticizes Gellner for ignoring 'the view from below'. Koelble notes that Hobsbawm 'does not himself provide much of an analysis of the effects of modernization on the lower classes' (1995: 78).

Obviously, not all theorists of political transformations are instrumentalists. Hence Breuilly expresses a similar complaint about instrumentalism, arguing that this approach cannot explain why and how nationalism convinces those who have no interest – or those who actually go against their own interests – in supporting it (1993b: 21). All these criticisms revolve around one simple question: why do so many people willingly lay down their lives for their nations? In an interview on H-Nationalism, Breuilly provides the rudiments of an answer to this question. First, it is simply not true that people always kill and die 'willingly' for their nations. Today, he argues, no country in Western Europe or the United States would tolerate obeying the orders soldiers were given in the First World War. In any case, 'enthusiasm for war, even expressed through mass volunteering, is not yet willingness to die. Young men often go off to war with no idea what it will be like, as an adventure from which they expect to return'. Second, there is the issue of authority; 'a lot of people fight and die because authority tells them to fight and die'. Finally, 'how you get from civilian life into the trenches, into a regiment, into being ordered to do things, is itself a quite complex process which changes people'. As army psychologists have figured out, individuals can bond in a platoon, a group of twenty-two and be prepared to risk their lives for their comrades. Hence some of the factors that produce the willingness to die, Breuilly concludes, no longer exist in modern Western societies and in any case have nothing to do with the national idea as such (H-Nationalism 2006).

Instrumentalist theories exaggerate the role of elites in shaping national identities

This criticism led to a memorable exchange between Francis Robinson and Paul R. Brass on the relative weight to be attached to Islamic values and to elite manipulation in the process leading up to the formation of two separate states in the Indian subcontinent (Brass 1977, 1979; Robinson 1977, 1979). Accusing Brass for overstating the role of elite manipulation in this process, Robinson holds that the values and religio-political ideas of Islam, especially those that stress the existence of a Muslim community, limited the range of actions open to Muslim elite groups. These ideas formed 'their own apprehensions of what was possible and of what they ought to be trying to achieve' and thus acted as a constraining factor on Hindu–Muslim cooperation (1979: 106).

For Robinson, the religious differences between Muslims and Hindus in the nineteenth century were too great to allow peaceful coexistence; in a way, they were predisposed to live as separate national groups. Brass does not ignore these differences, or more generally pre-existing cultural values that may influence the ability of elites to manipulate particular symbols. But for him, the crucial question is:

> Given the existence in a multiethnic society of an array of cultural distinctions among peoples and of actual and potential cultural conflicts among them, what factors are critical in determining which of those distinctions, if any, will be used to build political identities? (1991: 77; see also Box 4.4)

Here, Brass turns to the role of political elites, the balance between rates of social mobilization and assimilation between ethnic groups, the building of political organizations to promote group identities and the influence of government policies. Clearly, the answer to this question has broader theoretical implications with regard to one of the most fundamental divides of the literature on nationalism, namely that between the 'primordialists' and 'instrumentalists'. Both writers agree that these are extreme positions and that the answer lies somewhere between the two. As the above discussion shows, Brass veers towards the instrumentalist position, whereas Robinson insists that 'the balance of the argument should shift more towards the position of the primordialists' (Brass 1991: chapter 3; Robinson 1979: 107).

On the other hand, O'Leary claims that, despite its sophisticated nature, Brass's theory does not address the question of why and when elites choose ethnic and national identities for mobilization rather than others satisfactorily. He believes that elites and dominant classes, as much as the masses or subordinate classes, are constrained by their ethnic or national identities, and not just motivated by their interests. Moreover, the masses are not simply passive recipients of manipulative discourses imposed from above; they have their own reasons to acquiesce to them. Such an account gives insufficient weight to the

independent role of ideas and doctrines, and reduces identities to interests, thereby making a philosophical category mistake which conflates what people want with what they want to be (2001: 150–1).

Social/cultural transformations

Theories of social/cultural transformations do not fit the facts

Probably the most problematic aspect of Gellner's theory is the purported correlation between industrialization and nationalism. Several commentators have cast doubt on Gellner's assumptions by pointing to a series of counter-examples. To begin with, it is argued that many nationalist movements flourished in societies which had not yet undergone industrialization. Kedourie, for example, asserts that nationalism as a doctrine was articulated in German-speaking lands in which there was as yet hardly any industrialization (1994: 143). Kitching makes a similar point for Britain, claiming that the emergence of nationalism in the British Isles precedes even early industrialism by 150–200 years (1985: 106). Counter-examples abound. The nineteenth-century Balkans, in particular Greece, fell prey to nationalism when they were innocent of industrialization (Mouzelis 2007: 132–3; Minogue 2001: 108; O'Leary 1998: 73). In the light of these counter-examples, critics maintain that industrialization can be regarded as one amongst many preconditions of successful nation formation, and certainly not the 'starting point' of the spread of nationalism (Hroch 2006: 25).

Breuilly makes the same point, arguing that commercial agriculture, mass education and modern systems of communication can all produce the effects Gellner attributes to industrialization (1996: 162). Anti-imperialist or post-colonial nationalisms are a good case in point. Gandhi's nationalism, for example, was quite explicitly hostile to industrialism. In Russia, on the other hand, a regime deeply hostile to nationalism took over the empire in 1917 and proceeded to supply just the conditions Gellner takes to be necessary to an industrial society (Minogue 1996: 120). To sum up, nationalism preceded industrialization in many places; and in still others, nationalism was not a concomitant of the process of industrialization.

It is worth noting that Gellner tries to counter these criticisms by arguing that 'industrialism casts a long shadow' before its actual reality and that at any rate it was only the intellectuals who were nationalists (BBC radio discussion with Kedourie, cited in Minogue 1996: 120). He does however admit that the Greek case presented an anomaly for his theory – 'the Morea did not look like the Lancashire dales' (cited in O'Leary 1998: 73). There are two problems with this argument, according to Breuilly. First, not all examples of pre-industrial nationalism are about industrialization. Some nationalists, again like Gandhi, reject Westernization, even if there are others in the same movement, like Nehru, who support it. Second, many nationalists act in ways that push their

country backwards (like Pol-Pot's genocide of Western-educated elites in Cambodia). In short, Breuilly concludes, 'pre-industrial nationalism can be about many things other than industrialization' (2006: xxxix).

Similar charges have been brought against Anderson's theory regarding his arguments on the relationship between religion and nationalism, and on the 'birthplace' of nationalism. It has been argued, for example, that religion is not always replaced by nationalism; Kellas refers to the cases of Ireland, Poland, Armenia, Israel and Iran, where religious institutions have reinforced nationalism, to support this argument. There are also cases where nationalism and religion thrive together. Therefore, it is difficult to relate the rise of nationalism to the decline of religion (1991: 48).

Greenfeld goes one step further and argues that 'nationalism emerged in a time of ardent religious sentiment, when questions of religious identity grew more, rather than less acute, and faith became more significant – the time of the Reformation'. Nationalism was able to develop and become established with the support of religion, writes Greenfeld. Even at later stages, when it replaced it as the governing passion, it incorporated religion as a part of the national consciousness in many cases (1993: 49).

As alluded to above, Anderson's contention that the national liberation movements in the Americas constitute the earliest examples of modern nationalism has also been the subject of much controversy (Kitromilides and Varouxakis 2001; Cheah 2003). The first examples of nationalism have been identified variously as appearing in England (Greenfeld 1992; Hastings 1997), France (Alter 1989), Germany (Kedourie 1994). Anderson, however, insists that 'it is an astonishing sign of the depth of Eurocentrism that so many European scholars persist, in the face of all the evidence, in regarding nationalism as a European invention' (1991: 191, note 9). Hastings fires back, claiming that Anderson does not explain why the first wave of nation-making was the American. Anderson offers no explanation, he writes, 'as to why the growth in books did not have in the sixteenth century the effect he postulates for the late eighteenth' (1997: 11).

Theories of social/cultural transformations cannot explain the passions generated by nationalism

As Gellner himself notes, this point has been raised by various critics from opposing ends of the ideological spectrum (1996c: 625). For instance, Perry Anderson, a leading figure of the New Left, argues that Gellner's theory cannot explain the emotional power of nationalism: 'Where Weber was so bewitched by its spell that he was never able to theorize nationalism, Gellner had theorized nationalism without detecting the spell' (1992: 205; for Gellner's response see Box 4.6). O'Leary and Minogue make much the same point; while O'Leary accuses Gellner for relying on 'culturally and materially reductionist accounts of the political motivations which produce nationalism',

Minogue is critical of his neglect of the power of identity (O'Leary 1996: 100; Minogue 1996: 126).

As we saw earlier, this point also forms one of the core arguments of the ethnosymbolist critique of modernist theories. Ethnosymbolists like Smith begin by asking the following question: why should people ardently identify with an invented high culture and be willing to sacrifice their lives for it (1996c: 134)? Gellner seeks the answer in modern systems of mass education. However, Smith notes, the ardour of the early nationalists, those who create the nation in the first place, cannot be the product of a national mass education system which has not at that date come into being. It is not possible to establish a 'national' educational system without first determining who the 'nation' is. Who will receive the education? In which language? To explain the nationalism of those who propose answers to these questions, that is those who 'construct' the nation, by mass education is to fall into the trap of functionalism (1996c: 135; for a detailed discussion of Gellner's functionalism see below).

Gellner rejects these charges by arguing that they are based on a misreading of his theory. The model does not explain nationalism by the use it has in legitimating modernization, he says, but by the fact that 'individuals find themselves in very stressful situations, unless the nationalist requirement of congruence between a man's culture and that of its environment is satisfied'. Without such a congruence, life would be hell – hence the deep passion which is thought to be absent from the theory. The passion is not a means to an end, 'it is a reaction to an intolerable situation, to a constant jarring in the activity which is by far the most important thing in life – contact and communication with fellow human beings' (1996c: 626).

Despite its insistence to explain 'the attachment that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations' (2006: 141), Anderson's theory has not been able to escape the same criticism. For Smith, the emphasis on imagination as the key to the rise and spread of nationalism deflects attention away from collective attachment and sentiment. '"Imagination" certainly helps us to understand how easily the concept of the nation *can* be spread and transplanted; but why *should* it be spread, and why should *it* (the nation) be transplanted?' What was it about the nation that made their members feel bound into 'nations'? (1998a: 137, original emphasis). These allegations seem somewhat out of place given Anderson's own sensibilities which unerringly fall on the side of nationalism – as several commentators point out. Hence for Redfield, Anderson writes as a late Romantic, not because he invokes imagination, but because, in doing so, he attempts to rescue nationalism from the condescension of cosmopolitanism:

> Anderson thus positions nationalism at a remove from the state: its roots are different from the state's and run deeper, tapping, ultimately, into the substratum of the imagination itself … it is an equally 'Romantic' characteristic of Anderson's text that … it also suggests the impossibility of keeping

> nation and state from blurring into each other, precisely because the nation, *as* 'imagined', inevitably becomes the object of aesthetic pedagogy. (2003: 78, original emphasis; see also Laclau 2003: 25, 28)

Similarly, Cocks observes that Anderson 'depicts the nation as a cozy community of newspaper readers and anthem singers'. This community is 'inclusive' by virtue of a shared language that anyone can learn, as opposed to the ethnoracist exclusions of aristocratic – not national – ideologies of 'stock' and blood (1996: 529). In a reply to his critics, Anderson concedes the point:

> I accept completely [the] criticism … that I am a late Romantic with a decadent tendency to believe in the Fall … the lines I have often tried to draw between a 'true' uncontaminated popular nationalism and the kind of Machiavellian nationalism emanating from the state and from threatened aristocracies and monarchies, is theoretically implausible and leads me back to contrasts between the true and the false, the primal and the derivative, that many other texts I have written are intended to destroy. (2003: 231; see also Box 4.7)

Theories of social/cultural transformations are reductionist

According to Zubaida, all general theories of nationalism assume a 'sociological homogeneity' – that there are common social structures and processes which underlie the ideological/political phenomena, and they all share a basic structure despite their conceptual and terminological variations. To illustrate this structure, he considers Gellner's theory which he sees as the epitome of such theories. The main elements of the narrative are: a world historical process (modernization or industrialization); traditional societies which this process hits at a differential pace, leading to differences in the degree of development and resulting in the breakdown of traditional ties and structures; particular social groups (intelligentsia and proletariat for Gellner) taking up the double fight against tradition and against external enemies. The story ends with the establishment of national states, which is followed by the struggle to replace traditional loyalties with national ones among the population at large. For Gellner, this is generated by an educational system which produces citizens with the needed qualifications (1978: 56–7).

Yet, for Zubaida, the reality is much more complex. He argues that the sociological explanations of nationalist movements are based on processes and groups which are not generalizable or comparable between the various social contexts. For instance, the term 'industry' does not have the same meaning everywhere; it covers a wide range of forms of production, in scale from small workshops to nuclear power stations. Moreover, the consequences of industrial development are not uniform; factors like capital intensivity, the stratification or segmentation of labour markets, the source, nature and duration of capital

investment, the relationship of industry to the agricultural sector may influence the outcome of industrialization and lead to very different socioeconomic configurations. In short, industrialization may not lead to nationalism in all these societies. Gellner's theory – or in that respect any general theory of nationalism – overlooks regional and historical variations (ibid.: 58–9).

Breuilly also complains about the abstract and sociological form of Gellner's theory which does not accord due weight to the role of the state and politics. If not all cases of industrialization produce nationalism, says Breuilly, and if nationalism can be produced in the absence of industrialization, then 'we must recognize that the modern state is not necessarily national or nationalist' (2006: xliii–xlv). O'Leary concurs: 'What appears to lack is a sustained and developed sense of the political'. Gellner's theory disregards the role of power politics in determining which cultures become nations, 'and the possibility that nation-builders explicitly see the functional relationship between nationalism and modernity which he posits' (1998: 63; see also Puri 2004: 50).

A similar objection has been raised against Anderson's emphasis on the role of cultural representations in the construction of nations as 'imagined communities'. Breuilly criticizes Anderson as well for underestimating the political dimension of nationalism, and more specifically, for exaggerating the importance of cultural nationalism in nineteenth century Europe. According to Breuilly, Anderson's theses, while plausible in eighteenth century America, falter when he moves to Europe; he cannot tackle the thorny problem of the lack of congruence between 'cultural' and 'political' nationalism in certain cases. To illustrate this point, Breuilly points to the 'political' unification of Germany which was not accompanied by a 'cultural' unification. The political dimension plays a more significant role even in the case of the liberation movements that developed in eighteenth-century America, for which Anderson's argument works better. Most of these movements, Breuilly notes, worked within the territorial framework set down by the colonial system (1985: 71–2).

In general, Breuilly admits that the cultural dimension is important for understanding nationalism, but adds that this dimension can only explain why certain small groups might be disposed to imagine themselves as a nation and act politically on the basis of this assumption. Anderson's theory, he continues, cannot provide an answer to the question of 'why are those groups important'; in other words, 'why does anyone either above (in power) or below (in the society claimed to be national) take these arguments seriously'. Breuilly contends that Gellner's theory is more satisfactory in this respect since it tries to pinpoint some basic changes in the social structure which might underpin the type of cultural processes Anderson considers. He concludes by claiming that a closer examination of the links between the modern state and nationalism might provide a solution to this problem (ibid.: 73).

In passing, let us note that Hroch's model was also criticized for ignoring the political determinants of nationalism (Hall 1993: 25). Hroch tries to redress the

balance in his later work by focusing more on the political dimension. In a later article on national self-determination, for example, he examines how the structure of national programmes was shaped by the political setting under which they operated and when political demands entered these national programmes. He basically argues that 'the strength and timing of the call for self-determination did not depend upon the intensity of political oppression and had no correlation with the level of linguistic and cultural demands'. Self-determination became more successful in movements 'which were based on a complete social structure of their non-dominant ethnic group and which could use some institutions or traditions of their statehood from the past' (1995: 79).

Gellner's theory is too functionalist

Another standard criticism of Gellner's theory relates to its stark functionalism. Hence several commentators have argued that Gellner tries to account for nationalism on the basis of the consequences it generates, 'by reference to an historical outcome (the emergence of Industrial Society) which chronologically follows it' (Kitching 1985: 102; see also Laitin 1998: 137; for a dissenting view see Hall 2006: 36–7). For Gellner, nationalism is required by industrial society which could not 'function' without it; thus, nationalism is beneficial for modernizing states. In such a picture, nationalism is unintended by the actors producing modernization as they are unaware of the causal relationship between these two processes. O'Leary contends that:

> Gellner's argument displays all the vices of functionalist reasoning – in which events and processes occur which are implausibly treated as wholly beyond the understanding of human agents, in which consequences precede causes, and in which suspicions arise that supra-individual and holistic entities are being tacitly invoked to do explanatory work. (1996: 85–6)

Breuilly, on the other hand, notes that there are a multitude of functions which it is suggested nationalism can serve. For some, nationalism facilitates the process of modernization; for others, it helps the preservation of traditional identities and structures. For some, it is a function of class interest; for others, of identity need. Since there is no universally accepted interpretation, it makes no sense to explain nationalism in terms of the 'function' it serves (Breuilly 1993a: 419).

Minogue goes one step further and argues that functional explanations are patronizing in the sense of treating the researcher/theorist as a kind of omniscient being. Such explanations imply that what people are doing is actually different from what they believe they are doing and the theorist is in a position to perceive the reality. Hence, nationalists may think that they are liberating the nation, but Gellner knows that what they are really doing is in fact facilitating the transition to an industrial society. The olympian theorist spots the real

causes of what is happening and reveals them to the readers. Minogue also criticizes Gellner, and functional explanations in general, for underestimating the full conditions of human agency. He maintains that individuals respond rationally to the situations in which they find themselves in the light of the understanding they have of it. According to Minogue, 'different ideas, like the fluttering of the famous butterfly's wing that produces tempest on the other side of the globe, can lead to quite unpredictable consequences'. Discarding these ideas may doom a theory to extrapolation (1996: 117–18).

Gellner's functionalism does not manifest itself only in his portrayal of the relationship between nationalism and industrialization. His account of the rise of mass education displays similar functionalist overtones. The theory postulates that the new educational system based on generic training is a product of the new societal conditions. But again a process – here, the emergence of standardized educational systems – is explained by reference to a function which it is purported to play. Breuilly asks: 'education may eventually function in this way but does that explain its development'? His answer is negative: 'unless one specifies either a deliberate intention on the part of key groups to produce this result or some feed-back mechanism which will "select" generic training patterns of education against other patterns, this cannot count as an explanation' (1985: 68).

Hroch reifies nations

This criticism comes from Gellner who describes Hroch's approach as 'an interesting attempt to save … the nationalist vision of itself by confirming that nations do really exist and express themselves through nationalist striving' (1995: 182). What lies behind this criticism is Hroch's distinction between established 'state-nations' and 'non-dominant ethnic groups'. As we have seen above, Hroch argues that there were eight fully fledged state-nations in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, which were the products of a long process of development that started in the Middle Ages. This argument led some scholars to suggest that Hroch's approach was a mixture of primordialism and modernism. Hence, for Hall, 'Hroch stands closer to Anthony Smith [the leading proponent of ethnosymbolism] in insisting that nationalism would be ineffective were its appeal not directed at a pre-existing community' (1998a: 6). Hroch replies by noting that he uses the term 'revival' in a metaphorical sense, without implying that nations were eternal categories. Gellner's objections, Hroch comments, are based partly on misunderstanding and partly on an inadequate interpretation of the terms and concepts he used in his model (1998: 94 and 106, note 30). For him, the basic difference of opinion lies elsewhere:

> I cannot accept the view that nations are a mere 'myth', nor do I accept Gellner's global understanding of nationalism as an all-purpose explanation including categories of which the nation is a mere derivative. The relation

> between the nation and national consciousness (or national identity, or 'nationalism') is not one of unilateral derivation but one of mutual and complementary correlation, and the discussion about which of them is 'primary' can, at least for the present, be left to the philosophers and ideologues. (ibid.: 104; see also Box 4.8)

Elsewhere, Hroch is more explicit about his theoretical preferences. 'I consider myself neither a "primordialist" nor a "modernist" ', he says. 'I do not regard the nation as an eternal creation of God, nor as an artificial product of the imagination of a handful of intellectuals, but rather as a result of prolonged historical development' (2007: III–74). Nevertheless, Hall's observation remains compelling: Hroch does seem to stand closer to primordialism than to modernism. Why it occurred to nobody at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hroch asks, to launch a campaign to convince the Irish that they were in fact Germans, or the Hungarians that they were actually Chinese?

> The answer is simple: The basic condition for the success of any agitation … is that its argument at least roughly corresponds to reality as perceived by those to whom it is directed. National agitation therefore had to (and normally did) begin with the fact that, quite independently of the will of the 'patriots', certain relations and ties had developed over the centuries which united those people towards whom the agitation is directed. (1998: 99)

But what was the 'reality' as perceived by the masses? What was the exact nature of the relations and ties that had developed over the centuries? To what extent were they 'national'? Who described them as 'national', when and for what purpose? In any case, Hroch's question seems to be a rhetorical one. Why would national agitators launch a campaign to persuade the Irish that they were Germans or the Hungarians that they were Chinese anyway? It is quite conceivable, however, that they launch a campaign to persuade the Irish that they were English and the Hungarians that they were Romanians. It is indeed true that the agitators have built on pre-existing ties and relations to mobilize the masses. But, as I will argue in more detail in Chapter 7, they made use of some ties, ignored others, and transformed them beyond recognition to suit present (political) needs.

Modernism today

Despite the various complaints lodged against its main assumptions, modernism continued to constitue the backbone of some very influential analyses of nationalism which rose to prominence in recent years. A good example of this is Michael Mann's theory of nationalism which provides a politically driven

account of the rise of nations and nationalisms, focusing in particular on the role of institutions and popular political movements. Mann is unabashedly modernist. Nations arose only from the eighteenth century, he argues, first in Europe and America, then elsewhere. Political units could rarely be defined by a modern culture in pre-modern times, as is the case in a nation, since the culture and organization of the dominant classes were largely insulated from the life of the masses (1995: 44–5).

Still, Mann identifies two 'proto-national' phases before the full emergence of nations and nationalism: the religious and the commercial/statist phases. The expansion of literacy was central to both. In the first, religious, phase, which began in the sixteenth century, 'Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation expanded literacy across the spread of each vernacular language and downward across middling classes'. In the second, commercial/statist, phase, which began in the late seventeenth century, commercial capitalism and military state organization took over the expansion of literacy. Some 'proto-national' sentiments reaching the lower classes could be detected in both these phases, but since capitalism, upper-class literacy and Churches were all transnational, national identity remained limited. States, on the other hand, were not relevant enough to form the focus of people's identities and ideologies. These processes also led to the slow but steady solidification of local and regional communities which started to mobilize entire 'ways of life' by the late seventeenth century. Yet the boundaries of such, 'seemingly ethnic', communities remained imprecise and fluid (ibid.: 45–6).

The merging of these proto-national elements, notably 'the bounded but weakly rooted state, and the vibrant but poorly demarcated local-regional ethnic community', into fully fledged nations, Mann claims, took place in three phases: the militarist, industrial and modernist phases, which lasted from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries. According to Mann, the answer to the question, 'why did nations develop?', lies in the state. In the militarist phase, under the impact of what he calls the 'military revolution', reinforced by endless eighteenth-century wars, the military activities of states began to significantly affect social life. 'Far from being insignificant, states now loomed over the lives of their subjects, taxing and conscripting them, attempting to mobilize their enthusiasm for its goals'. But increased state extraction led to popular reactions and the demand for political citizenship – for 'the people' and 'the nation'. Local-regional ethnic communities also played their role in channelling political mobilization (ibid. 47–8). In the industrial phase, from the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War, states shifted gears in two ways, under the pressures of industrial capitalism. First, the notion of popular sovereignty conquered the hearts and minds of the subordinate classes mobilized by the diffusion of industry, commerce and commercialized agriculture. Second, state functions rapidly expanded; for the first time in history states undertook major civilian functions, and sponsored communications systems – canals,

roads, post offices, railways, telegraph systems, and, most significantly, schools (1993: 730). Popular sovereignty and state activities had in turn bolstered 'the nation as an experienced community, linking the intensive and emotional organizations of family, neighbourhood and ethnicity with more extensive and instrumental power organizations' (1995: 53–4). It is in this phase that nations became more passionate and aggressive:

> Passion derived principally from the tighter links between the state and the intensive, emotional sphere of family and neighbourhood interaction in which state education and physical and moral health infrastructures loomed large. Ideologies saw the nation as mother or father, hearth and home writ large. Aggression resulted because all states continued to crystallize as militarist; all were geopolitically militarist, and some remained domestically so. (1993: 732; see also ibid.: 227)

The final, modernist, phase, began with the peace settlements of 1917–19, and redrew the political map fairly radically. The war and the peace settlements destroyed most of the authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes of Europe, and most tools of institutional control over the masses. Churches, armies, some monarchies and conservative parties remained, but were forced to compromise with the subordinate classes through parliamentarianism, institutionalized labour relations and land reform. But across much of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, parliamentary regimes were not yet stably institutionalized:

> Under the strain conservatism split into parliamentarianism and an authoritarian radical Right … Throughout the entire centre, south and east (except for Czechoslovakia), the competition between the two rightisms had a single result: authoritarianism triumphed, either as parliamentary conservatives themselves launched coups, or as they were swept aside by quasi-fascist radical rightists. By 1938 modern authoritarianism was entrenched across two-thirds of the continent. (1995: 57–8)

Despite its attempt to supplement the top-down approach of earlier political accounts with a focus on popular political movements with a view to explain the passions generated by nationalism, Mann's theory has not been immune to the criticisms raised against modernism in general, and political modernism in particular. Smith, for example, argues that state-centric approaches falter when it comes to Central Europe, or Germany and Italy. Shouldn't we have expected a Prussian and Piedmontese nation to emerge, he asks, instead of Germany and Italy? 'Why was the fight for democracy and representative government ipso facto a movement for a *German* and an *Italian* nation'? Moreover, whatever its intentions, Smith believes, Mann's theory still fails to account for the passions aroused by nationalism:

> What is crucial for nationalists is the sense of a 'homeland' and of historic, even sacred territory, not just boundaries … It is the relationship, emotional as well as political, between land and people, history and territory, that provides one of the main motive forces for national mobilization … Hence explanations in terms of inter-state relations and warfare fail to uncover the emotional sources of national sentiment. (1998a: 83–4)

A more recent reformulation of the modernist position comes from David D. Laitin, in his *Nations, States, and Violence* (2007), which the author presents as a 'revisionist' view of nationalism. It is revisionist, the author tells us, because it challenges the commonsense view that the spectre haunting world peace today is that of ethnic and civilizational clashes. 'The popular belief that nationalism and ethnic differences in and of themselves are dangerous is discredited by quantitative research', Laitin argues. The sources of contemporary civil wars lie elsewhere – 'the weak state, unable to provide basic services to its population, unable to police its peripheries, and unable to distinguish law abiders from lawbreakers' (2007: vii, 21–2).

Laitin's alternative, rational choice, account draws on the Nobel Prize-winning economist Thomas Schelling's model of binary choice – the 'tipping game'. According to Laitin, nations are the result of choices made by their prospective members. But these choices are interdependent:

> Individuals do not choose … in absolute privacy. Rather, individual *a* chooses in large part based on signals received from individuals *b*, *c*, *d*, …, *n* on how they will choose … Unlike a plebiscite where individuals expect a *division* of votes in their community, when it comes to national identification, individuals expect a *coordinated outcome*. And unlike a plebiscite in which different subgroups in a community may have different interests, in the case of national identification, each individual voter gets higher rewards the greater the agreement on a national identity. (Ibid.: 30, original emphasis)

In the light of these observations, Laitin defines the nation as:

> a population with a coordinated set of beliefs about their cultural identities (i.e. the salient cultural dimension, their category on that dimension, and the attributes qualifying people for membership in that category) whose representatives claim ownership of a state (or at least an autonomous region within a state) for them by dint of that coordination either through separation, or amalgamation, or return. (Ibid.: 40–1)

Appeals to the nation, Laitin continues, are justified by the relevant population's representatives – what he calls 'ethnic entrepreneurs' – through the singling out of a particular category on the salient dimension. 'These appeals

are compelling to the extent that the people qualifying for membership coordinate their identities in accord with the national vision of these entrepreneurs' (ibid.: 41). There are of course several factors which influence individuals' choices/decisions. Three such factors are particularly important: economic payoffs (for example job prospects), in-group status (levels of social support and stigma given by members of a particular community for the identity choices made by their peers) and out-group acceptance (when for instance members of an assimilating community receive status within the majority community as a reward for adapting to new cultural practices). Laitin concludes by stressing the role of 'coordination':

> People do not vote for their nationality as they do for a set of political alternatives because the principal goal in this sort of election is not to win, but to choose the national identity that most others in one's community are likely to choose. When it comes to national identities, we are not in competition with our neighbours but rather in coordination with them. Coordination among large numbers of people, however, is not easy to accomplish, even if all the people agree on a preferred outcome. Thus the role of ethnic entrepreneurs. (Ibid.: 58)

Not surprisingly, Laitin's alternative account has not escaped criticisms. Referring to Laitin's earlier work, Motyl argues that the most problematic aspect of his model is its insistence that tipping games really motivate people. Do individual choices regarding identity really involve the application of this model, Motyl asks:

> Do people truly act primarily, if not exclusively, on the basis of the trade-offs the model implies? Are people even aware of these trade-offs? Or are tipping games a metaphor, a catchy 'as if' device, or an algorithm for expressing general trends in aggregate human behaviour? These questions cannot be brushed aside by asserting, as Laitin effectively does, that the model is plausible, that choices are made. (2002: 238)

Another problem, Motyl continues, is rational choice's inability to account for the preferences that underpin identity shifts. If it assumes that all preferences at all times and places are exclusively material, then the model is making an easily falsifiable claim. If it admits that other kinds of preferences, based on culture, history and ideology, are possible, then it is bound to give priority to culture, history and ideology, thereby making itself redundant, as this will 'relativize the utility maximization (or risk minimization) strategy underlying the rational choice calculus' (ibid.: 238–9; for other reviews of Laitin's work see McLaughlin 2008; Rojas 2008; Abizadeh 2008).

Further reading

Stimulating discussions of most theories reviewed in this chapter can be found in Smith (1998a), Day and Thompson (2004), Ichijo and Uzelac (2005) and Hearn (2006).

So far as theories of economic transformations are concerned, Nairn (1981) and Hechter (1975) are required reading. New, expanded, editions of both books are now available – see Nairn (2003) and Hechter (1999a). For later reformulations of Nairn and Hechter's views on nationalism, see the various essays by Nairn in Nairn and James (2005) and Hechter (2000b) respectively. The canonical texts of political modernism are Breuilly (1993a), Brass (1991), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Hobsbawm (1990). The most elaborate statement of Gellner's theory can be found in his *Nations and Nationalism* (1983); for the earlier version of his theory, see Gellner (1964). For Anderson's theory, see the second, expanded, edition of his *Imagined Communities* (1991). On Hroch's celebrated phase model, see Hroch (1985) and (1993). Other key modernist texts are Mann (1993 and 1995) and, more recently, Laitin (2007).

Modernist theories have been fiercely criticized by primordialists and ethnosymbolists – see for example Smith (1983, 1995 and 1998a), Hastings (1997) and Grosby (2005a). For a critique of Nairn and Hechter's theories, see Orridge (1981a, 1981b), Brand (1985). Cocks (2005) and Davidson (1999) deliver powerful diatribes against Nairn's 'nationalist' sensibilities. Nairn's response can be found in Nairn and James (2005), Chapter 6. For a general critique of rational choice theories and instrumentalism, see O'Leary (2001); for a critique of Hechter's later, rational choice, model, see Höijer (2000) and Stefanovic (2007). The exchange between Brass (1977 and 1979) and Robinson (1977 and 1979) is still worth reading as a concise summary of diverging opinions on the role of elites in the construction of ethnic and national identities. In the context of political modernism, see also Matthews' (2008) compelling critique of Hobsbawm's views on nationalism. On Gellner's theory, see Hall and Jarvie (1996), Hall (1998b, especially the essays by O'Leary and Laitin) and Malešević and Haugaard (2007, especially the essay by Mouzelis). Among these, the first and the last are general assessments of the social philosophy of Gellner and contain sections which critically discuss his arguments on nationalism. The second, on the other hand, is devoted solely to Gellner's theory of nationalism, and thus explores every aspect of that theory. Breuilly's comprehensive and balanced introduction to the new edition of Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (2006) should also be mentioned in this context. Gellner's reply to these criticisms can be found in Gellner (1996c) and (1997). For a critique of various aspects of Anderson's theory, see the collection of articles by Culler and Cheah (2003) and the penetrating article by Chatterjee (1996). For Anderson's reply to some of the criticisms raised against his theory, see Anderson (2003). For insightful critiques of Gellner and Anderson's theories from a modernist perspective, see Breuilly (1985) and (1996), and Zubaida (1978). Hroch's work has been criticized most vigorously by Gellner (1995). Hroch's reply to these criticisms can be found in Hroch (1998) and (2007, especially Chapter IX).

Chapter 5

Ethnosymbolism

What is ethnosymbolism?

Ethnosymbolism emerges from the theoretical critique of modernism. Broadly speaking, the term refers to an approach which emphasizes the role of myths, symbols, memories, values and traditions in the formation, persistence and change of ethnicity and nationalism (Smith 2001d: 84). According to Anthony D. Smith, the leading proponent of this approach, an ethnosymbolic approach stresses the need for an analysis of collective cultural identities over *la longue durée*, that is a time span of many centuries; the importance of continuity, recurrence and appropriation as different modes of connecting the national past, present and future; the significance of pre-existing ethnic communities, or *ethnies*, in the formation of modern nations; the role of memories of golden ages, myths of origin and ethnic election, cults of heroes and ancestors, the attachment to a homeland in the formation and persistence of national identities; the different kinds of ethnic groups that form the basis of various kinds of nations; and the special contribution of the modern ideology of nationalism to the dissemination of the ideal of the nation (2002: 14–15; see also Smith 1999, Chapter 1 and 2005: 98). Such an approach, Smith argues, differs from other approaches in underlining the importance of subjective elements in our understanding of ethnic groups and nations, in the weight it gives to popular cultures and practices and how these set limits to elite understandings and strategies (2001d: 84).

Ethnosymbolists form a more homogeneous category than both the primordialists and the modernists. Guided by a common reverence for the past, they lay stress on similar processes in their explanations of nations and nationalism. For them, the emergence of today's nations cannot be understood properly without taking their ethnic forebears into account; in other words, the rise of nations needs to be contextualized within the larger phenomenon of ethnicity which shaped them (Hutchinson 1994: 7). The differences between modern nations and the collective cultural units of earlier eras are of degree rather than kind. This suggests that ethnic identities change more slowly than is generally assumed; once formed, they tend to be exceptionally durable under 'normal' vicissitudes of history, such as migrations, invasions, intermarriages, and to persist over many generations, even centuries (Smith 1986: 16). In short, the modern era is no *tabula rasa*:

> On the contrary, it emerges out of the complex social and ethnic formations of earlier epochs, and the different kinds of *ethnie*, which modern forces transform, but never obliterate. The modern era in this respect resembles a palimpsest on which are recorded experiences and identities of different epochs and a variety of ethnic formations, the earlier influencing and being modified by the later, to produce the composite type of collective cultural unit which we call 'the nation'. (Smith 1995: 59–60)

Ethnosymbolists claim to reject the stark 'continuism' of the perennialists and to accord due weight to the transformations wrought by modernity. They also reject the claims of the modernists by arguing that a greater measure of continuity exists between 'traditional' and 'modern', or 'agrarian' and 'industrial' eras – hence the need for a wider theory of ethnic formation that will bring out the differences and similarities between contemporary national units and pre-modern ethnic communities (Smith 1986: 13).

Smith contends that such an approach is more helpful than its alternatives in at least three ways. First, it helps to explain which populations are likely to start a nationalist movement under certain conditions and what the content of this movement would be. Second, it enables us to understand the important role of memories, values, myths and symbols. Nationalism, Smith argues, mostly involves the pursuit of symbolic goals such as education in a particular language, having a TV channel in one's own language or the protection of ancient sacred sites. Materialist and modernist theories of nationalism fail to illuminate these issues as they are unable to comprehend the emotive power of collective memories. Finally, the ethnosymbolist approach explains why and how nationalism is able to generate such a widespread popular support (1996b: 362).

> Most of all perhaps, an ethnosymbolic approach can help us to understand both the durability and the transformations of ethnicity in history and the continuing power and persistence of nations and nationalism at the start of the third millennium. This is because it directs our gaze to the inner worlds of the *ethnie* and the nation. (2000: 77)

John Armstrong and myth-symbol complexes

According to Anthony D. Smith, it was John A. Armstrong who first underlined the significance of *la longue durée* for the study of nationalism in his 'path-breaking' *Nations before Nationalism* (1982), and who embedded it within a larger inquiry into the pre-modern bases of ethnicity (2004: 199). Armstrong's stated aim is to explore 'the emergence of the intense group identification that today we term a "nation"' by adopting what he calls an 'extended temporal perspective' that reaches back to antiquity. Having examined ethnic groups in

BOX 5.1 **John A. Armstrong**

Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, John A. Armstrong has been particularly influential in the field of nationalism studies through his *Nations before Nationalism* (1982).

'My first publications on nationalism', writes Armstrong in a summary of his intellectual trajectory, '**contained extended references to religion … Subsequent familiarity with the impressive sociological work by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann enabled me to show more clearly how nationalism, as a type of identity, "shelters the individual from ultimate terror", that is, death as "the most terrifying breakdown of identity". To a believer such as myself, universal religions (particularly those of the "Peoples of the Book", Muslims, Jews, and Christians) remain more satisfying than nationalism. But … in a secularized world, reinforcing combinations of national and religious identity occur frequently. [The] conviction that no particular nation is "primordial" but that all originated from human agency at specific times and places, is widely held by nationalism specialists, Steven Grosby being a notable exception. In general, I share this consensus, while stipulating that *nations*, but no particular nation of the modern type, and certainly not *nationalism* existed before the sixteenth century. Such issues of timing and agency are very important to my theory, for my methodological preference is for intensive employment of historical data over the *longue durée*. I have consistently rejected "evolutionary theory" and its biological ontology, and even structural functionalism insofar as its organic model tends to reject human agency. Instead, I favour multifactorial interpretations that leave a considerable scope to individual and group initiatives. The pre-modern social formations that I treat in *Nations before Nationalism* (1982) and elsewhere … require an approach rather less specific in terms of the time and place of the genesis of national ideas. Fundamental themes are myth, symbol, and communication, especially as they relate to boundary mechanisms of a psychological rather than territorial nature'** (Armstrong 2001: 197–8).

the course of their long historical journey, he stops at the 'threshold of nationalism', that is before the period when nationalism becomes the dominant political doctrine, the eighteenth century. He justifies this by noting that he is more concerned with the persistence rather than the genesis of particular patterns (1982: 3–4).

For Armstrong, ethnic consciousness has a long history; it is possible to come across its traces in ancient civilizations, for example in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In this sense, contemporary nationalism is nothing but the final stage of a larger cycle of ethnic consciousness reaching back to the earliest forms of collective organization. The most important feature of this consciousness, according to Armstrong, is its persistence. Hence the formation of ethnic identities should be examined in a time dimension of many centuries, similar to

the *longue durée* perspective emphasized by the *Annales* school of French historiography. Only an extended temporal perspective can reveal the durability of ethnic attachments and the 'shifting significance of boundaries for human identity' (ibid.: 4).

This emphasis on boundaries suggests Armstrong's stance *vis-à-vis* ethnic identities. Adopting the social interaction model of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, he argues that 'groups tend to define themselves not by reference to their own characteristics but by exclusion, that is, by comparison to "strangers"' (ibid.: 5). It follows that there can be no fixed 'character' or 'essence' for the group; the boundaries of identities vary according to the perceptions of the individuals forming the group. Thus, it makes more sense to focus on the boundary mechanisms that distinguish a particular group from others instead of objective group characteristics. For Armstrong, Barth's attitudinal approach affords many advantages. First, it makes room for changes in the cultural and the biological content of the group as long as the boundary mechanisms are maintained. Second, it shows that ethnic groups are not necessarily based on the occupation of particular, exclusive territories. The key to understanding ethnic identification is the 'uncanny experience of confronting others' who remained mute in response to attempts at communication, whether oral or through symbolic gestures. Inability to communicate initiates the process of 'differentiation' which in turn brings a recognition of ethnic belonging (ibid.).

Such a conception of ethnic group, that is a group defined by exclusion, implies that there is no definitional way of distinguishing ethnicity from other types of collective identity. Ethnic ties will often overlap with religious or class loyalties. 'It is precisely this complex, shifting quality that has repelled many social scientists from analyzing ethnic identity over long periods of time.' Drawing on this observation, Armstrong declares that he is more concerned with the shifting interaction among class, ethnic and religious loyalties than with 'compartmentalizing definitions'. To do that, however, the focus of investigation must shift from internal group characteristics to symbolic boundary mechanisms that differentiate these groups, without overlooking the fact that the mechanisms in question exist in the minds of the subjects rather than as lines on a map or norms in a rule book (ibid.: 6–7).

We have already noted that Armstrong lays special emphasis on the durability and persistence of these symbolic boundary mechanisms. For him, 'myth, symbol, communication, and a cluster of associated attitudinal factors are usually more persistent than purely material factors' (ibid.: 9). What, then, are the factors that ensure this persistence? Armstrong tries to specify and analyse these factors in the rest of his book.

He begins with the most general factor, namely ways of life and the experiences associated with them. Two fundamentally different ways of life, the

nomadic and the sedentary, are particularly important in this context, because the myths and symbols they embody – expressed, notably, in nostalgia – create two sorts of identities based on incompatible principles. Thus, the territorial principle and its peculiar nostalgia ultimately became the predominant form in Europe, while the genealogical or pseudo-genealogical principle has continued to prevail in most of the Middle East. The second factor, religion, reinforced this basic distinction. The two great universal religions, Islam and Christianity, gave birth to different civilizations and the myths/symbols associated with them shaped the formation of ethnic identities in their own specific ways. Armstrong's third factor is the city. The analysis of the effect of towns on ethnic identification requires, Armstrong argues, examination of a host of factors, ranging from the impact of town planning to the unifying or centrifugal effects of various legal codes, especially the Lübeck and Magdeburg law. Then he moves to the role of imperial polities. At this point, the central question is 'how could the intense consciousness of loyalty and identity established through face-to-face contact in the city-state be transferred to the larger agglomerations of cities and countryside known as empires'? Here, Armstrong stresses the diverse effects of the Mesopotamian myth of the polity – what he calls '*mythomoteur*' – as a reflection of heavenly rule. This myth was used as a vehicle for incorporating city-state loyalties in a larger framework. For him, this might constitute the earliest example of 'myth transference for political purposes' (ibid.: 13). Finally, Armstrong introduces the question of language and assesses its impact on identity-formation in the pre-nationalist era. Contrary to commonsense assumptions, Armstrong concludes, 'the significance of language for ethnic identity is highly contingent' in pre-modern eras. Its significance depended in the long run on political and religious forces and allegiances (ibid.: 282).

Armstrong softens this stance in his later work. While standing firm on his belief that nations did exist before nationalism (1995: 42, note 2), he nevertheless agrees with Anderson and Hobsbawm that, like other human identities, national identity had been an invention. The only remaining disagreement, Armstrong contends, is 'over the antiquity of some inventions and the repertory of pre-existing group characteristics that inventors were able to draw upon' (1995: 36; see also 2001: 198–9).

It can be argued that Armstrong's work, with its focus on medieval European and Middle Eastern civilizations, offers a more comprehensive overview of the process of ethnic identification than other comparable studies in the field. For Smith, Armstrong makes a strong case for grounding the emergence of modern national identities on patterns of ethnic persistence, and especially on the long-term influence of 'myth-symbol complexes' (1998a: 185).

It was indeed Smith who explored these issues further and elaborated the framework of analysis developed by Armstrong.

Anthony D. Smith and the ethnic origins of nations

Anthony D. Smith is the last representative of a chain of scholars who contributed to what Ernest Gellner calls the 'LSE debate' on nationalism (1995: 61), continuing a tradition bequeathed to him by such distinguished scholars as Elie Kedourie, Kenneth Minogue and Gellner himself. Yet, Smith differs from the generation that preceded him in one important respect. Most participants of the LSE debate, including Kedourie, Minogue and Gellner, were proponents of the modernist paradigm. Smith, on the other hand, bases his approach on a critique of modernism. His central thesis is that modern nations cannot be understood without taking pre-existing ethnic components into account, the lack of which is likely to create a serious impediment to 'nation-building'. Smith concedes that there are a variety of cases where there was little in the way of a rich ethnic heritage. But, he continues, such extreme cases are rare. 'Usually, there has been some ethnic basis for the construction of modern nations, be it only some dim memories and elements of culture and alleged ancestry, which it is hoped to revive' (1986: 17). It follows that the rise of contemporary nations should be studied in the context of their ethnic background, which means:

> grounding our understanding of modern nationalism on an historical base involving considerable time-spans, to see how far its themes and forms were pre-figured in earlier periods and how far a connection with earlier ethnic ties and sentiments can be established. (Ibid.: 13)

According to Smith, if we are to move beyond the sweeping generalizations of both modernism and primordialism, we need to formulate clear working definitions of key terms like 'nation' and 'nationalism', thereby breaking out of an impasse which continues to bedevil progress in the field. The problem with modernist theories, he argues, is that they provide a definition, not of the nation *per se*, but of a particular kind of nation – the modern nation. It reflects the characteristics of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nations in Western Europe and America, hence it is partial and Eurocentric (2005: 95). What is needed is an ideal-typical definition of the nation, one that treats it as a general analytic category which can in principle be applied to all continents and periods of history (2008: 19). He thus proposes the following definition of the nation, derived to a large extent from the images and assumptions held by most or all nationalists: a nation is 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (1991a: 14). Smith holds that such a definition reveals the complex and abstract nature of national identity which is fundamentally multidimensional.

On the other hand, the origins of nations are as complex as its nature. We might begin to look for a general explanation by asking the following questions:

1. *Who* is the nation? What are the ethnic bases and models of modern nations? Why did these particular nations emerge?
2. *Why* and *how* does the nation emerge? That is, what are the general causes and mechanisms that set in motion the process of nation-formation from varying ethnic ties and memories?
3. *When* and *where* did the nation arise? (Ibid.: 19)

BOX 5.2 **Anthony D. Smith**

Emeritus Professor of Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Anthony D. Smith is the founding editor (currently editor-in-chief) of *Nations and Nationalism*, and President of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN), founded by research students and academics in 1990 at the LSE. Smith's many publications on nationalism include, among others, *Theories of Nationalism* (1971), *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), *National Identity* (1991a), *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (1995), *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (1998a), *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2000), *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (2001a), *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (2003a) and *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* (2008).

'If Armstrong reached forward from the distant past to the age of nationalism', writes Smith in *Nationalism and Modernism*, **'my own work has taken the opposite route: working back from the modern epoch of nation-states and nationalism to the earliest manifestations of collective cultural sentiments'.** With important provisos, **'I accepted the modernity of both nations and nationalism, as befitted a student of Ernest Gellner. However, the initial sketch of the origins of ethnic nationalism which I offered stressed the role of political and religious, rather than social and cultural, factors. [By] the early 1980s, I came to feel that, while this analysis of alienated and deracinated indigenous intelligentsias radicalized by alien bureaucratic states helped to explain part of the phenomena of nationalism, it signally failed to account for the broader social picture or explain the configurations of nations and the incidence and intensity of nationalisms. In effect, what was needed was an historical sociology of nations and nationalism'. '[It] was possible to find examples of social formations in pre-modern periods, even in antiquity',** says Smith, **'that for some decades or even centuries approximated to an inclusive definition of the concept of the "nation", notably among the ancient Jews and Armenians, but also to some extent among the ancient Egyptians, and perhaps the medieval Japanese and Koreans. Though hardly sufficient to undermine the modernist paradigm, these examples seemed to cast doubt on Gellner's insistence on the impossibility of nations in pre-modern periods. In the light of these considerations, the focus of my analysis began to shift from nationalisms to nations, and from nations to ethnic communities'** (Smith 1998a: 187–91; see also Guibernau 2004).

For Smith, the answer to the first question should be sought in earlier ethnic communities (he prefers to use the French term *ethnie*) since pre-modern identities and legacies form the bedrock of many contemporary nations. He posits six main attributes for such communities: a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with a specific homeland, a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (ibid.: 21). As this list reveals, most of these attributes have a cultural and historical content as well as a strong subjective component. This suggests, contrary to the rhetoric of nationalist ideologies, that the *ethnie* is anything but primordial. According to Smith, as the subjective significance of each of these attributes waxes and wanes for the members of a community, so does their cohesion and self-awareness (ibid.: 23).

If the *ethnie* is not a primordial entity, then how does it come into being? Smith identifies two main patterns of *ethnie* formation: coalescence and division. By coalescence he means the coming together of separate units, which in turn can be broken down into processes of amalgamation of separate units such as city-states and of absorption of one unit by another as in the assimilation of regions. By division he means subdivision through fission as with sectarian schism or through 'proliferation' (a term he borrows from Horowitz), when a part of the ethnic community leaves it to form a new unit as in the case of Bangladesh (ibid.: 23–4).

Smith notes that *ethnies*, once formed, tend to be exceptionally durable (1986: 16). However, this should not lead us to the conclusion that they travel across history without undergoing any changes in their demographic composition and/or cultural contents. In other words, we should try to eschew the polar extremes of the primordialist–instrumentalist debate when assessing the recurrence of ethnic ties and communities. Smith admits that there are certain events that generate profound changes in the cultural contents of ethnic identities. Among these, he singles out war and conquest, exile and enslavement, the influx of immigrants and religious conversion (1991a: 26). Nevertheless, what really matters is how far these changes reflect on and disrupt the sense of cultural continuity that binds successive generations together. For Smith, even the most radical changes cannot destroy this sense of continuity and common ethnicity. This is partly due to the existence of a number of external forces that help to crystallize ethnic identities and ensure their persistence over long periods. Of these, state-making, military mobilization and organized religion are the most crucial.

In the light of these observations, Smith sets out to specify the main mechanisms of ethnic self-renewal. The first such mechanism is 'religious reform'. The history of the Jews is replete with many instances of this. Conversely, groups who fell prey to religious conservatism tried to compensate for the failure to introduce reforms by turning to other forms of self-renewal. This was the

dilemma faced by the Greeks at the beginning of the nineteenth century. When the Orthodox hierarchy failed to respond to popular aspirations, the Greek middle classes turned to secular ideological discourses to realize their goals. The second mechanism is 'cultural borrowing', in the sense of controlled contact and selective cultural exchange between different communities. Here again, examples can be found from Jewish history. The lively encounter between Jewish and Greek cultures, Smith holds, enriched the whole field of Jewish culture and identity. The third mechanism is 'popular participation'. The popular movements for greater participation in the political system saved many *ethnies* from withering away by generating a missionary zeal among the participants of these movements. The final mechanism of ethnic self-renewal identified by Smith is 'myths of ethnic election'. According to Smith, *ethnies* that lack such myths tended to be absorbed by others after losing their independence (ibid.: 35–6).

Together, these four mechanisms ensure the survival of certain ethnic communities across the centuries despite changes in their demographic composition and cultural contents. These mechanisms also lead to the gradual formation of what Smith terms 'ethnic cores'. These 'cohesive and self-consciously distinctive *ethnies*' form the basis of states and kingdoms in later periods. Thus, locating the ethnic cores helps us a great deal to answer the question 'who is the nation?'. Smith observes that most latter-day nations are constructed around a dominant *ethnie*, which annexed or attracted other ethnic communities into the state it founded and to which it gave a name and a cultural character (ibid.: 38–9).

However, this observation is not sufficient to justify our quest for the origins of nations in the pre-modern era since there are many cases of nations formed without immediate ethnic antecedents. In other words, the relationship between modern nations and prior ethnic cores is problematic. At this point, Smith lists three more reasons to support his case. To begin with, the first nations were formed on the basis of ethnic cores. Being powerful and culturally influential, these nations provided models for subsequent cases of nation-formation. The second reason is that this model sat easily on the pre-modern 'demotic' kind of community (which will be explained below). In the words of Smith, 'the ethnic model was sociologically fertile'. Finally, even when there were no ethnic antecedents, the need to fabricate a coherent mythology and symbolism became everywhere paramount to ensure national survival and unity (ibid.: 40–1).

The existence of pre-modern ethnic ties helps us to determine which units of population are likely to become nations, but it does not tell us why and how this transformation comes about. To answer the second general question raised above, that is, 'why and how does the nation emerge?', we need to specify the main patterns of 'identity formation' and the factors that triggered their development. Smith begins by identifying two types of ethnic community, the

'lateral' (aristocratic) and the 'vertical' (demotic), noting that these two types gave birth to different patterns of nation formation.

'Lateral' *ethnies* were generally composed of aristocrats and higher clergy, though in some cases they might also include bureaucrats, high military officials and richer merchants. Smith explains his choice of the term 'lateral' by pointing out that these *ethnies* were at once socially confined to the upper strata and geographically spread out to form close links with the upper echelons of neighbouring lateral *ethnies*. As a result, their borders were 'ragged', but they lacked social depth, 'and [their] often marked sense of common ethnicity was bound up with [their] *esprit de corps* as a high status stratum and ruling class'. On the contrary, 'vertical' *ethnies* were more compact and popular. Their culture was diffused to other sections of the population as well. Social cleavages were not underpinned by cultural differences; 'rather, a distinctive historical culture helped to unite different classes around a common heritage and traditions, especially when the latter were under threat from outside'. As a result of this, the ethnic bond was more intense and exclusive, and the barriers to admission were much higher (ibid.: 53).

As noted above, these two types of ethnic communities followed different trajectories in the process of becoming a nation. Smith calls the first, lateral, route 'bureaucratic incorporation'. The survival of aristocratic ethnic communities depended to a large extent on their capacity to incorporate other strata of the population within their cultural orbit. This was most successfully realized in Western Europe. In England, France, Spain and Sweden, the dominant *ethnie* was able to incorporate the middle classes and peripheral regions into the elite culture. According to Smith, the primary vehicle in this process was the newly emerging bureaucratic state. Through a series of 'revolutions' in the administrative, economic and cultural spheres, the state was able to diffuse the dominant culture down the social scale. The major constituents of the 'administrative revolution' were the extension of citizenship rights, conscription, taxation and the building up of an infrastructure that linked distant parts of the realm. These developments were complemented by parallel 'revolutions' in economic and cultural spheres. Smith singles out two such processes as relevant to nation formation, namely the movement to a market economy and the decline of ecclesiastical authority. The latter was particularly important in that it allowed the development of secular studies and of university learning. This, in turn, led to a 'boom' in popular modes of communication – novels, plays and journals. An important role was played in these processes by the intellectuals and professionals (ibid.: 59–60).

The second route of nation formation, what Smith calls 'vernacular mobilization', set out from a vertical *ethnie*. The influence of the bureaucratic state was more indirect in this case mainly because vertical *ethnies* were usually subject communities. Here, the key mechanism of ethnic persistence was organized religion. It was through myths of chosenness, sacred texts and scripts, and

the prestige of the clergy that the survival of communal traditions was ensured. But demotic communities had problems of their own, which surfaced at the initial stages of the process of nation formation. To start with, ethnic culture usually overlapped with the wider circle of religious culture and loyalty, and there was no internal coercive agency to break the mould. Moreover, the members of the community simply assumed that they already constituted a nation, albeit one without a political roof. Under these circumstances, the primary task of the secular intelligentsia was to alter the basic relationship between ethnicity and religion. In other words, the community of the faithful had to be distinguished from the community of historic culture. Smith identifies three different orientations among the intellectuals confronted with this dilemma: a conscious, modernizing return to tradition ('traditionalism'); a messianic desire to assimilate to Western modernity ('assimilation' or 'modernism'); and a more defensive attempt to synthesize elements of the tradition with aspects of Western modernity, hence to revive a pristine community modelled on a former golden age ('reformist revivalism') (ibid.: 63–4).

The solution adopted by the intellectuals had profound implications for the shape, pace, scope and intensity of the process of nation formation. But whatever the solution espoused, the main task of an ethnic intelligentsia was 'to mobilize a formerly passive community into forming a nation around the new vernacular historical culture it has rediscovered' (ibid.: 64). In each case, they had to provide 'new communal self-definitions and goals', construct 'maps and moralities out of a living ethnic past'. This could be done in two ways: by a return to 'nature' and its 'poetic spaces' which constitute the historic home of the people and the repository of their memories; and by a cult of golden ages. These two methods were frequently used by the 'educator-intellectuals' to promote a national revival.

It needs to be noted in passing that Smith identifies a third route of nation formation in his later work, that of the immigrant nations which consist largely of the fragments of other *ethnies*, particularly those from overseas. In countries like the United States, Canada and Australia, colonist-immigrants have created a 'providentialist frontier nationalism' and this has encouraged a 'plural' conception of the nation, which accepts, even celebrates, ethnic and cultural diversity within an overarching political, legal, and linguistic national identity. (1998a: 194; see also 1995: chapter 4)

This brings us to the final question guiding Smith's explanatory framework, namely 'where and when did the nation arise'? This is where nationalism comes in. Nationalism, Smith contends, does not help us to determine which units of population are eligible to become nations, nor why they do so, but it plays an important part in determining when and where nations will emerge (1991a: 99). The next step, then, is to consider the (political) impact of nationalism in a number of particular cases. But this cannot be done without clarifying the concept of nationalism itself.

Smith begins by noting that the term 'nationalism' has been used in five different ways:

1. the whole process of forming and maintaining nations;
2. a consciousness of belonging to the nation;
3. a language and symbolism of the 'nation':
4. an ideology (including a cultural doctrine of nations); and
5. a social and a political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize the national will. (Ibid.: 72)

Smith stresses the fourth and the fifth meanings in his own definition. Hence, nationalism is 'an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential "nation" '. The key terms in this definition are autonomy, unity and identity. Autonomy refers to the idea of self-determination and the collective effort to realize the true, 'authentic', national will. Unity denotes the unification of the national territory and the gathering together of all nationals within the homeland. It also signifies the brotherhood of all nationals in the nation. Finally, identity means 'sameness', that is, that the members of a particular group are alike in those respects in which they differ from non-members, but it also implies the rediscovery of the 'collective self' (or the 'national genius') (ibid.: 73–7).

On the other hand, the 'core doctrine' of nationalism consists of four central propositions:

1. The world is divided into nations, each with its own peculiar character, history and destiny.
2. The nation is the source of all political and social power, and loyalty to the nation has priority over all other allegiances.
3. Human beings must identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves.
4. Nations must be free and secure if peace is to prevail in the world. (Ibid.: 74)

Smith then moves on to the types of nationalism. Drawing on Kohn's philosophical distinction between a more rational and a more organic version of nationalist ideology, he identifies two kinds of nationalism: 'territorial' and 'ethnic' nationalisms (based on 'Western', civic-territorial, and 'Eastern', ethnic-genealogical models of the nation respectively). On this basis, he constructs a provisional typology of nationalisms, taking into account the overall situation in which the movements find themselves before and after independence:

1. Territorial nationalisms
   (a) *Pre-independence* movements based on a civic model of the nation will first seek to eject foreign rulers, then establish a new state-nation on the old colonial territory; these are 'anti-colonial' nationalisms.
   (b) *Post-independence* movements based on a civic model of the nation will try to bring together often disparate ethnic populations and integrate them into a new political community replacing the old colonial state; these are 'integration' nationalisms.
2. Ethnic nationalisms
   (a) *Pre-independence* movements based on an ethnic/genealogical model of the nation will seek to secede from a larger political unit and set up a new 'ethno-nation' in its place; these are 'secession' and 'diaspora' nationalisms.
   (b) *Post-independence* movements based on an ethnic/genealogical model of the nation will seek to expand by including ethnic kinsmen outside the present boundaries and establish a much larger 'ethno-nation' through the union of culturally and ethnically similar states; these are 'irredentist' and 'pan' nationalisms. (Ibid.: 82–3)

Smith admits that the typology he develops is not an exhaustive one. It does not include some well-known examples of nationalism like Maurras's 'integral' nationalism. However, he insists that such a basic typology helps us to compare nationalisms within each category. Let me sum up the discussion so far by a simple diagrammatic representation of the two main routes of nation-formation postulated by Smith:

I. Lateral (aristocratic) *ethnies* ⇨ bureaucratic incorporation ⇨ civic-territorial nations ⇨ territorial nationalisms (from above; usually led by the elites).
II. Vertical (demotic) *ethnies* ⇨ vernacular mobilization ⇨ ethnic-genealogical nations ⇨ ethnic nationalisms (from below; usually led by the intelligentsia).

Without ever recanting his ethnosymbolist convictions, Smith revised his position on a number of critical issues in his later work. The first of these concerns his definition of a 'nation'. Now the nation is 'a named and self-defined community whose members cultivate common myths, memories, symbols and values, possess and disseminate a distinctive public culture, reside in and identify with a historic homeland, and create and disseminate common laws and shared customs' (2005: 98). This is a more processual and interactional definition of the nation, one that emphasizes 'self-definition' and 'historicity' at the expense of more objective factors such as 'a common economy' and 'common legal rights and duties for all members'. More importantly, 'agency', which was

absent from the earlier definition, is now back: the members of the nation do not simply 'possess' certain characteristics, but 'cultivate', 'create' and 'disseminate' them (see also Ichijo and Uzelac 2005: 90 and Breuilly 2005: 17). On the other hand, this new definition enables Smith to elaborate on the differences between nations and earlier ethnic communities. They are both forms of cultural community, which share a high degree of self-definition and a fund of myths, symbols and memories, says Smith. But nations differ from *ethnies* in terms of:

> the residence of many members of the community in a particular historic territory or homeland; the dissemination of a public culture to the members (as opposed to elements of common culture); the spread of standard laws and customs among the members. (2005: 99; see also 2000: 65 and 2002: 25)

But of course this does not mean to deny the linkages between pre-modern and modern types of cultural collectivities. The most obvious form of linkage is that of 'continuity'; particular nations can be traced back to the medieval epoch or even to antiquity, writes Smith, and members of modern nations often draw on the symbolic elements of earlier *ethnies* to which they claim kinship or an ancestral relationship. The second form of linkage is 'recurrence' of ethnicity and the nation form; both *ethnies* and nations are forms of social organization and cultural community that may be found in every period and in every continent. And the final form of linkage is provided through the 'discovery' and 'appropriation' of ethnic history:

> Typically, a new national community and polity is elaborated by priests, scribes and intellectuals who select for this purpose symbolic elements from earlier 'related' ethnic and national cultures. In the modern epoch, authenticity becomes their guiding light, the need to discover and use all that is genuine and indigenous, to construct national communities that will be pure, original and unique. (2005: 99–100; see also 2000: 63–5)

The second revision in Smith's later work concerns the ethnic origins of nations. While continuing to hold firm to the belief that ethnicity and ethnic ties play a key role in the formation of nations, Smith now claims that a broader view of the cultural foundations of nations is needed, with a view to highlighting the importance of other kinds of political and religious kinds of community – such as the cultural traditions of 'hierarchy' and 'republic' emanating from the ancient Near East and the classical world (2008: x, xiv).

The third revision relates to the dating of the ideology of nationalism. Smith still believes that nationalism, as a doctrine, emerged in the eighteenth century. However, he now adds, several of its elements emerged considerably earlier and

'a certain kind of popular and vernacular nationalism could be found in some seventeenth-century states like England, Scotland, and the Netherlands – and perhaps elsewhere too'. This in turn requires us to revise the modernist chronology of nationalism, as well as of nations (ibid.).

A further aspect of Smith's later work is the stress he laid on the 'sacred foundations' of nations, and their relationship to the older beliefs, symbols and rituals of traditional religions, in explaining the strength and durability of national identities. These foundations, Smith maintains, can only be understood within the framework of the binding commitments of religion; 'so it is in the sphere of "religion" that we must seek primarily the sources of national attachments' (2003a: 4–5). This will also enable us to make sense of the recent revival of 'religious nationalisms':

> It is clearly insufficient to argue that nations and nationalism arose out of, and against, the great religious cultural systems of the medieval world. We have to recognize the complexity of continuing relations between religions and forms of the sacred, on the one hand, and national symbols, memories and traditions, on the other hand. (2008: 8)

A critique of ethnosymbolism

A quick glance at the literature will reveal that ethnosymbolists have had their fair share of criticisms. Some of these criticisms relate to the conceptual and methodological premises of ethnosymbolist interpretations, others to their theoretical prowess and explanatory value. In what follows, I will dwell on five objections to ethnosymbolism.

Ethnosymbolists are conceptually confused

According to the proponents of this view, ethnosymbolist arguments constitute a typical illustration of the 'terminological chaos' that plagues the study of nationalism. Connor, a stern critic of conceptual licence in the field, notes that one of the most common manifestations of this confusion is the interutilization of the terms ethnicity, ethnic group and nation (1994: chapter 4). Smith and Armstrong are accused of falling into the same trap. O'Leary puts this very succinctly, when he argues that it is not too surprising to find nationalism in the 1500s if one grants the term such empirical range. According to him, 'most of those who discuss "nations" before "nationalism" are in fact establishing the existence of cultural precedents, and ethnic and other materials, which are subsequently shaped and re-shaped by nationalists in pursuit of nation-building' (1996: 90).

This is also what underlies the charge of 'retrospective nationalism' (a charge, as we have seen earlier, that was also directed against perennialists), the

tendency to project back onto earlier social formations the features peculiar to modern nations and nationalism. Smith rejects these charges, arguing that this is to confuse a concern for *la longue durée* with perennialism. Armstrong may use the term 'nation' for pre-modern *ethnies*, he says, but he clearly differentiates modern nations from these earlier cultural formations. And he claims that he does the same, clearly separating off modern nationalism from pre-modern ethnic sentiments:

> The differences in historical context are too great to permit such retrospective generalization … Rather, it is a question of tracing in the historical record the often discontinuous formation of national identities back to their pre-existing cultural foundations and ethnic ties – which is a matter for empirical investigation rather than *a priori* theorizing. (1998a: 196)

Ethnosymbolists underestimate the differences between modern nations and earlier ethnic communities

The first criticism leads on to a more general objection to ethnosymbolist explanations, and goes to the heart of a recent debate between Smith and Connor on the nature of modern nations. As we have already seen in Chapter 3, national consciousness for Connor is mainly a mass, not an elite, phenomenon, and 'evidence of ethnic consciousness among the aristocracy or the literati cannot be accepted as evidence of national consciousness without evidence that it is shared across a broader spectrum of the putative nation'. We study nations and nationalism, Connor continues, precisely because their appeal has not been restricted to a small group of elites, but extended to all major segments of the population that constitutes the putative nation. In any case, there is always a time lag between the appearance of national consciousness among the elites and its extension to the masses; hence nation formation is a process, not an occurrence or an event. This creates further difficulties in answering the question 'when is the nation?' since events are easily dated, but stages in a process are not:

> At what point did a sufficient number/percentage of a given people acquire national consciousness so that the group merited the title of nation? There is no formula. We want to know the point in the process at which a sufficient portion of the populace has internalized the national identity in order to cause appeals in its name to become an effective force for mobilizing the masses … the point at which a quantitative addition in the number sharing a sense of common nationhood has triggered the qualitative transformation into a nation resists arithmetic definition (2004: 40–2; see also Connor 2005 and Gorski 2006: 150–1).

Smith disagrees. For him, 'absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence', and the argument from silence is a double-edged sword, as this might

be construed as much one of masses taking their ethnic or national attachments for granted. What is more, it is not possible to argue, as Connor does, that elite conceptions did not extend to the masses, because this suggests that we have more insight into the beliefs of pre-modern masses than did their elite contemporaries who chronicled these sentiments. Alternatively, Smith continues, one could question the relevance of peasant mass sentiment to the determination of the existence of the nation. It is possible to maintain that, given their absence from history and politics in most epochs, what they felt and thought about their nation is largely irrelevant:

> Cultures and polities are forged by minorities, usually by elites of one kind or other. All that matters is that quite a large number of people outside the ruling class should come to feel that they belong to a given nation, for it to be said to exist. (2008: 5–6)

In any case, well into the modern epoch, few recognized nations could be called 'mass nations'. Many of their members, notably the working classes, women and ethnic minorities, were excluded from civic rights. Thus we should be prepared to recognize other kinds of nations, Smith concludes, at least in theory (ibid.: 15; see also 2002: 10–11; 28–9).

It needs to be noted here that Connor is not the only one who accuses Smith in particular, and ethnosymbolists in general, for conflating ethnic groups and nations. Symmons-Symonolewicz made a similar point more than two decades ago, claiming that Smith attributes to all ethnic groups a fully developed group consciousness and a deep sense of history (1985a: 219). Breuilly concurs with Symmons-Symonolewicz and Connor, arguing that it is impossible to know what meaning such ethnic sentiments had for the majority of the people. But he also spots another difference between modern nations and earlier ethnic communities, namely pre-modern identities' lack of institutional basis. Smith argues that the three fundamental elements of modern nationality, that is legal, political and economic identity, are absent in pre-modern *ethnies* (as we have seen above, Smith later excludes the economic element from his definition of the nation). According to Breuilly, however, these are the principal institutions through which national identity achieves form. This leads to a contradiction in Smith's arguments since, Breuilly maintains, identities established outside institutions, particularly those which can bind people together across wide social and geographical spaces, are necessarily fragmentary, discontinuous and elusive. The only two institutions that could provide an institutional basis to ethnic allegiances in pre-modern epochs, the church and the dynasty, were both translocal, and carried at their heart an alternative, ultimately conflicting sense of identity to that of the ethnic group (1996: 150–1).

Smith acknowledges the important role institutions play as carriers and preservers of collective identities, but argues that Breuilly's understanding of

such institutions is narrowly modernist. Significant numbers of people were included in schools, temples, monasteries and a host of other legal and political institutions. More important was their inclusion 'in linguistic codes and in popular literature, in rituals and celebrations, in trade fairs and markets, and in ethnic territories or "homelands", not to mention the corvée and army service'. Obviously, not all these institutions reinforced a sense of common ethnicity, but many did. Smith concludes by asserting that there are many more cases of ethnic identities in pre-modern periods than Breuilly and other modernists are prepared to allow, and that some of them did have 'political significance', such as the ethnic states of Hellenistic antiquity (1998a: 197; see also 2008: 7).

It is not possible to speak of nations and nationalisms in pre-modern eras

Can we, then, claim that there were nations and nationalisms in pre-modern eras? For scholars who subscribe to some form of modernism, the answer to this question is negative. Eley and Suny argue that Greeks in the classical period or Armenians in the fifth century were not, and could not be, nations in the modern sense of the term. Whatever their degree of cohesion and consciousness, these ethno-religious formations did not make claims to territory, autonomy or independence, nor could they, since these political claims were only authorized in the age of nationalism (1996a: 11). Kumar makes a similar point, arguing that the idea of an 'ancient' or 'medieval' nation sounds highly anachronistic given the overwhelming preponderance of empires and other forms of dynastic and 'universal' states for much of the ancient and medieval period (2006: 15; see also James 2006: 374–5).

Symmons-Symonolewicz claims that there were only three kinds of collective sentiments in the Middle Ages: religious, political and ethnic. The first contained loyalty to the church or to various heretic movements; the second included feudal, city-state, dynastic, monarchical and imperial loyalties; and the third consisted of loyalty to the neighbourhood or the region. Some of these loyalties faded away in time; others were replaced by new loyalties; still others provided the 'bricks and mortar' out of which the cultural unity of the future nation was built. However, it is not possible to know with certitude which of these sentiments was dominant in a particular situation (1981: 158–63). This is also the main thrust of the medieval historian Geary's work who argues that 'the history of the peoples of Europe in the early Middle Ages cannot be used as an argument for or against any of the political, territorial, and ideological movements of today'. The past obviously matters; but this should not blind us to the fact that the membership and identity of social and political groups in the Middle Ages were always open to negotiation, to dispute and to transformation (2002: 173).

What all these scholars share is a belief in the modernity of nations and nationalisms. Nationalism involves a new form of group identity or membership; it 'demands internal homogeneity throughout a putative nation, rather

than gradual continua of cultural variation or pockets of subcultural distinction' (Calhoun 1993: 229). In this sense, earlier histories of nations should not be read simply as pre-histories, but 'as varied historical developments whose trajectories remained open' (Eley and Suny 1996a: 11).

It is in this context that the modernists question the significance of the cultural materials of the past. Breuilly, for example, admits that nationalist intellectuals and politicians seize upon myths and symbols of the past and use them to promote a particular national identity. But, he continues, 'it is very difficult to correlate their degree of success with the "objective" importance of such myths and symbols'. In many cases nationalists simply invent myths or they ignore those which cut across their purposes – hence for every national myth that has been used, there are many others that have been dumped in the dustbin of history. Moreover, myths and symbols of the past can be put to various, often conflicting, uses. Finally, there are also many nationalist movements that have succeeded without having a rich ethnohistory to feed upon (1996: 151). Malešević adds a political dimension to this, noting that the degree of continuity between some pre-modern ethnic communities and modern nations may have less to do with shared narratives of the mythical past and collective memories, since there is an immense, almost inexhaustible repertoire of those, and more to do with actual and contemporary social (and here, one might add, economic, political) conflicts (2006a: 134).

Calhoun concurs, and argues that noticing the continuity in ethnic traditions does not explain either which of these traditions last or which become the basis for nations or nationalist claims (1997: 49). More importantly, traditions are not simply inherited, they have to be reproduced:

> stories have to be told over and again, parts of traditions have to be adapted to new circumstances to keep them meaningful, what seem like minor updatings may turn out to change meanings considerably, and the 'morals' to the stories – the lessons drawn from them – sometimes change even while the narratives stay the same … To say too simply that nationalism is grounded in ethnic traditions, thus, obscures from our view important differences in scale and mode of reproduction. (Ibid.: 50)

Ethnosymbolist analyses lack historical detail and analytical rigour

A growing number of commentators argue that the problems that afflict the ethnosymbolist reading of the past and its relationship to modern nations stem from methodological limitations. According to Breuilly, for example, the modernist critique of ethnosymbolism must be framed in terms of method, as most of the claims of the latter take the form of a general assertion accompanied by brief examples – what he calls the 'scissors-and-paste' arguments – lacking in historical context and detail (2005: 15). To show this, he suggests a thought experiment, involving an imaginary knock-out competition with 128

competitors. Each competitor has a name and a distinctive mark. The competitors are divided into pairs in each round (to 64 pairs, 32 pairs, and so on) until a winner is declared after seven rounds. The nature of the competition varies in each round; sometimes it is a contest of chance, sometimes of skill or strength. We know in advance that there can only be one winner, but we do not know who the winner will be. Once the competition is over, the name and the particular mark that will stand out will be that of the winner since it figures in every round. The names and marks of the losers will be largely forgotten. It would be easy, Breuilly notes, to see the winner's name and mark as somehow the 'cause' of the victory, looking back after the final result. This is a selection process; selection processes always have a history and this history always displays continuity. However, unless one can identify a specific causal mechanism of selection, continuity means nothing but survival through random selection. Debates about the antiquity of nations relate to just such selection processes. Societies give themselves names which they associate with distinctive characteristics, or marks. These names and marks are selectively transmitted from one generation to another, and some survive longer than others:

> However, to assume that this, by itself, tells us anything about the 'successful' names beyond survival is like assuming that the name and mark of the winner of a knock-out competition based on a combination of chance and constantly changing performance criteria contributed to that victory … To refute modernist objections to ethno-symbolic and perennialist ways of telling a long-run story of continuity, it is not enough to demonstrate a long and continual history of certain names. Rather, one must show that these names are used for the same purposes and in the same ways from generation to generation. (Ibid.: 18–19)

A similar observation is made by Laitin who maintains that Smith's analyses remain 'trapped in assumptions'. Smith assumes, for instance, that most people are 'deeply attached' to their ethnic communities or that they are willing to die for these communities. Yet he 'hardly reflects on whether the very assumptions that drive his research are true'. He thus rejects modernist interpretations arguing that it does not explain the widespread appeal of nationalism. Since he assumes that the appeal is widespread, Laitin notes, he is rejecting a major approach by fiat. What is more, 'he biases the search for evidence in support of his own framework', giving scant attention to ethnic groups or nations that command little or no attachment. For example, Croatians get much attention in his work, since they managed to boast a successful nationalist project in the 1990s, but there is no mention of Bavaria. 'Smith studies the *ethnies* that become nations to the exclusion of the "dogs that did not bark". By so doing, we have no way of knowing the probability of any *ethnie* becoming a nation' (2001: 176–8; see also Wimmer 2008). The same problem is evident in Smith's

claim that nationalists are constrained by historical facts. 'Their interpretations must be consonant not only with the ideological demands of nationalism', argues Smith, 'but also with the scientific evidence, popular resonance and patterning of particular ethno-histories' (1999: 181). 'The more factually based the ethnic history, the more powerful the nationalist project' (in the words of Laitin); the Zionist use of the Masada was powerful because archaeological evidence proved that this legend was indeed true. But, Laitin continues, Smith does not consider contrary evidence on this point: 'Would he want to claim that German nationalism under Nazi ideological guidance was any less powerful because its claims about Jews rested on outrageous pseudo-science' (2001: 179)?

Laitin concludes – in the spirit of Breuilly – by complaining about Smith's use of actual cases in an ad hoc way:

> From a few casual observations on Slovenes, Serbs, Eritreans, Slovaks, Basques and Catalans, he retains confidence that those national movements with impoverished ethno-histories will have lower rates of sustainability. But is this warranted? He considers Basque violence, where there are many archaeological remains, as evidence of the intensity of their nationalism. But Eritrean violence, where archaeological remains are few, is interpreted as evidence of 'compensation' for their lack of a deep ethno-history. If the same observations (ethnic violence) are posited as the result of both the depth and shallowness of ethno-history, the theory is indeterminate. (Ibid.: 178–9)

Ethnosymbolists reify nations

Another problem with ethnosymbolist accounts is their belief in the 'persistence' and 'durability' of ethnic ties. Kedourie, for example, observes that ethnic and national identities have proved to be highly plastic and fluid over the centuries, and have been subject to far-reaching changes and revolutions. Hence, 'the pagan Roman citizen of North Africa becomes, through his biological descendant, the Christian subject of a Christian emperor, then a member of the Muslim *umma*, and today perhaps a citizen of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria or the Libyan *Jamahiriya*' (1994: 141). For Norval, on the other hand, Smith's insistence on retaining a pre-existing, pre-modern form of ethnicity leads him to subject the theorization of nations to an objectivist reduction, a 'ground' outside all forms of discursive construction: nations 'on these readings, can be nothing other than ideological forms which cover over deeper, underlying objectivities, objectivities which may be revealed by drawing away the veil of manipulation which they seem to construct'. The implications of such an approach can be quite dangerous, writes Norval:

> [a] rejection of the symbolically constituted nature of certain forms of identification in favor of an uncovering of objective reality falls into a form of

> theorization which has been decisively problematized for its rationalism, its claims to a realm of truth not accessible to the consciousness of those engaged in the construction of their own identities, and, finally, its possible authoritarian consequences. (1996: 62)

The same point is made by Nairn and James who note that the primordialist turn against modernization theory, including some of Smith's work, made the mistake of arguing that particular 'ethnicities', or potential nations, had to be in place for each modern nation to arise. 'This view colluded with that of romantic nationalists who naturally sustained their politics by contending that there must always have been Serbs, Inuits … in waiting as it were, but unfairly cheated of the opportunity to be themselves' (2005: 13–14). Puri, too, asserts that Smith's notion of culture is transhistorical. The myths, symbols, values and memories that form the culture 'tend to be exceptionally durable under "normal" vicissitudes and to persist over many generations, even centuries' for Smith, setting limits to elite attempts at manipulation (Smith 1986: 16). So long as this view of culture guides his analysis, Puri concludes, Smith cannot avoid the charge of 'retrospective nationalism' he associates with perennialism (2004: 49; see also Day and Thompson 2004: 81).

This is indeed the main thrust of Malešević's critique of Smith's account of nationalism. The 'evolutionary historicism' that characterizes Smith's work, Malešević maintains, is based on three ontological assumptions: determinism, fatalism and finalism. In this perspective, history has clearly defined (and predetermined) stages of development, and historical evolution is perceived as having a mission; *ethnies* are destined to become nations, hence become the principal actors in the drama of history, with 'a purpose and a functional role in the Great Chain of Being'. There is little room for contingency in this 'teleologically crafted narrative', notes Malešević. Perhaps more importantly, Smith reifies nations (and here one might add *ethnies*) by unproblematically accepting folk concepts and treating large-scale social actors as if they have singular and recognizable wills. We thus read about the 'Finns' looking back to an age of wisdom and heroism, the 'Slovaks' returning to an early Moravian kingdom or the 'Kievan Rus' claimed by both the Ukrainians and Russians as their golden age … How can Smith know what some five million individual citizens of Finland think or have ever thought about the age of heroism, Malešević asks:

> How many individual Slovaks regularly and unconditionally 'return to an early Moravian kingdom'? Is 'Kievan Rus' claimed by every single individual who describes themselves as Ukrainian or Russian or is this claim made by some groups and individuals in the name of Ukrainians and Russians? Do these perceptions ever change? Are there any competing understandings of Slovakness, Finnishness? (2006a: 131)

Dominant interpretations of the 'national' are the result of attempts at articulating the national idea by various social movements or cultural and political elites, Malešević concludes, and not the effect of particular ethno-histories.

Ethnosymbolism today

In his introduction to the debate on John Hutchinson's book, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (2005), Eric Kaufmann remarks that, 'while younger writers as diverse as Rogers Brubaker and Andreas Wimmer have introduced their own novel interpretations of the modernist canon, there are actually very few "second-generation" theorists of note working within the Smith-Armstrong tradition' (2008: 1). Kaufmann's observation is not entirely correct since there is a sizeable and increasingly influential group of 'younger' writers (including Atsuko Ichijo, Gordana Uzelac, Oliver Zimmer and Kaufmann himself, among others – most of them Smith's students) who remain broadly sympathetic to the ethnosymbolist enterprise, despite their disagreements with various aspects of it. On the other hand, it is true that Hutchinson is probably the only theorist who attempted to reformulate the ethnosymbolist position in the light of recent theoretical developments in the field.

Taking issue with what he calls the 'over-coherent model' of modernization theories, Hutchinson embarks on providing an alternative model of nation formation, 'one that conceives of the nation as a species of the ethnic project, only contingently related to the state, and which recognizes that the power of states to regulate populations is limited and fluctuating'. This model should address:

> the enduring character of nations based on a sense of being embedded in much older (ethnic) communities that have survived centuries of vicissitudes; the internal cultural revolutions required before nationalists are able to overcome established identities, including ethnic traditions; the persistence and functions of cultural difference in nations; and the episodic character of nationalist resurgences throughout the modern period. (2005: 4)

Such a model treats nations not as unitary, homogeneous wholes, but as zones of conflict, reflecting centuries of conflicts, memories of which are carried into the modern era by a host of institutions. This is also why the rise of nationalism is almost always accompanied by struggles of legitimacy with traditional power holders, and there remain tensions between traditionalists and modernizers in many societies. Cultural wars continue to plague most nationalisms as protagonists seek inspiration from alternative pasts for their programmes. The regulatory powers of states may have increased in the modern era (mainly through the granting of citizenship rights), but this does not in itself create unitary and sovereign national societies:

> Nationalism is an episodic movement, provoked by periodic incapacities of states to protect the nation throughout the modern period. This suggests that far from being 'passive' outgrowths of modern forces, nations are dynamic entities that structure our response to the multiple and unpredictable processes we encounter. (Ibid.: 4–5; see also 191–3)

Hutchinson argues that this 'episodic interpretation' brings together two apparently antithetical approaches. The first is the *longue durée* perspective of ethnosymbolists such as Armstrong and Smith, 'which views nations as dynamic, long term historical processes that structure the forms of modernity'. The second is the 'post-modernist' framework of scholars like Özkırımlı and Yuval-Davis, 'which emphasizes that collectivities and individuals have multiple and conflictual identities over which there can be no final consensus'. Hutchinson claims that he agrees with post-modernists' rejection of the idea that modernization leads to a world of homogeneous nation-states and their belief in the significance of contest and conflict in shaping collectivities. Yet he does not share what he calls 'their idealist and asociological voluntarism' which ignores the binding power of institutionalized identities. In integrating the insights of 'post-modernists' within an ethnosymbolic framework, writes Hutchinson, his objective is to combine an appreciation of the enduring character of modern nations with the role of conflict in their formation, 'and to argue that the preservation of persisting differences and rival cultural repertoire is one of the important reasons for the adaptability of the nation throughout two centuries of tumultous change' (ibid.: 5; see also 2001: 84–7).

This is indeed a 'futuristic ethnosymbolism', one that acknowledges the role of plurality and conflict in the formation of nations more than its classical predecessor. Hence for Hutchinson, 'conflict is endemic to nations'; all nations contain plural ethnic repertoires that give birth to competing cultural and political projects in the modern period – hence nation formation is an unfinished and evolving process (2008: 19; 2005: 193). But this new emphasis on plural and conflicting ethnic repertoires does not sit well with Hutchinson's insistence on seeing modern nations as products of 'older ethnic formations' or 'pre-existing ethnic identities' which have survived 'centuries of vicissitudes' (2005: 4, 5, 14). How can we talk about 'older ethnic formations' surviving vicissitudes of history if there are indeed a number of competing visions or projects within each ethnic formation? What is it that survives for centuries? Which project or vision is taken up by modern nationalists? Why is this particular version of identity chosen, and not the others? As we have seen above, the ethnosymbolist story is about 'continuity', 'recurrence' and 'appropriation', or the ways in which the past constrains the present. But it is not possible to argue that present elites are constrained by the 'national' past if there are indeed several versions of the past (or the 'national') to choose from. Hutchinson's recognition of plurality and conflict defines ethnosymbolism out of existence or reduces it

to an approach which merely stresses the significance of myths, symbols, memories and traditions in the construction of nations, a truism that most theorists of nationalism, primordialist, modernist or 'post-modernist', would readily embrace (for a more detailed discussion see Özkırımlı 2008: 6–9).

On the other hand, Hutchinson's suggested synthesis remains susceptible to the vices that inflict other ethnosymbolist analyses as well. Hence Wimmer argues that Hutchinson, not unlike other ethnosymbolists, privileges examples that seem to support his theory and does not discuss cases that do not fit his scheme. 'To advance the arguments made in the ethnosymbolist tradition', Wimmer continues, 'one would have to overcome this case selection bias and adopt a more systematic research methodology where the choice of examples would NOT be determined by the degree of fit with the argument' (2008: 11–12, original emphasis).

What is more, Hutchinson bases his arguments on a 'romantic ontology', and reifies nations. It is not individual or collective actors that pursue political projects, ally with or fight each other; rather, it is nations, myths and memories that 'do' such things:

> Here we have a theory of the nation as a living organism with a life span of centuries and millennia … a view that bears more than a family resemblance to that of the eighteenth century philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder … this represents not just a terminological slippage … but a core theoretical argument. Without the claim that myths, symbols and memories have transhistorical power shaping human action over the course of centuries, the ethnosymbolist programme would collapse into the simple argument that historically constituted cultural frames … matter for processes of political mobilization. (Ibid.: 12–13)

Finally, Wimmer points to the absence of 'politics' or 'power' from Hutchinson's analysis, despite his emphasis on conflict and struggle for hegemony. According to Hutchinson's analysis, Wimmer notes, struggles over the definition of the nation are not driven by the quest for power by various political actors, but 'by the memories and myths which seem to lead a life of their own and breathe, like Herder's *Volkgeist*, through the bodies of the nation' (ibid.: 13).

Hutchinson tries to counter these criticisms, arguing that he sees no incompatibility between an emphasis on the embeddedness of ethnic repertoire and on the transformational character of nationalism. 'I see a tension, not a contradiction', he writes:

> There may be many alternative pasts available to nationalists. But to be successful, nationalists must speak to their constituencies in languages the latter understand. If they fail to do so, their project is still-born and they may

be overthrown by counter elites. It is in this sense that I speak of trial and error, which implies an interaction between elites and their target population. (2008: 25)

Further reading

For a definition of (and the exposition of the main theses) of ethnosymbolism, see Smith (1999, Chapter 1 and 2001d). Other useful introductions to ethnosymbolism include Ichijo and Uzelac (2005, pp. 89–92) and Day and Thompson (2004, Chapter 4). The classic works written in the ethnosymbolist tradition are Armstrong (1982) and Smith (1986 and 1991a). Smith revises his position on a number of issues in his later work; see in particular Smith (2003a and 2005).

The exchange between Connor and Smith on the nature of modern nations can be found in Connor (2004) and Smith (2002 and 2008). On this, see also Connor's seminal article, 'When is the Nation?' (see Connor 1994). For the methodological critique of ethnosymbolism in general and Smith's work in particular, see Laitin (2001) and Breuilly (2005). Other, more substantive, criticisms can be found in Breuilly (1996), Malešević (2006a, Chapter 5). Smith's reply to some of these criticisms can be found in (1998a, pp. 196–8).

For a reformulation of ethnosymbolism, see Hutchinson (2005); for a critique of the 'new' ethnosymbolism, see Özkırımlı (2008) and Wimmer (2008), together with Hutchinson's reply (2008).

Chapter 6

New Approaches to Nationalism

Why 'new'?

A core argument of this book is that we have entered a new stage in the theoretical debate on nationalism since the end of the 1980s. This argument appeared somewhat eccentric back in 2000, when the first edition of this book was published, as it treated a rather limited number of independent studies as a separate category – a new wave of theorizing qualitatively different from the whole body of work hitherto produced. In the interim, the number of studies adopting similar approaches has grown exponentially, and the insights they provided have moved to the forefront of theoretical dicussions on nationalism. Subsequently, the argument has been implicitly or explicitly adopted by several introductory texts on nationalism and, as alluded to in Chapter 2, some have even started to speak of a 'post-classical' period in the study of nationalism (Day and Thompson 2004; see also Puri 2004 and Lawrence 2005).

The most distinctive characteristic of this constellation of studies is their critical attitude *vis-à-vis* the mainstream scholarship on nationalism. Despite the fact that each highlights a different problem with earlier theories, they all question the fundamental assumptions of their predecessors, and seek to go beyond the classical debate by exploring the issues neglected or ignored by the latter and by proposing new ways of thinking about national phenomena. New approaches have been influenced by the 'cultural turn' in social sciences, precipitated by the rise of new social movements in the last quarter of the twentieth century which challenged the purported homogeneity of national cultures and identities in the West. In this context, the static notion of 'culture' as a coherent, harmonious whole is replaced by more fluid and dynamic interpretations which treat culture as a deeply contested concept whose meaning is continually negotiated, revised and reinterpreted by successive generations and by various groups that are presumed to make up the 'national' society. In this view, culture is not divorced from social fragmentation and discrimination on the basis of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, place in the life cycle, hence from hierarchies of power; it is more often not what people share, but what they choose to fight over (Eley and Suny 1996a: 9).

On a methodological level, new approaches take issue with the tendency of most mainstream theories to collude with their object of analysis, calling

attention to the extent to which our conceptual frameworks and analytical vocabularies are themselves shaped by the discourse of nationalism. Steering clear of 'methodological nationalism' and 'reification', they refuse to take nations and nationalism, or their widespread appeal, for granted, and seek to understand the conditions under which they became central to modern politics and culture.

This leads to a renewed emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of nationalism as a subject of academic investigation. Thus the studies in question open up the field to the contributions of new methods of analysis such as critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, rhetorical theory, psychoanalysis, and new epistemological perspectives such as feminism, post-colonialism and post-modernism. They also stress the need to rectify the elitism of mainstream theories by bringing macro-level and micro-level analyses together, that is by considering the view from below (the 'masses', 'ordinary people') in addition to the view from above (the 'elites', 'intellectuals' or 'state bureaucrats').

On a more substantive level, new approaches argue that the classical debate has become unnecessarily polarized around certain issues, such as dating the origins of nations, at the expense of others, and criticize the gender-blind, Eurocentric character of the mainstream literature. They also turn their back on 'grand narratives' or 'meta-theories' designed to explain 'nationalism-in-general'. This enables them to focus on nationalist practices and representations, and the previously neglected aspects of nationalism, such as the gendered and sexualized character of nationalist projects, the reproduction of nationalism through popular culture and in everyday life, the dilemmas of 'nation-building' in post-colonial societies, among others, with an increased sensitivity to the experiences of previously marginalized groups in each case (for a discussion of the distinguishing features of the new approaches see also Day and Thompson 2004: 12–17, 86, 196–7; Puri 2004: 60; Salehi 2001; Triandafyllidou 2001; Walker 2001; Eley and Suny 1996a).

The argument that we have entered a new stage in the debate on nationalism since the late 1980s can be strengthened further by examining in detail a number of studies that question orthodox theorizations about nations and nationalism.

Michael Billig and banal nationalism

The question of the reproduction of nations and nationalisms has generally been disregarded by mainstream writings on the subject. As we will see in the next section, the issue was first taken up by feminist writers who sought to provide a gendered understanding of nationalism by exploring the various ways in which women contributed to the biological, symbolic and ideological reproduction of their respective nations. Another important exception was the French Marxist scholar Étienne Balibar who treated the nation as a social formation in the sense of:

> a construction whose unity remains problematic, a configuration of antagonistic social classes that is not entirely autonomous, only becoming *relatively* specific in its opposition to others and via the power struggles, the conflicting interest groups and ideologies which are developed over the *longue durée* by this very antagonism. (1990: 334, original emphasis)

According to Balibar, the main problem posed by the existence of social formations is not that of their beginning or their end, but primarily that of their reproduction, that is, 'the conditions under which they can maintain this conflictual unity which creates their autonomy over long historical periods' (ibid.: 334–5). It was Michael Billig who set out to specify these conditions in his influential *Banal Nationalism* (1995), which could be considered as the first study to provide a systematic analysis of the reproduction of nationalism (for a later attempt see Edensor 2002; see also Chapter 7).

Billig's approach is based on a critique of orthodox theorizations which tend to associate nationalism with 'those who struggle to create new states or with extreme right-wing politics'. According to this view, nationalism is the property of 'others', the peripheral states which have yet to complete their nation-building processes, and not 'ours', the established 'nation-states' of the West. Nationalism is a temporary mood in the West, only manifesting itself under certain 'extraordinary' conditions, that is, in times of crises – and vanishing once normal conditions are restored. In that sense, crises are like infections causing fever in a 'healthy body'. When the crisis abates, 'the temperature passes; the flags are rolled up; and, then, it is business as usual' (1995: 5). Billig rejects this simplistic, even naive, picture, arguing that the crises depend upon existing ideological foundations. They do not create nation-states as nation-states: 'In between times the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom and so on continue to exist. Daily, they are reproduced as nations and their citizenry as nationals'. However, this reminding is so familiar that it is not consciously registered as reminding. Billig introduces the term 'banal nationalism' to cover 'the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced': 'The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion: it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building' (ibid.: 6–8).

Such a conception casts doubt on standard interpretations which hold that nationalism becomes something surplus to everyday life once the nation-state is established, only to return when the orderly routines are broken down. According to Billig, nationalism does not disappear when the nation acquires a political roof; instead, it becomes absorbed into the environment of the established homeland (ibid.: 41). The symbols of nationhood (coins, bank notes, stamps) become a part of our daily lives. These small reminders turn the background space into 'national' space.

Billig maintains that it is not possible to explain all these routine habits or the

BOX 6.1 **Michael Billig**

Professor of Social Sciences at Loughborough University, Michael Billig is best known in the field of nationalism studies by his book *Banal Nationalism* (1995). This is how Billig recalls the background to this book:

'My background is in social psychology. Having conducted research into the social psychology of prejudice, including neo-fascism, I became dissatisfied with mainstream social psychological approaches. They appeared to equate all forms of prejudice and even to suggest that it was "natural" to stereotype. So, I began to explore the possibility that human thinking might be intrinsically rhetorical. It also seemed wrong to treat all forms of identity as if they were psychologically similar. In order to substantiate this, I began to read about nationalism. I was particularly impressed by Gellner and Anderson, who were arguing that there was something historically new about national identity. However, I felt that most of the writers on nationalism were missing out something important: the everyday nationalism of the established nation-state. It seemed surprising that social scientists were overlooking the routine displays of nationalism in the world's most powerful nation-state, the United States of America.

That was the background to my book *Banal Nationalism*. By and large, specialists in the study of nationalism have treated it kindly, although it was written by an "outsider", who had no record in studying nationalism. The book appeared in 1995, but, since then, I have tended to work in other areas. My more recent books have examined a variety of topics, such as Freud's theory of repression, the importance of humour in social life, and, most recently, eighteenth century theories of mind. Perhaps, I will return one day to reconsidering the nature of nationalism – after all, everyday the news confirms the hold that nationalism has on the contemporary mind' (personal correspondence).

popular reaction following the moments of crisis in terms of identity. National identity, he argues, is not a psychological accessory which people always carry with them, to be used whenever it is necessary. For national identity to do its work, people must know what that identity is. In other words, they must have assumptions about what a nation is and, indeed, what patriotism is.

This information comes from different sources. For instance, national histories tell us the story of a people travelling across time – 'our' people, with 'our' ways of life. On the other hand, national community cannot be imagined without also imagining communities of foreigners which make 'our' culture unique: there can be no 'us' without a 'them' (ibid.: 78–9). It is at this stage that stereotyped judgements come in. Stereotypes become means of distinguishing 'them' from 'us'; 'we' represent the standard, the normal, against which 'their' deviations appear notable. This unique community of culture is also associated with a particular territory, a bounded geographical space which is 'our' homeland.

Indeed, the whole world is composed of communities of culture like ours, each tied to a specific piece of land. For Billig, this international consciousness is integral to the modern discourse of nationalism (ibid.: 83).

These observations raise another question. Why do we, in established nations, not forget our national identity? For Billig, the answer is simple: 'we' are constantly reminded that 'we' live in nations. 'Routinely familiar habits of language' play an important role in this process of reminding. 'Small words, rather than grand memorable phrases' make our national identity unforgettable. To explore such matters, we should not only pay attention to words like 'people' or 'society', but also become 'linguistically microscopic' since the secret of banal nationalism lies in tiny words such as 'we', 'this' and 'here' (ibid.: 93–4). As might be expected, these words are most commonly used by politicians.

Politicians play an important part in the reproduction of nationalism, but not because they are figures of great influence. On the contrary, many commentators argue that their weight in the key decision-making mechanisms is constantly declining, partly as a result of increasing globalization. Politicians are important because they are familiar figures. Their faces appear regularly in the newspapers or on the television screens. In a way, they are the 'stars' of the modern age; their words daily reach millions (ibid.: 96). In such a context, what they say and how they say it is of utmost importance. The 'patriotic card' is played by almost all politicians. More importantly, however, politicians claim to speak for the nation. Evoking the whole nation as their audience, they rhetorically present themselves as representing the national interest. By using a complex deixis of homeland, they invoke the national 'we' and place 'us' within 'our' homeland. When the homeland-making phrases are used regularly, 'we' are reminded who 'we' are and where 'we' are. Moreover, what is 'ours' is presented as the objective world; the homeland is made unnoticeable by being presented as *the* context (ibid.: 106–9).

On the other hand, politicians are not the only actors contributing to the daily reproduction of nationhood. Their rhetorical forms and deixis are taken up by the newspapers. Like politicians, newspapers claim to stand in the eye of the nation. The opinion and editorial columns evoke a national 'we', including both readers and writers (as well as a universal audience). What unites the reader and the writer, what makes them 'we', is the national identity. The newspapers also contribute to the process of imagining a national 'we' by their internal organization and the structure of presentation of the news. 'Home' news is separated from 'foreign' news; and ' "Home" indicates more than the contents of the particular page: it flags the home of the newspaper and of the assumed, addressed readers'. We, the readers, follow the directing signs and find our way around the familiar territory of the newspaper: 'As we do so, we are habitually at home in a textual structure, which uses the homeland's national boundaries, dividing the world into "homeland" and "foreign" ' (ibid.: 119).

One of the most compelling theses of Billig's study relates to social scientists' role in the reproduction of nationalism. According to Billig, scholars contribute to this process by:

- *Projecting nationalism*. Most social scientific approaches define nationalism in a very restricted way, as an extreme/surplus phenomenon, thereby confining it to nationalist movements induced by irrational emotions. In this way, nationalism is projected on to 'others'; ' "ours" is overlooked, forgotten, even theoretically denied'.
- *Naturalizing nationalism*. Some theorists reduce nationalism to a psychological need by arguing that contemporary loyalties to nation-states are instances of something general, or endemic to the human condition. As such, ' "banal nationalism" not only ceases to be nationalism, but it ceases to be a problem for investigation'. (ibid.: 16–17)

Billig notes that some scholars do both simultaneously. This leads to a theoretical (and rhetorical) distinction: 'our' nationalism is not presented as nationalism, something dangerously irrational, surplus and alien. A new label is found for it, 'patriotism', which is beneficial and necessary. Consequently, 'our patriotism' is presented as natural, therefore invisible, whereas 'nationalism' is seen as the property of 'others' (ibid.: 55, 17).

If banal nationalism is so widespread, then, what should social scientists do? First and foremost, they should confess. Billig admits that he feels pleasure if a citizen from the homeland runs quicker or jumps higher than foreigners. Similarly, he confesses that he reads 'home' news with greater interest. Generally speaking, we are all participants in the discourse of nationalism; 'it is present in the very words which we might try to use for analysis' (ibid.: 12). In that sense, it can be argued that all texts on nationalism – even critical ones – contribute to its reproduction. Calhoun sums this up succinctly: 'many of the categories and presumptions of this discourse are so deeply ingrained in our everyday language and our academic theories that it is virtually impossible to shed them, and we can only remind ourselves to take them into account' (1993: 214). We should at least do this because:

> whatever else is forgotten in a world of information overload, we do not forget our homelands … If we are being routinely primed for the dangers of the future, then this is not a priming which tops up a reservoir of aggressive energy. It is a form of reading and watching, of understanding and of taking for granted. It is a form of life in which 'we' are constantly invited to relax, at home, within the homeland's borders. This form of life is the national identity … with its dangerous potentials appearing so harmlessly homely. (Billig 1995: 127)

Nira Yuval-Davis and feminist approaches

A key issue in the analysis of nations and nationalism has been the constitution of membership in the national community and the differential participation of various social groups in nationalist projects. It has been generally recognized that nationalist movements draw upon different constituencies, in uneven ways, and there has been a large body of work analysing various aspects of these movements, such as their class compositions, the levels of education of their participants and so on. However, this body of work has not engaged with the differential integration of women and men into national projects in a systematic way (Walby 1996: 235). Of course women were – and are – never absent from the nationalist discourse, figuring as 'conquerors' mistresses, wartime rape victims, military prostitutes, cinematic soldier-heroes, pin-up models on patriotic calendars' and as workers, wives, girlfriends and daughters waiting dutifully at home (Enloe 1993, cited in Eley and Suny 1996a: 27). Yet despite their centrality to nationalist discourse, it has been noted, most mainstream theorizations about nations and nationalism, sometimes even those written by women (for example Greenfeld 1992), have ignored gender relations as irrelevant (Yuval-Davis 1997: 1). Nationalism has been generally regarded as a male phenomenon, springing from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope (Enloe 1989: 44; on masculinity and nationalism see Bracewell 2000; Huysseune 2000 and Puri 2004: 128–33). This was what prompted the famous writer Virginia Woolf to declare her neutrality in the face of the unfolding Second World War, urging women to join her fictional 'Outsiders' Society':

> 'Our country' … throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions … Therefore if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or 'our' country, let it be understood … that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share. For … in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world. (2001: 252)

The gender-blindness of mainstream theories have been increasingly questioned since the mid-1980s. McClintock, for example, argues that nationalism is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power (1996: 261). In that sense, we should not simply add gender as a missing dimension to our discussions of nationalism, but integrate it into our theories. In fact for McClintock, what we need is a feminist theory of nationalism which will be:

> (1) investigating the gendered formation of sanctioned male theories; (2) bringing into historical visibility women's active cultural and political

> participation in national formations; (3) bringing nationalist institutions into critical relation with other social structures and institutions; and (4) at the same time paying scrupulous attention to the structures of racial, ethnic and class power that continue to bedevil privileged forms of feminism. (ibid.: 263)

This was in a way what scholars like Kumari Jayawardena (1986), Cynthia Enloe (1989), Sylvia Walby (1996), Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989; Yuval-Davis 1997) were attempting to do, namely to provide a gendered understanding of nations and nationalism. Among these, the work of Nira Yuval-Davis is particularly important. In an earlier intervention, Yuval-Davis and her co-editor Floya Anthias explored the various ways in which women affect and are affected by ethnic/national processes and how these relate to the state. Later, Yuval-Davis elaborated some of the theses developed in this collective endeavour and expanded them to book length as *Gender and Nation* (1997).

The starting point of Anthias and Yuval-Davis, in the Introduction to their pioneering *Woman–Nation–State*, is the shortcomings of the feminist critique of the state. For them, the merit of feminists and socialist feminists was to reveal how the state constructs men and women differently. In this way, they were able to shed light on the ways in which the welfare state has constituted the 'state subject' in a gendered way, that is, as essentially male in its capacities and needs (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 6). However, Anthias and Yuval-Davis contend, it is not enough to criticize the state's understanding of citizenship since this concept only relates to the way the state acts upon the individual and not the way in which the state forms its political project. Therefore, it cannot on its own explain the social forces that are dominant within the state. According to them, the notion of citizenship does not encapsulate adequately the relations of control and negotiation that take place in various areas of social life. What is required, then, is to identify the ways in which women participate in national and ethnic processes within civil society and to explore how these relate to the state. Before doing that, however, Anthias and Yuval-Davis stress that there is no unitary category of women which can be unproblematically conceived as the focus of ethnic, national and state policies: 'Women are divided along class, ethnic and life-cycle lines, and in most societies different strategies are directed at different groups of women' (ibid.: 7). In the light of these observations, Anthias and Yuval-Davis suggest five major ways in which women have tended to participate in ethnic and national processes:

(a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
(b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
(c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;

(d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences – as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories; and
(e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles. (Ibid.)

As biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities

Yuval-Davis notes that most discussions on women's reproductive rights have focused on the effects of the existence or absence of these rights on women as individuals. However, she argues, the pressures on women to have or not to have children often relate to them not as individuals, but as members of specific national collectivities: 'According to different national projects, under specific historical circumstances, some or all women of child-bearing age groups would be called on, sometimes bribed, and sometimes even forced, to have more, or fewer, children' (1997: 22).

Yuval-Davis identifies three main discourses that tend to dominate nationalist policies of population control. The first is the 'people as power' discourse, in which the future of the nation is seen to depend on its continuous growth (ibid.: 29–31). Here, various policies are pursued to encourage women to have more children. In Israel, for example, there were calls for women to bear more children at times of slack immigration or national crisis. This encouragement was usually underpinned by religious discourses about the duty of women to produce more children. Politicians nurtured the fear of a 'demographic holocaust' by drawing attention to popular Palestinian sayings ('The Israelis beat us at the borders but we beat them in the bedrooms'), using it to increase the pressure on women. However, the state does not always rely on ideological mobilization and may adopt less radical measures such as the establishment of child benefit systems or the allocation of loans (maternal benefit schemes) for this purpose (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 8–9; Yuval-Davis 1989).

The second discourse identified by Yuval-Davis is the Eugenicist. The Eugenics were concerned not with the size of the nation, but with its 'quality' (1997: 31–2). This has given rise to various policies aimed at limiting the physical numbers of members of 'undesirable' groups. These policies may sometimes take the form of immigration controls; at other times, they may include more extreme measures such as the physical expulsion of particular groups or their actual extermination (for example Jews and Gypsies in Nazi Germany). Another strategy is to limit the number of people born in specific ethnic groups by controlling the reproductive capacity of women. Again various policies are pursued here, ranging from forced sterilization to the massive mobilization of birth control campaigns. A corollary of this strategy is the active encouragement of population growth of the 'right kind', that is of the dominant ethnic group (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 8–9).

The final discourse identified by Yuval-Davis is the Malthusian. In stark

BOX 6.2 **Nira Yuval-Davis**

Professor and Graduate Course Director in Gender, Sexualities and Ethnic Studies at the University of East London, Nira Yuval-Davis is one of the first to introduce the long-neglected issue of gender into the study of nationalism, with her books *Woman–Nation–State* (with Floya Anthias, 1989) and *Gender and Nation* (1997). This is how Yuval-Davis recounts the origins of her interest in nationalism:

'One of my earliest significant memories is sitting with my parents listening to the votes of the UN assembly. I was four years old at the time and did not really understand what was going on, but knew it was something very important. Suddenly my parents got up and my father called to me and my sister with excitement: "We have a state! We have a state!" Shortly afterwards everybody went out to the street and I remember listening to the songs and dances, and general ecstasy of the people all night long. Then the British left and the 1948 war started.

Nationalism, in its particular form of Zionism, especially labour Zionism, has shaped my life from the beginning, and what we have learned on the fate of all our family relatives who were mostly murdered by the Nazis and the few who came to Israel after 1948 as survivors, was the emotional context of why Jewish national independence is so important. When I was growing up, however, I gradually came to see that some of the children in my school, who came from "Mizrakhi" families, were much more marginal in the national society that labour Zionism built and in which my family occupied a space in the centre, and when I was a teenager, I also met and came to know the fate of the Israeli Palestinians who were formally citizens, but were under military government and their movements were tightly controlled.

Thus started a long and painful journey of demystifications and deconstructions, although my gradual change from a Zionist to anti-zionist (Yuval-Davis 2002) could be completed only when I left Israel and realized that people in other societies do manage to live in pluralistic societies, and when I started to analyze Israel/Palestine as a settler society and not just as a nation-state (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995). Having lived and worked in three different countries and visited so many others, I have also come to recognize the importance of emphasizing the Otto Bauerian emphasis on "common destiny" rather than just the Anthony Smithian "common origin" as crucial aspects of nationalist discourse, but at the same time I was also able to evaluate critically the non-nationalist nationalist discourse prevalent in the West. Most importantly, starting from my work on Israel and then more generally, I was able to analyze nations and nationalist discourses in an intersectional way, pointing out that sexual, ethnic, class and other social divisions construct a differential, as well as multi-layered forms of belonging to national collectivities – hence *Gender and Nation* (1997), and *Intersectionality and Belonging* which I am in the process of writing these days' (personal correspondence).

contrast to the first discourse, the Malthusians see the reduction of the number of children as the way to prevent a future national disaster. This discourse is most visible in developing countries, where a number of policies aimed at reducing the overall rate of growth are adopted. 'Women are often the "captive" target population for such policies'. Yuval-Davis observes that the country which has gone furthest in this respect is China. Here, several measures were taken so that most families would not have more than one baby. Punishments for evading these measures ranged from unemployment for the parents to exclusion from education for the children. According to Yuval-Davis, the effect of Malthusian policies is highly gendered; 'Where there is strong pressure to limit the number of children, and where male children are more highly valued for social and economic reasons, practices of abortions and infanticide are mainly directed towards baby girls' (1997: 32–5; for the discourses on population control see also Yuval-Davis 2001: 124–5).

As reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups

Drawing on Armstrong's work, Yuval-Davis argues that the mythical unity of 'national imagined communities' is maintained and ideologically reproduced by a whole system of symbolic 'border guards' which classify people as members and non-members of a specific collectivity. These border guards are closely linked to 'specific cultural codes of style of dress and behaviour as well as to more elaborate bodies of customs, religion, literary and artistic modes of production, and, of course, language' (1997: 23). Gender relations and sexuality play a significant role in all this, as women are generally seen as embodiments and cultural reproducers of ethnic/national collectivities. According to Yuval-Davis, this dimension of women's lives is crucial to understanding their subjectivities as well as their relations with each other, with men and with children.

Given their centrality as symbolic border guards, it is easy to understand why women are controlled not only by being encouraged or discouraged from having children, but also in terms of the 'proper' way in which they should have them – that is, in ways which will reproduce the boundaries of their ethnic group or that of their husbands. Hence, in some cases they are not allowed to have sexual relations with men of other groups (as until recently in South Africa). This is particularly the case for women belonging to the dominant ethnic group. Legal marriage is generally a precondition for the child to be recognized as a member of the group. Often, religious and social traditions dictate who can marry whom so that the character and boundaries of the group can be maintained over generations (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 9). In Israel, for example, it is the mother who determines the child's nationality. But if the mother is married to another man, then the child will be an outcast (even if she is divorced by civil, rather than religious law, because civil marriages are not recognized by the religious court) and not allowed to marry another Jew for ten generations (Yuval-Davis 1989: 103).

As participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as the transmitters of its culture

As noted above, women are usually seen as the 'cultural carriers' of the ethnic/national group. They are the main socializers of small children, and thus they are often required to transmit the rich heritage of ethnic symbols, traditions and values to the young members of the group (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 9). Here, Yuval-Davis stresses the need to treat 'culture' not as a reified fixed category, but rather 'as a dynamic process, continuously changing, full of internal contradictions which different social and political agents, differentially positioned, use in different ways' (1997: 67).

As signifiers of ethnic/national differences

Women do not only transmit the cultural heritage of ethnic and national groups, but they also 'symbolize' it. The nation is often imagined as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who lost her sons in battle. It is supposedly for the sake of the 'womenandchildren' (*sic*) that men go to war (Enloe 1990, cited in Yuval-Davis 1997: 15). Yuval-Davis argues that this 'burden of representation' has brought about the construction of women as the bearers of the collectivity's honour. Hence, specific codes and regulations are usually developed, defining who and what is a 'proper woman', and a 'proper man'. In the Hitler Youth movement, for example, the motto for girls was 'Be faithful; be pure; be German'. For boys it was 'Live faithfully; fight bravely; die laughing' (1997: 45). Sometimes, the difference between two ethnic groups is determined by the sexual behaviour of women (on the intricate links between sexuality and nationalism see also Mosse 1985; Parker *et al*. 1992; and Puri 2004, Chapter 4). For instance, a 'true' Cypriot girl should behave in sexually appropriate ways. If she does not, then neither herself nor her children may belong to the community (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989: 10; see also Anthias 1989). In the words of Yuval-Davis:

> Other women in many other societies are also tortured or murdered by their relatives because of adultery, flight from home, and other cultural breaches of conduct which are perceived as bringing dishonour and shame on their male relatives and community. (1997: 46)

As participants in national, economic, political and military struggles

The category that is most commonly explored concerns women's role in national and ethnic struggles. Yuval-Davis argues that while women did not always participate directly in the fighting (although it was not uncommon for them to do so), they always had specific roles in the combat, 'whether it was to take care of the dead and wounded or to become the embodied possession of the victorious' (1997: 95). This 'sexual division of labour', however, usually disappears when there is no clear differentiation between the 'battle front' and

the 'home front'. At this point, Yuval-Davis refers to the changing nature of warfare and the professionalization of militaries as having a positive impact on the incorporation of women into the military. But, she adds, 'it is only very rarely, if at all, that differential power relations between men and women have been erased, even within the most socially progressively organized national liberation armies or western professional militaries' (ibid.: 114).

Another theme developed in Yuval-Davis's later study relates to the multi-dimensionality of nationalist projects. Noting that nationalist projects are often multiplex, Yuval-Davis argues that 'different members of the collectivity tend to promote contesting constructions which tend to be more or less exclusionary, more or less linked to other ideologies such as socialism and/or religion' (1997: 21). For her, attempts to classify all these different states and societies according to different types of nationalism would constitute an impossible and ahistorical task. Rather, we should treat these types as different dimensions of nationalist projects which are combined in different ways in specific historical cases.

Drawing on this observation, Yuval-Davis differentiates between three major dimensions of nationalist projects. The first is the 'genealogical' dimension which is constructed around the specific origin of the people or their race (*Volknation*). The second is the 'cultural' dimension in which the symbolic heritage provided by language, religion and/or other customs and traditions is constructed as the 'essence' of the nation (*Kulturnation*). Finally, there is the 'civic' dimension that focuses on citizenship as determining the boundaries of the nation, relating it directly to notions of state sovereignty and specific territoriality (*Staatnation*) (ibid.). According to Yuval-Davis, gender relations play an important role in each of these dimensions and are crucial for any valid theorization of them.

In *Gender and Nation*, Yuval-Davis also offers a more detailed analysis of the absence of women from mainstream theorizing about nations and nationalism. She mentions two explanations that might be relevant in this respect. The first comes from Carole Pateman who traces the origins of this 'collective scholarly forgetting' back to the classical foundation theories which have shaped the commonsense understanding of Western political and social order. These theories divide the sphere of civil society into two domains, the public and the private, and locate women (and the family) in the private domain, which is not seen as politically relevant. Rebecca Grant, on the other hand, argues that the foundation theories of both Hobbes and Rousseau portray the transition from the state of nature to an orderly society exclusively in terms of what they assume to be male characteristics – the aggressive nature of men (Hobbes) and the capacity for reason in men (Rousseau). Women are not part of this process, hence excluded from the 'social'. Later theories, Grant contends, took these assumptions for granted (Yuval-Davis 1997: 2). It is important to note, however, that the neglect was mutual, and nations and nationalisms have not

been a major focus of feminist scholars either until relatively recently. According to Yuval-Davis, part of the reason for this was the fact that for a long time feminist scholars have come from privileged settings and could afford to agree with Virginia Woolf's statement, 'as a woman, I have no country!' Kumari Jayawardena's book, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (1986), was a turning point in that respect, she argues, as it showed to Western feminists that loyalty to one's national liberation movement does not necessarily mean that women do not fight for the improvement of their position in their respective societies (2001: 121, 134–6; see also McClintock 1996: 281 and West 1997a).

Yuval-Davis notes that the gender-blindness of the mainstream literature continues unabated, despite the explosion of feminist analyses of nationalism and of specific nationalist projects in recent years (in addition to the sources already cited, see also Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Stiglmayer 1994; Moghadam 1994; Lutz *et al*. 1995; Wilson and Frederiksen 1995; Sutton 1995; Pettman 1996; West 1997b; Wilford and Miller 1998; Mayer 2000; Walby 2006; and the special issues of *Journal of Gender Studies* in 1992; *Feminist Review* in 1993; *Gender and History* in 1993; *Women's Studies International Forum* in 1996; *Nations and Nationalism* in 2000). The editors of a well-received reader on nationalism, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, for example, placed the only extract (among 49) on nationalism and gender relations in the last section called 'Beyond Nationalism' and introduced it with the following words: 'The entry of women into the national arena, as cultural and biological reproducers of the nation and as transmitters of its values, has also redefined the content and boundaries of ethnicity and the nation' (Hutchinson and Smith 1994: 287). Yuval-Davis's reply is crisp: 'But, of course, women did not just "enter" the national arena: they were always there, and central to its constructions and reproductions!' (1997: 3). This can be read as another example of how deeply entrenched 'masculinist universalist' biases are in mainstream constructions of nations and nationalism. This is precisely what feminist scholarship has challenged, writes Yuval-Davis, by highlighting the sexual division of labour on which nationalist projects have been based, and the dual positioning of women as subjects and objects in nationalist projects (2001: 137; see also Walby 2000: 529; Cusack 2000: 545–6; Kandiyoti 2000: 491 and Al-Ali 2000: 632).

Partha Chatterjee and post-colonial theory

The exploration of the relationships between 'Europe', or the 'West', and its 'others' was one of the most important theoretical gains of the last decade. Not surprisingly, this process was initiated by scholars from outside Europe, notably by the members of the Subaltern Studies Group coming out of Indian Marxism (see Box 6.3).

Partha Chatterjee's point of departure is a critique of bourgeois-rationalist (whether conservative or liberal) and Marxist discussions of nationalism which fail to recognize the peculiarities of nation-building in the post-colonial world. In these discussions, nationalism does not constitute an autonomous discourse for the non-European world. Even as sophisticated a writer as Benedict Anderson describes Third World nationalisms as 'modular' in form, drawing on more than a century and a half of human experience and earlier models of nationalism. But, Chatterjee asks:

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the post-colonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonised. (1993: 5; see also Chatterjee 2003)

Chatterjee rejects these interpretations, arguing that 'the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West'. This common error arises from taking the claims of nationalism to be a political movement too literally and seriously. Yet, he continues, 'as history, nationalism's autobiography is fundamentally flawed' (ibid.: 5–6).

Chatterjee's own interpretation of nationalism in the non-European world identifies three stages, or 'moments': the moments of departure, manoeuvre and arrival. The *moment of departure* begins with the encounter of nationalism with the framework of knowledge created by post-Enlightenment rationalist thought, which leads to an awareness, and acceptance, of an essential cultural difference between East and West. It is believed that modern European culture possesses attributes conducive to power and progress, whereas the lack of such attributes in the 'traditional' cultures of the East dooms those countries to poverty and subjection. But the nationalists claim that this backwardness is not historically immutable; it can be overcome by adopting the modern attributes of European culture (1986: 50–1). At this stage, nationalist thought divides the world of social institutions and practices into two domains, the material and the spiritual.

> The material is the domain of the 'outside', of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority

had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. (1993: 6)

BOX 6.3 **Partha Chatterjee**

Professor of Political Science at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and simultaneously Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, Partha Chatterjee was a founding member of the influential Subaltern Studies Group which attempted to reinterpret the history of South Asian societies, notably India, from the vantage point of the subordinated. Chatterjee's main contributions to the field of nationalism studies are *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1986) and *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (1993).

'I did not actually begin my academic career studying nationalism', says Chatterjee in an interview he gave to *AsiaSource*. **'I completed my Phd at the university of Rochester in political science where I studied international relations and nuclear war strategies. Immediately after I finished my dissertation, I returned to Calcutta, where I was born and brought up. It was obvious that there was no way I could pursue the same kind of work in India because there was no one else doing it. In the early 1970s, a great deal of research was concerned with agrarian structures and peasant movements. The whole atmosphere was charged with questions regarding the nature of the Indian state. Even before the Emergency in India (1975–77), as far as Calcutta and West Bengal were concerned, the face of the authoritarian state had become very, very clear in the period of the Maoist uprising (1969–71) and immediately afterwards. So people were preoccupied with questions about the violence of the state and the possibilities of political movements based on the peasantry. Those were really the major questions posed by the Maoist movement.**

So that is what I began to think about. The way of proceeding to answer those questions, given the methods then popular, was to examine the historical context. In other words, how had the independent Indian state emerged? The whole story of the movement against colonialism, and the question of how the Indian peasantry was involved with that movement and with the formation of that state, these became the central questions. So that is how I entered into the field. It was not nationalism that was my immediate concern; it was much more the specific history of the emergence of the Congress Party and the way in which Congress had included the peasantry within the national movement. This was the issue I ultimately took up: the emergence of, broadly speaking, yes, movements of nationalism, but specifically, the kind of nationalism adopted by the Congress that found a base in rural areas by trying to organize peasants into the anti-colonial struggle' (Asia Source 2009).

According to Chatterjee, 'nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory' and refuses to allow the colonial power to interfere with it. But this does not mean that the spiritual domain is left unchanged. On the contrary, 'here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being' (ibid.: 6, 120–1; see also 1986: 41–2). This is why, Chatterjee argues, nationalist texts addressed themselves both to 'the people' who were supposed to constitute the nation and to the colonial masters.

> To both, nationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward peoples were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world. Nationalism denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people; it also asserted that a backward nation could 'modernize' itself while retaining its cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based. (1986: 30)

Yet this project necessarily implies an elitist programme, for the cultural synthesis in question can only be realized by the refined intellect. The masses, 'steeped in centuries of superstition and irrational folk religion', can hardly be expected to embrace this ideal. The transformation would have to come from without, through a 'passive revolution'. The ultimate aim is to establish a politically independent nation-state. This requires 'the creation of a series of alliances, within the organizational structure of a national movement, between the bourgeoisie and other dominant classes and the mobilization … of mass support from the subordinate classes'. The nationalists do not attempt to get rid of or transform in any radical way the institutional structures of 'rational' authority set up in the period of colonial rule, notes Chatterjee. Nor do they undertake a full-scale attack on all pre-capitalist dominant classes. Rather, they seek to limit their power, and 'to bring them round to a position of subsidiary allies within a reformed state structure'. All this is achieved at the *moment of manoeuvre*, a crucial phase with many contradictory possibilities. 'It consists in the historical consolidation of the "national" by decrying the "modern", the preparation for capitalist production through an ideology of anti-capitalism' (ibid.: 48–9; 51).

We can talk of the *moment of arrival*, on the other hand, when nationalist thought attains its fullest development. It now becomes a discourse of order, of the rational organization of power. 'Here the discourse is not only conducted in a single, consistent, unambiguous voice, it also succeeds in glossing over all earlier contradictions, divergences and differences'. It actualizes ideological

unity of nationalist thought in the unified life of the state. 'Nationalist discourse at its moment of arrival is passive revolution uttering its own life-history' (ibid.).

This interpretation, Chatterjee adds, can also help us to understand the 'nationalist resolution of the women's question' in the post-colonial world. The relative unimportance of the women's question in the last decades of the nineteenth century is not to be explained by the fact that it has been taken out of the reform agenda or overtaken by other, more pressing, issues of political struggle. The answer lies in nationalism's success in relegating the women's question to an inner domain of sovereignty, far removed from the political contest with the colonial state. The nationalist distinction between the material and the spiritual domains was condensed into a similar, yet more powerful, distinction – that between the outer and the inner, or the home and the world:

> The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and women is its representation. (1993: 120)

For the nationalists, continues Chatterjee, the main requirement was to retain the inner spirituality of indigenous social life:

> The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality. No matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not lose their essential spiritual (that is, feminine) virtues; they must not, in other words, become *essentially* Westernized. (1990: 243)

This meant that the distinction between the social roles of men and women must at all times be retained. There has to be a marked difference in the degree and manner of Westernization of women, as opposed to men. The 'new' woman of the nationalists was thus subjected to a 'new' patriarchy. She could go to schools, use public transport, even take up employment outside the home as long as her essential 'femininity' was fixed in terms of certain culturally visible 'spiritual' qualities – in her dress, her eating habits, her social demeanour, her religiosity. The evidence of women's struggles for equality and freedom, Chatterjee notes, cannot be found in the public archives, for unlike the women's movement in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, the battle was not waged there in the post-colonial world. The ideal of the 'new' woman was actualized at 'home', and the real history of that change can only be tracked in

autobiographies, family histories, religious texts, literature, theatre, songs and paintings that describe middle-class homes (ibid.: 247–50).

How does this particular interpretation contribute to our understanding of nationalism? For one thing, Chatterjee argues, it shows us that the universalist claims of Western interpretations are themselves limited by the contingencies of empire and global power, that 'Western universalism', no less than 'Oriental exceptionalism', is no more than a particular form of a richer and more diverse conceptualization of a universal idea. This might enable us not only to think of new forms of the modern community, but also new forms of the modern state. The aim then, Chatterjee concludes, is 'to claim for us, the once-colonized, our freedom of imagination. Claims, we know only too well, can be made only as contestations in a field of power' (1993: 13; see also Chatterjee 1998; 1999, 2005 and Box 6.3).

Craig Calhoun and nationalism as discursive formation

Taking issue with the tendency of most mainstream analyses to 'reify' nations, Craig Calhoun defines nationalism as a 'discursive formation', 'a way of speaking that shapes our consciousness', but problematic enough to keep generating questions, propelling us into further talk and producing debates over how to think about it (1997: 3; for a similar approach see Chapter 7). Recognition of a nation requires social solidarity, or some level of integration among the members of the putative nation, argues Calhoun, but solidarity exists in many sorts of groupings, from families to sports teams or the employees of business corporations, hence it is not sufficient by itself to identify a nation. This is where the discourse of nationalism comes in. As a particular way of thinking about social solidarity, it plays a crucial role in the production of nationalist self-understandings and the recognition of nationalist claims by others. Calhoun cites ten distinguishing features of the rhetoric of nation:

1. boundaries, of territory and population, or both;
2. indivisibility;
3. sovereignty, or the aspiration to sovereignty, usually through an autonomous and putatively self-sufficient state;
4. an 'ascending' notion of legitimacy, or the idea that government is just only when supported by popular will;
5. popular participation in collective affairs;
6. direct membership, where each individual is a part of the nation and categorically equivalent to other members;
7. culture which involves some combination of language, shared beliefs and values;
8. temporal depth, the idea of a nation extending from the past to the future;
9. common descent or racial characteristics;

10. special historical, sometimes sacred, relations to a particular territory. (Ibid.: 4–5)

None of these features are definitive however, Calhoun hastens to add. These are claims that are commonly made on behalf of nations. Nations cannot be defined 'objectively':

> Rather, nations are constituted largely by the claims themselves, by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilize people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices. (Ibid.: 5)

In that sense, recognition of nations works through what Wittgenstein called a pattern of 'family resemblance', not by identifying the common 'essence' of nationhood. Some siblings will have the family nose, but not the family jaw, or the family's characteristic eyes without its characteristic forehead; 'none of the features is shared among all the members of the family without also being shared with others who are not part of the family'. Yet the pattern is there. Thus recognition as a nation requires a preponderance of this pattern, not a strict definition (ibid.: 6). The crucial thing to grasp here, Calhoun contends, is that nations can only exist within the context of nationalism. 'Nation' is 'a particular way of thinking about what it means to be a people'. The nationalist discourse helps to make nations (ibid.: 99).

This also explains the modernity of nations. The term 'nation' may be old, but it only meant people linked by place of birth or culture; it did not have any political connotations. Long-existing cultural patterns may have contributed to the formation of national identities, but the meaning and form of these patterns have been transformed in the modern era. Nationalism, Calhoun argues, 'is not simply a claim of ethnic similarity, but a claim that ethnic similarity should count as *the* definition of political community'. Thus it needs solid boundaries in a way pre-modern ethnic groups do not. It claims that national identities trump other individual or collective identities. This is in sharp contrast to ethnic identities which flow from membership in family, from kinship or other kinds of intermediate groups. In short, it is the discourse of nationalism that matters and that discourse was firmly in place only by the end of the eighteenth century. Some elements of this discourse have a longer history of their own, and indeed some modern countries have histories before the discourse of nationalism; but 'these are only retrospectively constituted as *national* histories' (ibid.: 9 and 1993: 229; see also Calhoun 2007: 3 and 47).

On the other hand, Calhoun is careful not to reduce nationalism to a political doctrine. This view, characteristic of some modernists like Gellner and Kedourie, does not do justice to the myriad ways in which nationalism shapes our lives outside of explicitly political concerns. It is thus not just a doctrine, but

BOX 6.4 **Craig Calhoun**

President of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) since 1999 and University Professor of the Social Sciences at New York University, Craig Calhoun has published widely in various areas of social sciences. His contributions to the study of nationalism can be found in *Nationalism* (1997) and *Nations Matter* (2007). This is how Calhoun answers the question, 'what led you to the study of nationalism?':

'I wrote my first piece on nationalism in response to a request from *The Annual Review of Sociology* that I write an article on "action and structure". I wrote back saying I did not think saying more about that abstract problematic would be very helpful, but that I was very interested in the problems of nationalism and would like to review the literature on nationalism. This was in, I believe January 1991. They responded essentially that nationalism was not an important enough topic in sociology and asked to me to return to the original proposal. We argued through the year and they finally agreed, so long as I would write on "nationalism and ethnicity". I did.

I was interested in nationalism, first of all simply because it was so evident in the crisis of Yugoslavia and the breakup of the former USSR (and I was shocked that other sociologists were not paying more attention). Secondly, I was at work on my study of the Chinese student movement of 1989 in which one theme was the national consciousness of the students (and though I never wrote separately on it, I had been reading a lot about late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chinese nationalism and related movements). Nationalism had not come to the foreground of my earlier studies of social movements, class politics, and social change in the nineteenth century – though in retrospect it should have figured more. It was in the context of the events centered on 1989–1992 that I began to rethink some of the significance of nationalism in the earlier contexts as well. To aid in my explorations, I undertook team teaching of the literature on nationalism with the historian Lloyd Kramer and that proved very valuable. I conceived my early work on nationalism as part of a project that would look at different forms of social solidarity (complementing my earlier work on community and class). Of course, the interest and the complexity of nationalism kept me focusing recurrently on this and not getting on to all the other dimensions of solidarity very rapidly – though hopefully my understanding deepened. This interest remains prominent in my explorations of cosmopolitanism and how both nationalism and other forms of solidarity and belonging figure in relation to it' (personal correspondence).

'a more basic way of talking, thinking, and acting'. As such, nationalism does not lose its force if researchers are able to show that it is 'contructed' or fails to perform the tasks it is supposed to perform. 'As a way of imagining communities', says Calhoun, 'it is not simply right or wrong. These are ways of constructing the social reality we live, which we can regret … or wish to change,

but which do not admit of simple right/wrong judgements' (ibid.: 11–12). This last point is crucial, Calhoun argues in his later book *Nations Matter* (2007), as author after author has slipped from showing the constructed character of national self-understandings into suggesting that nations are somehow not real. Nations, or traditions on which they are based, may be invented, and their critique may be necessary, but 'it is a sociological misunderstanding to think that the reality of nations depends on the accuracy of their collective self-representations'. 'To say that nationalism is part of a social imaginary is not to say that nations are mere figments of the imagination to be dispensed with in more hard-headed analyses' (2007: 27, 40–1; see also Calhoun 2003a, 2003b and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 7 of this book).

Calhoun also points to the futility of attempts to explain nationalism in terms of a single, 'master', variable, be it industrialization, capitalism or the state. These factors may explain the contents of particular nationalisms or processes associated with nationalism, but they do not explain the form of nation or nationalist discourse itself. This is so because they address 'heteregeneous objects of analysis'. 'At the level of practical activity, there are many diverse nationalisms.' What links these various movements, ideologies, policies is a discursive form that shapes all of them; what is common, what is general is the discourse of nationalism, which may not completely explain any particular event or activity, but helps to constitute each through cultural framing (ibid.: 21–2). This implies that there can be no general theory of nationalism. 'This does not mean that theory is not needed', but 'grasping nationalism in its multiplicity of forms requires multiple theories'. 'To address a question like, "Why do nationalist movements seem to come in waves?" will require a different theory from the question, "Why is nationalist ideology pervasively bound up with sexuality and gender?"' What needs to done in theoretical terms, Calhoun concludes, is to address 'the factors that lead to the continual production and reproduction of nationalism as a central discursive formation in the modern world' (ibid.: 8, 123).

Rogers Brubaker and ethnicity without groups

The critique of 'reification' forms the point of departure of Brubaker's analysis of ethnicity and nationalism as well. This time the target is 'groupism', that is 'the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis'. In the field of ethnicity and nationalism, Brubaker remarks, 'groupism' refers to 'the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed', to speak of Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Turks and Kurds as if they were unitary collective actors with common purposes (2002: 164; see also Brubaker 1996 and 1998; most of the essays used in this section can be found in Brubaker 2004).

BOX 6.5 **Rogers Brubaker**

Professor of Sociology at the University of California at Los Angeles, Rogers Brubaker has written widely on social theory, immigration, citizenship, ethnicity and nationalism. His main publications in the field of nationalism studies are *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992), *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (1996), *Ethnicity without Groups* (2004) and *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (with M. Feischmidt, J. Fox and L. Grancea, 2006).

'My interest in nationalism emerged from my work on immigration and the politics of citizenship in France and Germany', says Brubaker**. 'My concern in that work with "traditions of nationhood" had introduced me to the rich historical German-language literature on the "national question" in Central and Eastern Europe, which suddenly came to seem newly relevant in the late 1980s and early 1990s with German unification and the reconfiguration of the multinational Soviet, Yugoslav and binational Czechoslovak states along national lines. The momentous transformations of 1988–91 coincided, serendipitously, with a fellowship that allowed me to retool both linguistically (by studying Russian and Hungarian) and analytically (by plunging into the literature on nationalism and ethnicity). A second serendipitous encounter in 1994 – a visit to the Transylvanian Romanian town of Cluj, where the incendiary rhetoric of a flamboyantly nationalist Romanian mayor was received with considerable indifference by majority Romanian and minority Hungarians alike – led to a recalibration of my interest in nationalism. Although I retained my interest in what Chuck Tilly called "big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons", I became increasingly interested in the relation between nationalist politics on the one hand and everyday understandings and enactments of nationhood and nationness on the other'** (personal correspondence)**.**

Brubaker, by contrast, suggests that ethnic conflict need not, in fact should not, be understood as conflict between ethnic groups. It is true that participants in these conflicts represent them in groupist terms, and as analysts, we do need to take vernacular categories and participiants' understandings seriously since they are partly constitutive of our objects of study. 'But we should not uncritically adopt *categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our *categories of social analysis*'. We should not forget that these accounts, especially those of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs who may live 'off' as well as 'for' ethnicity, have a 'performative' character:

> By *invoking* groups, they seek to *evoke* them, summon them, call them into being … Reifying groups is precisely what ethnopolitical entrepreneurs are in the business of doing. When they are successful, the political fiction of the unified group can be momentarily yet powerfully realized in practice. As

> analysts, we should certainly try to account for the ways in which … this practice of reification … can work. But we should avoid unintentionally *doubling* or *reinforcing* the reification of ethnic groups in ethnopolitical practice with a reification of such groups in social analysis. (Ibid.: 166–7, original emphases; see also Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 5–6 and Brubaker *et al*. 2006: 9)

Instead, Brubaker continues, ethnicity, race and nation should be conceptualized in 'relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms'. We should think of them as 'practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events'. Brubaker issues a word of caution at this stage, arguing that rethinking ethnicity, race or nationhood does not 'dispute their reality, minimize their power or discount their significance'; it simply construes their reality in a different way (ibid.: 167–8; for a similar approach see Chapter 7).

According to Brubaker, shifting attention to the variable and contingent character of groupness enables us to take account of moments of extraordinary cohesion and of intensely felt collective solidarity without treating high levels of groupness as constant and enduring. 'It allows us to treat groupness as an *event*, as something that "happens" ', at the same time keeping us attuned to the possibility that groupness may not happen, despite the efforts of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs in situations of intense elite-level ethnopolitical conflict. Being alert to 'failed' attempts at mobilization broadens the universe of relevant cases and helps correct the 'coding bias' in the field which tends to an 'overethnicized' view of the world – seeing ethnicity everywhere at work (ibid.: 168, 174; Brubaker and Laitin 1998).

This approach also allows us to distinguish between categories and groups, and to problematize the relation between the two. We can thus inquire the degree of groupness associated with a particular category, and the conditions under which categories get invested with groupness. This has consequences for the kinds of questions we ask. Starting with groups, Brubaker argues, we are led to ask what groups want, demand or aspire towards; how they think of themselves and others. Starting with categories, on the other hand, we focus on processes and relations rather than substances. This invites us to analyse how ethnic and national categories channel social interaction, organize commonsense knowledge and judgements:

> It invites us to study the politics of categories: from above, the ways in which categories are proposed, propagated, imposed, institutionalized, discursively articulated, organizationally entrenched … and from below, the 'micropolitics' of categories, the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade or transform the categories that are imposed on them. It

> invites us to ask how, why, and in what contexts ethnic categories are used – or not used – to make sense of problems and predicaments, to articulate affinities and affiliations … to frame stories and self-understandings. (2006: 11–12)

Finally, problematizing groupness helps us to focus our attention to the cognitive dimension of ethnicity. Ethnicity, race and nation, Brubaker claims, exist only in and through our perceptions and interpretations:

> They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world. These include ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring), of construing (and misconstruing), of inferring (and misinferring), of remembering (and forgetting) … They include systems of classification, categorization and identification, formal and informal. And they include the tacit, taken-for-granted background knowledge … through which people recognize and experience objects, places, persons, actions or situations as ethnically, racially or nationally marked and meaningful. (2002: 174–5; see also 2004: 77–87)

According to Brubaker, cognitive perspectives can help us advance the constructivist research agenda which he claims stalled in recent years. Instead of asserting that ethnicity, race and nationhood are constructed, they can help us comprehend how they are constructed. They can help us determine when and how people identify themselves and perceive others in ethnic or national terms, rather than others (ibid.: 175). They can also correct for the elite bias characteristic of much of constructivist theorizing, pointing to the need to study 'rank-and-file' construction of ethnic, racial and national realities and providing the necessary conceptual vocabulary and analytical tools for such an enterprise (2004: 86–7).

Brubaker's most recent book to date, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (with Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox and Liana Grancea, 2006; see also Csergo 2008), is an attempt to flesh out these arguments empirically. What prompted Brubaker and his friends to choose the Transylvanian city of Cluj to put their arguments to the test is the observation that it has never experienced violent ethnic and nationalist conflict, despite being the contested terrain of two conflicting – Hungarian and Romanian – nationalisms for several years. The lukewarm response of ordinary Clujeni to fervent nationalist rhetoric does not mean that ethnicity and nationhood have no meaning outside the political realm. On the contrary, the authors contend, social life is largely structured along ethnic lines, and ethnic and national categories are an important part of daily interactions. They are embodied and expressed in everyday encounters, commonsense knowledge, organizational routines and institutional settings (2006: 6–7). But this does not say much about the degree of groupness achieved by these categories. Nationalist 'politics' is

remote from the everyday concerns of Romanians and Hungarians, even from those sympathetic to nationalist rhetoric. These concerns are only occasionally expressed in ethnic terms, and 'ethnicity has little bearing on strategies for getting by and getting ahead'. Ethnicity is a 'modality of experience' for ordinary Clujeni, not 'a thing, a substance, an attribute that one "possesses" '; and it is not a continuous, but an intermittent phenomenon. It happens at particular moments, in particular contexts (ibid.: 207–8):

> It happens, for example, when people become aware – often through language spoken, accent, or name – of the ethnicity of a stranger, and when that awareness affects the course of their interaction. It happens when ethnicity is invoked to account for an action or stance, to hold others accountable as Hungarians or Romanians, to claim insider status … And it happens when nominally interethnic relationships among friends, neighbours, colleagues or spouses come to be experienced *as* interethnic at particular moments. (Ibid.: 362, original emphasis)

Ethnic and national categories, the authors conclude, are 'neither ubiquitous nor omnirelevant; and where they are present, they are not always salient or operative'. Passions can be mobilized, but not always and not automatically. Ethnic and national identifications can be powerful, but they are not always so, 'not even in situations of intense elite-level ethnopolitical contention'. The argument, they write, 'is not about how much or how little ethnicity matters; it is about how ethnicity works':

> Here the study of everyday experience is fundamental … it is ultimately in and through everyday experience – as much as in political contestation or cultural articulation – that ethnicity and nationhood are invested with meaning and produced and reproduced as basic categories of social and political life. (Ibid.: 363–4; see also 2004: 87)

A critique of new approaches

Recent approaches and the fundamental premises upon which they are based have come under increasing attack in the last decade from a variety of perspectives. In what follows, I will discuss the main criticisms levelled against new approaches, starting, once again, with general objections.

New approaches cannot explain the passions generated by nationalism
The standard ethnosymbolist objection to modernist theories is directed against new approaches as well which the ethnosymbolists see as a variant of modernism. These approaches, Smith argues, 'assume one or the other version

of the modernist paradigm, which they then seek to "go beyond" in time-period as well as in the "phase" of development of the phenomena themselves'. They all suffer from a lack of historical depth; it is as if they 'had entered the drama in the third act … taking for granted some version of modernism's script for the two previous acts' (1998a: 218, 220). It is not enough for nationalist elites to make a claim to some 'putative' past or people, writes Smith in his review of Calhoun's *Nationalism*; 'to make the claim stick, there must be "objective" (actually "subjective") components in that area's pasts that still bind populations together and distinguish them in some degree from outsiders' (1998b: 500).

There is also a lack of sociological solidity in these accounts, according to Smith. They treat the nation, he contends, as 'a narrative text or a cultural artifact that, once deconstructed, dissolves into its component ethnic parts; or alternatively, like Rogers Brubaker, they reject altogether any notion of the nation as a real community'. Why would, Smith asks, so many people continue to identify themselves with their nations and be willing to lay down their lives for them – even after they have been 'deconstructed by the post-modernists'? For Smith, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the answer is straightforward:

> Even if the post-modernist characterization of contemporary humanity as 'post-emotional' and possessed of 'pastiche personalities' were plausible, it remains the case that, only recently, millions of human beings were prepared to sacrifice their possessions and lives for 'the defence of the motherland' (or fatherland), and in many parts of the world they still are. (2000: 61–2; see also Smith 2003a: 265, note 3).

New approaches are partial and fragmentary

This criticism also comes from Smith who claims that recent approaches, with the exception of some feminist analyses, make no attempt to uncover the mechanisms by which nations and nationalism were formed and spread; hence they cannot explain which nations emerged and where, or why there are nations and nationalism at all. 'They illuminate a corner of the broader canvas only to leave the rest of it in untraversed darkness'. This is a consequence of post-modernism's 'anti-foundationalism', says Smith. But without an explicit theory of their own, they are bound to rely on some of the existing grand narratives. And so far as the theory of nations and nationalism is concerned, this can only represent a retreat from the advances made by modernism (1998a: 219–20).

This criticism applies not only to Calhoun, who explicitly rejects the possibility of a 'general' theory of nationalism, but also to Brubaker and his colleagues who argue, drawing on Weber, that 'The great range and heterogeneous causal texture of the phenomena grouped under the rubrics of ethnicity and nationalism … render problematic any effort to construct a general theory' (2006: 357). The idea that there can be no general theory of nationalism has a

long pedigree and is certainly not confined to what Smith calls the 'post-modernists' (see for example Zubaida 1978 and Breuilly 2001). In fact, as we will see in the following chapter, it forms one of the basic contentions of this book as well. This is also a point made by Day and Thompson who claim, in their recent survey of the theoretical debate, that 'post-classical theorists shed light on important dimensions of nationalism insufficiently acknowledged by classical theorists … who implicitly partake in the reproduction of the idea of the nation as a unified human group' (2004: 196). In short, it may be more preferable to illuminate a corner of the canvas, rather than leaving the whole of it in untraversed darkness.

New approaches overstate the decline of nations and nationalism
This criticism is voiced by a wide spectrum of scholars, from ethnosymbolists to those who are sympathetic to recent approaches. According to Walker, this stems from post-modernists' lack of clarity as to whether they are proposing a series of hypotheses about the state of the world or simply expressing their wishes – confusing the hypothetical with the factual and the normative (2001: 627). Yet, as Walker herself is aware, this conventional criticism does not apply to theorists whose work we have reviewed in this chapter. Billig, for example, argues that 'one can eat Chinese tomorrow and Turkish the day after; one can even dress in Chinese or Turkish styles. But being Chinese and Turkish are not commercially available options' (1995: 139). Calhoun's recent work is a reminder of the continuing importance of national solidarities and a critique of 'actually existing cosmopolitanisms' (see 2003a, 2003b and 2007); and post-colonial theorists issue warning after warning that empire is not dead (Chatterjee 2005), noting the extent to which metropolitan centres of the global economy continue to operate neo-imperialist structures with respect to the rest of the world (Walker 2001: 627).

Billig overestimates the power of 'banal nationalism'
Drawing on their fieldwork in Cluj, Brubaker and his colleagues argue that nationhood does not always become a pervasively relevant category in the daily lives of ordinary people who regularly resort to non-ethnic and non-national categories to express themselves. Nor does banal nationalism necessarily reinforce nationalist politics. There is a disjuncture between the thematization of ethnicity and nationalism in the political realm, they argue, and their experience and enactment in everyday life (2006: 363).

A similar observation comes from Day and Thompson who believe that Billig goes too far in his eagerness to correct the misapprehension that nationalism exists only in exceptional circumstances and extreme forms. 'We prefer to say', they write, 'that we carry our national identities at all times, reserving the term "nationalism" for more overt expressions of ideas about national interests and national fortunes' (2004: 99).

It is not possible to avoid 'groupist' language

A number of commentators, including those sympathetic to Brubaker's theoretical enterprise, point to the difficulty of avoiding groupist terms. It is not clear how one can keep away from groupist discourse, argues Malešević in his review of Brubaker's work, 'when dealing with particular empirical material or when attempting to disseminate your knowledge to a wider, non-academic audience':

> It is very difficult and often stylistically awkward to constantly make references to, let's say, 'a multitude of individuals and organizations who pursue a particular political project by invoking a notion of Polishness'. Even Brubaker himself is not immune to this slipping into groupist language when in his empirical work … he often makes reference to 'people' or 'ordinary people' … to 'the violence between Germans and Frenchmen'. (2006b: 700)

What is not obvious here, Malešević asks, is why such groupist terms as 'people' or 'society' are not problematized as are those of 'ethnic group', 'nation' or 'identity'. Too much emphasis on the conceptual façade might lead one to mistake form for substance (ibid.). The same criticism is directed against Brubaker's later work. As Csergo observes, group categories such as 'Hungarians' or 'Romanians' appear regularly in the text (2008: 395). Brubaker and his colleagues admit that they sometimes use these terms in a generalizing manner, but stress that they refer to 'sets of category members, specifically to those persons who, if asked their ethnicity or ethnic nationality, would identify themselves as Hungarian or Romanian'. Moreover, they add, this does not say much as to the salience of ethnonational identifications in relation to other identifications (Brubaker *et al*. 2006: 12). But these disclaimers are not compelling enough, especially if we recall Brubaker's repeated warnings against the dangers of taking participants' categories for granted. Csergo goes one step further and contends that the use of such groupist terms might lead the reader to think that the book fails to fulfil its promise of a 'good practice example of groupless scholarly language precisely because a shift to a groupless vocabulary is neither possible nor necessarily beneficial' (2008: 395).

Constructivist approaches have little explanatory value

A final criticism raised against constructivist analyses in general and Calhoun's work in particular concerns the relative explanatory strength of approaches that stress the 'socially constructed' nature of nations and nationalism. The burden of these approaches, Day and Thompson claim, is that nationalism is not peculiar in this regard. The same analytical perspective can be fruitfully applied to other modes of collective identification such as race, ethnicity, sexuality or gender (2004: 103). It is not, however, clear how this affects the fortunes of constructivism apart from showing that it is indeed a powerful

analytical tool. If the discourse of nationalism is responsible for nations and nationalism, Hechter asks in his review of Calhoun's *Nationalism*, then we should explore the conditions under which it arises (1999b: 589–90). Similarly, Day and Thompson, drawing on Castells, argue that what matters more is 'how, from what, by whom and for what' identities, including ethnic and national identities, are constructed (2004: 107). This criticism seems to be misplaced when it comes to Calhoun's work since he goes to great pains to show how the nationalist discourse emerged. But the general point remains valid; what needs to be done, to further the constructivist agenda, is to probe deeper into the process of the construction of nations and nationalism, and to identify the mechanisms through which they are sustained and, just as importantly, resisted or challenged. This is the aim of the next chapter.

Further reading

The best starting point for anyone interested in recent approaches to nationalism is the excellent introduction by Eley and Suny to their 1996 reader, *Becoming National*. Other useful sources are Puri (2004); Day and Thompson (2004, especially Chapters 1 and 5); Özkırımlı (2005, especially Chapters 3 and 7); and Walker (2001).

On the reproduction of nationalism, see Billig's groundbreaking *Banal Nationalism* (1995) and Balibar's classic 'The Nation Form' (1990). On gender and nation, the key texts are Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) and Yuval-Davis (1997). In this context, the reader should also consult Enloe (1989), McClintock (1996), Mayer (2000) and the special issue of *Nations and Nationalism* on 'Gender and Nationalism' (2000). On post-colonial nationalisms, see Chatterjee (1986) and (1993). For a treatment of nationalism as a 'discursive formation', see Calhoun (1997) and (2007); and for an 'anti-groupist', that is relational and processual, analysis of ethnicity and nationalism, see Brubaker (2004) and (2006).

For an ethnosymbolist critique of recent approaches, see Smith (1998a, especially Chapter 9) and (2000, especially pp. 61–2). More 'constructive' criticisms of new approaches can be found in Walker (2001), Day and Thompson (2004, especially Chapter 5), Malešević (2006b) and Csergo (2008).

Chapter 7

Understanding Nationalism

A critique of the theoretical debate on nationalism

When Walker Connor presented a paper entitled 'When is a Nation?' in a conference on 'Pre-Modern and Modern National Identity in Russia/the USSR and Eastern Europe' at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in 1989, he could not have foreseen that this simple question would become the main dividing line of the theoretical debate on nationalism in the years to come. 'The article appears to have elicited a surprising amount of interest in LSE circles', Connor later recalls. Why, he does not know: 'at the risk of impersonating Dickens' deceitfully self-deprecating Uriah Heep', he writes, 'my piece does not merit such attention' (2004: 35).

It is indeed true that 'when is the nation?' has been the central organizing question of the contemporary theoretical debate on nationalism, as the Table of Contents of most introductory texts on nationalism would attest (see for example Hearn 2006; Ichijo and Uzelac 2005; Smith 1998a; see also Uzelac 2002: 35). Yet we would be hard pressed to overlook Connor's scepticism. What makes the question 'when is the nation?' so important? According to Smith, the question brings the issue of the origins of nations into the open and reveals its importance 'for an understanding of the place of the nation in history and in the contemporary world' (2002: 68). Connor himself disagrees. 'I do not feel that the issue of "When is a nation" is of key significance', he says, simply because, in an important sense, today's nations defy dating. 'Identity does not draw its sustenance from facts but from perceptions; not from chronological/factual history but from sentient/felt history'. Whatever historians may say, in popular perceptions nations are 'eternal', 'beyond time' (2004: 45; see also Breuilly 2005: 48).

I would argue, following Connor and several other commentators, that this question is inconsequential, for three reasons. First, it is not possible to identify the date of origins of nations beyond doubt for we are talking about historical processes, not specific events. As Gorski points out, 'it is very difficult to fix such a point of origin, both because the evidence goes so far back in time and because it becomes thinner the farther back we go' (2006: 154). Second, the answer to this question depends very much on how one defines the 'nation'. As we have extensively discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, those who define nations as

'elite' phenomena are able to detect nations in pre-modern eras, laying emphasis on a sense of cultural distinctiveness, whereas those who regard nations as 'mass' phenomena argue that we cannot talk of nations before the modern era, until large numbers of people start to make 'political' demands on the basis of this sense of cultural distinctiveness. Since it is highly unlikely that theorists of nationalism will come up with universally agreed definitions any time soon, the question 'when is the nation?' is bound to remain unanswered. Third, even if we could ascertain the date of origins of nations, how does this contribute to our understanding of nationalism? As Delanty and O'Mahony remark, the question of whether there were nations in pre-modern times may be an interesting question in itself, but it is not clear 'in what ways the existence of such pre-modern nations should be important to modern nations, even if continuity could be asserted' (2002: 83).

These problems bear directly on the tripartite division used to classify contemporary theories of nationalism. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, this classification, popularized, if not invented, by Anthony D. Smith, divides existing theories and approaches into different categories in terms of the answer they give to the question, 'when is the nation?'. Very broadly, primordialists and perennialists believe that nations can be found at all times (for some primordialists, they are in fact 'timeless'); modernists associate nations with the transformations wrought by modernity and argue that it is not possible to talk of nations before the modern era; finally, ethnosymbolists claim that although nationalism, as ideology and movement, is modern, nations exist in all periods of history. Obviously, the issue of dating the origins of nations is not simply a chronological question and requires the theorists to engage with a host of other, more sociological, questions – 'what is the nation?', 'can there be nations before nationalism?', and so on. Still, the logic of classification is predicated on the 'when' question.

Yet the categories of the tripartite division and the labels used to describe each category are highly arbitrary. The classification of a particular theory or writer into the existing categories depends to a large extent on who is doing the sorting. Armstrong is a 'perennialist' for Smith, an 'ethnicist' for Hutchinson, the precursor of 'ethnosymbolism' for several others. Hastings is variously labelled as a 'primordialist', 'perennialist' and 'ethnosymbolist', and Connor as a 'modernist' and a 'primordialist'. What is more, the classification does not always accurately reflect the works of the theorists concerned, hence can be seriously misleading. I have already pointed to the fallacy of calling Clifford Geertz a 'primordialist' when he is in fact talking about the 'assumed' or 'perceived' givens of social life. The same applies to such theorists as Connor, Greenfeld or Hroch whose work straddles the theoretical positions represented by these rigid categories. In that sense, it is indicative that few of the theorists concerned accept the labels used to describe their work. As McCrone states in his review of Smith's *Nationalism and Modernism*, it is difficult to see the likes

of Brubaker, Chatterjee and Billig readily accepting that they are 'post-modernists'. For McCrone, 'Smith's determination to fit writers onto the procrustean beds he has fashioned for them' is indeed one of the weaknesses of his book (2000: 397). The problem is further exacerbated by the changing positions of the theorists concerned. Again, we have noted how Nairn, a modernist in the 1970s, has switched sides in later years and started to call himself a 'neo-primordialist'.

Perhaps more importantly, the tripartite division glosses over the internal variations in each category. Very few of the 'academic' primordialists would subscribe to the nationalist thesis that nations have existed since time immemorial; perennialists would have a hard time accepting the claim, characteristic of some primordialists, that nations are a natural part of the human condition. The modernists share little in common apart from a general belief in the importance of modern processes such as capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism, and the rise of the bureaucratic state in the growth of nations and nationalism. Stressing different, at times sharply conflicting, factors in their explanations, they remain the keenest critics of each other's work. Ethnosymbolists appear to be more homogeneous than the other two categories; this is, however, hardly surprising given that there are very few theorists who use the term to describe their work, apart from Smith and Hutchinson. In any case, as I will argue in more detail below, it is not clear whether ethnosymbolists should be treated as a separate category, rather than being lumped together with perennialists.

The problems with the tripartite division become clearer when we probe deeper into the categories themselves and consider the theoretical claims that are supposed to help us distinguish between various categories. We might begin with primordialism and ask: is the category 'primordialist' analytically useful? For Grosby, 'what primordiality does recognize is that everything known historically and anthropologically about human beings indicates that there have always been primordial attachments', despite variations in the form of these attachments (2001: 253). Hearn believes that primordialists encourage us to think about the continuities between these attachments and contemporary nationalisms (2006: 43). For Smith, on the other hand, it exposes the weaknesses of instrumentalist accounts which overestimate the role of elite manipulation in explaining nationalism. More importantly, it focuses our attention on the emotions and intense passion ethnicity and nationalism evoke, which the modernists so often fail to address (2000: 25; 2008: 10). This is also the view of Ichijo and Uzelac who argue, in their recent introduction to the theoretical debate on nationalism, that modernist approaches are unable to engage with the issue of emotion and loyalty directly (2005: 54).

I beg to differ. First, primordial attachments may have been a perennial feature of the human condition, but how do these attachments relate to modern nations? Primordialism does point to the continuing force of ethnic attachments,

but does not explain how and why. In that sense, as Smith himself admits, it tells us little about the origins and cultural shape of nations (2008: 10). As I will argue in more detail below, the link between primordial attachments and modern nations is provided by the 'modern' discourse of nationalism. It is nationalism which takes pre-existing attachments and gives them political significance. Primordialism never asks which attachments are selected from history and which ones are left out, which interests are served through that selection or how the outcome of the selection process is imposed on the populations 'designated' as the would-be nation. It simply assumes that the attachments that are selected are the ones that matter, that resonate among the members of what is perceived, with hindsight, as a particular 'nation'. It never engages with issues of power, or more generally, with politics; it pays no heed to or downplays the role of contingency, plurality and ambivalence in the formation of nations; it turns a blind eye to struggles for hegemony, to resistance and subversion, to accommodation and compromises, to failed projects of nation-building. In short, primordialism does encourage us to think about continuities between the past and present, but does not provide us with the tools to do so, and it simply ignores the possibility of 'discontinuity' and 'rupture'.

Second, it is not true that modernists have failed, or are bound to fail, to address emotions directly. Emotions are indeed key to human motivation: 'They are stimulus to action; they are fundamental to self-identification, to thinking about who we are and who the "other" is; they are involved in the social bonds that make groups, even whole societies, or nations, possible' (Suny 2006: 3). There is a growing body of work by social psychologists, psychoanalysts and other social scientists to explore the role emotions play in collective identifications and decision-making (see for example Reicher and Hopkins 2001; Suny 2006; Langman 2006; Kecmanovic 2007). In any case, if primordialism is reduced to an approach that calls attention to the powerful passions evoked by nationalism, then its contribution is trivial, as this is in many ways a truism. In fact, the whole field of nationalism studies is based on this truism; we would not be studying nations or nationalism if they did not evoke those passions, sometimes to the point of self-sacrifice. The problem with primordialism is that it does not explain those passions; it simply assumes them. In that sense, primordialism is 'a-historical' and, to a certain extent, 'un-sociological' (cf. Eller and Coughlan 1993). It is not useful as an analytical category precisely because it lacks an analytical component.

When we move on to the second category of the tripartite division, 'ethnosymbolism', what is striking at first glance is the affinity between ethnosymbolist claims and the moderate version of primordialism, or 'perennialism' which treats nations (and in some cases nationalism) as a fundamental feature of human life throughout recorded history. Smith, the major proponent of ethnosymbolism, is careful to distinguish between his approach and crude versions of primordialism; ethnosymbolism, he argues, 'holds that ethnic

communities and nations are historical phenomena. They do not exist "in nature", nor are they part of the human condition' (2005: 122). Yet when it comes to perennialism, in particular its 'recurrent' type, which Smith defines as an approach that regards the nation as 'a category of human association that can be found everywhere throughout history', the differences become more difficult to sustain (2000: 34–5). In his later work, Smith states that:

> Contrary to the modernist doctrine, we can already find evidence of the general processes of nation formation, and some of the cultural resources and sacred foundations of nationhood, in pre-modern epochs, *starting with the ancient world*. Several of these resources may already be discerned, for example, in ancient Egypt, in Second Temple Judea and in early Christian Armenia. (2005: 104, emphasis added)

'The category of the nation emerged in stages over *la longue durée*', he writes in the same article, 'becoming visible in the historical record *in parts of the ancient world* and reappearing in the later Middle Ages' (ibid.: 109, emphasis added). Elsewhere, he distinguishes between 'ancient' and 'modern' nations, 'not just in chronological terms, but also sociologically – the main difference being the extent to which the members are deemed to be equal citizens'. With these provisos, he continues:

> I think we can demonstrate the existence and vitality of *nations* in ancient Judea and Armenia, and possibly Sasanid Persia, as well as in medieval Japan, Korea and England. In all these examples, we find a named human population occupying an historic territory, or 'homeland', sharing myths, symbols and memories, possessing a distinctive public culture (albeit unstandardised), and common rights and duties for many, if not all, of the (usually male) members, though this is often understood in religious terms. (2004: 66, emphasis added; see also Smith 2000: 42–51)

In his later work, Smith goes even further and argues that several elements of 'nationalism' emerged considerably earlier than the eighteenth century and that 'a certain kind of popular and vernacular nationalism could be found in some seventeenth-century states like England, Scotland, and the Netherlands – and perhaps elsewhere too'. This in turn requires us to revise the modernist chronology of nationalism, as well as of nations (2008: x).

In the light of these observations, it is not clear why ethnosymbolism and perennialism should be treated as separate categories. What unites them is their belief in the 'persistence' and 'durability' of ethnic and national ties. Both approaches argue that pre-modern cultural materials that form the basis of modern national cultures 'tend to be exceptionally durable under "normal" vicissitudes and to persist over many generations, even centuries', setting limits

to elite attempts at manipulation (Smith 1986: 16). Nationalism may be modern (as we have just seen, ethnosymbolists are no longer keen on this point either), but never 'contingent'; every nationalism is constructed around 'particular' ethnic traditions. To put it differently, there is an ethnic/national 'essence' (a 'myth-symbol complex') underlying many, if not all, contemporary nationalisms. This is precisely what impels so many people around the world to lay down their lives for their nations.

The last category of the tripartite division, 'modernism', is beset by similar problems. As I have pointed out earlier, this category is much more heterogeneous than the other two and contains such figures as Liah Greenfeld and Miroslav Hroch who take the origins of modern nations as far back as the Middle Ages. The disagreement is not only chronological. For Greenfeld, the nation is not a 'product' of modern conditions, but the very 'cause' of modernity; modernity is defined and shaped by nationalism (see Greenfeld 1992 and 2006). In a similar vein, Hroch argues that objective relationships and ties which constitute the basis of modern nations took centuries to be formed. The process of nation formation, Hroch maintains, went through two distinct stages, and the first began during the Middle Ages (1998: 94). The differences within the category 'modernism' cannot be explained away as minor squabbles. The category itself, and the label attached to it, obscures more than it clarifies.

In short, the attempt to sort various theoretical approaches into the air-tight categories of the tripartite division is a 'trivial pursuit', or, in the words of Walker Connor, 'little more than an exercise in academic name-calling' (Ichijo and Uzelac 2005: 125). At times, this effort leads to the invention of terms that border on frivolity. Hence in an attempt to differentiate his position from that of the modernists and perennialists, Smith talks about 'modern nationalist-based nations' and 'earlier pre-nationalist nations' which are found in the medieval period or antiquity (2001a: 118). A similar exercise can be found in Roshwald's recent book where he distinguishes between 'pre-modern nationalism' and 'modern nationalism'. Roshwald is aware that this may look like a 'meaningless semantic game', but, he argues, this would allow us to compare and contrast pre-modern and modern nationalisms within a common framework without suggesting that they amount to the same thing (2006: 11–12). I do not see, however, how such distinctions or neologisms can further our understanding of nationalism in a field already rife with classifications. Categorization was perhaps necessary at the outset, to put an order to the vast and rapidly growing field of nationalism studies and to make sense of the nuances among theoretical perspectives. Today, however, these distinctions raise more questions than they answer. Time is ripe for moving beyond labelling and categorizing, and for addressing the real issues raised by these theories.

The outline of a theoretical approach to nationalism

Can there be a 'grand' theory of nationalism, that is a theory that identifies a set of factors which would explain the rise of nationalism in every continent, and in every period, the form it takes, and why it takes that form? Sami Zubaida answered this question in the negative several decades ago, pointing to the diversity and heterogeneity of movements and ideologies that are labelled 'nationalist'. It is of course possible to show, Zubaida argues, that these various nationalisms operate within a common ideological field. A sociological theory of nationalism, however, cannot be content with identifying the ideological homogeneity of nationalisms, but would also entail a sociological homogeneity, that 'there are common social structures and processes which underlie the ideological/political phenomena' (1978: 56). Several influential theorists have come to accept this view since then. Hence for Calhoun, 'nationalism is a rhetoric for speaking about too many different things for a single theory to explain it':

> Why nationalism comes to dominate in those settings where it does – or for some people and not others within an ostensible national population – are questions that by and large can be answered only within specific contexts, with knowledge of local history, of the nature of the state (and other elite) power, and of what other potential and actual movements competed for allegiance. (1997: 8, 25; see also Brubaker *et al.* 2006: 357; Breuilly 2001: 49 and Smith 2005: 123)

Following McCrone, we may take this one step further and ask, 'why do we need a general theory of nationalism anyway?' After all, no one expects, McCrone reminds us, students of social class for example to come up with a general theory. Neither does this lack of theoretical consensus lead to a paucity of empirical research designed to test the various theories. 'The sociology of nationalism', McCrone concludes, 'seems at present far too top heavy with terminological – even interminable – debate, which may be fine for students writing essays, but is no guide to those who want to do sociological analysis of nationalism' (2000: 397 and 1998: 171).

This does not of course mean that all attempts at theorizing should be abandoned. We might indeed try to formulate 'partial' theories which might shed light on different aspects of nationalisms or we might devise a theoretical framework that can be used to study particular nationalisms. In what follows, I will try to provide the outline of such a framework of analysis, a framework that would identify the common rhetoric of the nationalist imaginary, without however overlooking the distinctive and unique features of each nationalism. As will become evident later, the ideas that form the basis of this framework are not born in a vacuum. My debt to Foucault and Gramsci in particular will be apparent. Although they have not written much on nationalism, I believe,

following Stuart Hall, that their concepts are still useful to us in our attempt to think through the adequacy of existing social theory paradigms in these areas (1996a: 416). On the other hand, my theoretical framework draws heavily on the ideas of contemporary theorists of nationalism as well, in particular those that are covered under the title 'New Approaches', and I will be referring to these when appropriate. Finally, the outline I will be providing should be seen as 'work-in-progress', and not as a finished blueprint.

It is customary to start any attempt at theorizing by providing definitions of key terms, in this case 'nation' and 'nationalism'. I take 'nation' to be a symbol with multiple meanings, 'competed over by different groups manoeuvring to capture [its] definition and its legitimating effects' (Verdery 1993: 39). I thus part company with most classical theorists who have attempted to provide 'objective' or 'subjective' (or a combination of both) definitions of the nation. There are exceptions to every list of objective factors that are presumed to make up the nation, and the relative significance of particular factors changes in time and from one nation to the next. As Barth famously observed several decades ago, what matters is not 'objective' differences that differentiate cultural collectivities, but those which the actors themselves regard as significant. In that sense, it is better to view ethnic and national groups as 'organizational types', where individuals strategically manipulate their cultural identity by emphasizing or underplaying certain markers according to context (1969: 14–15). Subjective factors, on the other hand, do not distinguish a nation from other social and cultural collectivities to which we belong. Solidarity, self-awareness and loyalty characterize many other groupings, from families and religious groups to voluntary associations; they may be the minimum condition in defining a nation, but they do not in themselves constitute nations.

I thus refrain from defining the 'nation' deliberately in order not to fall into trap of 'reification' and treat 'categories of practice' as 'categories of analysis' (Brubaker 2004 and 2006). I believe, following Segal and Handler, that we lose our footing if we take terms from social life and treat them as analytic concepts, rather than mapping or exploring their contingent (and, I would add, divergent) meanings and uses (2006: 61). Identities, national or otherwise, 'are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*. As such they have no existence beyond our politics, our social relations, and our histories' (Gillis 1994: 5).

What matters more for the purposes of my theoretical framework is 'nationalism' – partly because it is nationalism that defines nations. I treat nationalism as a 'discourse', a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world, a frame of reference that helps us make sense of and structure the reality that surrounds us. I use 'discourse' in Foucault's sense as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (2002a: 54). Before elaborating on this definition, it needs to be stated that I am not the only one operating with such a conceptualization of nationalism. We have already seen that for Calhoun, nationalism is a 'discursive formation', 'a way of speaking that

shapes our consciousness' (1997: 3); for Delanty and O'Mahony, on the other hand, it is 'a semantic space, that expresses through manifold discourses the many kinds of projects, identities, interests and ideologies that make it up', 'a way of seeing the world' (2002: xv, 29; see also ibid.: 54, 81); and for Hall, 'a national culture is a discourse – a way of constructing meanings which influences and organises both our actions and our conception of ourselves' (1996b: 613). Suny talks about the 'metanarrative' or 'discourse of the nation', 'the cluster of ideas and understandings that came to surround the signifier "nation" in modern times', arguing that identities are always formed within broad discourses, universes of available meanings (2001b: 868, 870; see also Wodak 2006: 106 and Sutherland 2005).

Such a definition of nationalism can be criticized on the grounds that it is too general and vague. This was in fact one of the objections of a reviewer of the first edition of *Theories of Nationalism* who claimed, in a rather dismissive tone, that the book is 'a good example of the tendency in social sciences to explain allegedly complex and multidimensional social phenomena in terms of an all-encompassing category of both analytical enquiry and empirical observation … namely "discursive formation"'. Domination is equated with 'discourse of domination', our critic contends, 'as if, willing to dominate you, all I have to do is to invent a "discourse of domination", and, *voilà*, you are dominated' (Pozo 2002: 192). These criticisms can be countered without difficulty by identifying the rules that govern the discourse of nationalism, by outlining its structure, its claims and the characteristics which differentiate it from other, similar, discourses.

We may begin by noting, paraphrasing Joan Scott, that discourse:

> refers not only to ideas but to *institutions* and *structures*, *everyday practices* as well as *specialized rituals*, all of which constitute social relationships. [Discourse] is a way of ordering the world; as such it is not prior to social organization, it is inseparable to social organization. (Cited in Roseberry 1996: 72, emphasis added)

As we will see in more detail below, the nationalist discourse tends to establish its hegemony and naturalize itself, presenting its truth claims as 'commonsense', and striving, if unsuccessfully, to obliterate alternative discourses. Foucault himself does not see the emergence and rise to prominence of particular discourses as the outcome of machinations by powerful groups:

> the analysis of power relations within a society cannot be reduced to the study of a series of institutions or even to the study of all those institutions that would merit the name 'political'. Power relations are rooted in the whole network of the social … The forms and the specific situations of the government of some by others are multiple; they are superimposed, they

> cross over, limit and in some cases annul, in others reinforce, one another. (Foucault 2002b: 345)

Discourses should not be reduced to 'language' or a disembodied collection of statements; rather, they are statements that are enacted within a social context and determined by that social context. 'Institutions and social context therefore play an important determining role in the development, maintenance and circulation of discourses' (Mills 2004: 9–10). This is why Foucault emphasizes what he calls the 'archaeology of knowledge', which entails uncovering the conditions which allowed a certain discourse to emerge (Burr 1995: 63–9).

Moreover, an emphasis on discourses does not amount to a denial of 'reality', as critics of Foucauldian perspectives claim. According to Foucault, how we interpret objects and events, and what we perceive to be significant, are dependent on discursive structures; discourses are what make objects and events appear to us to be real. They determine what we can think and how we can act; they set the limits of our field of vision, excluding a range of phenomena from being considered as real or as worthy of attention (Mills 2004: 46). As Laclau and Mouffe put it:

> An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God' depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence. (1985: 108)

Thus treating nationalism as a form of discourse, as a way of seeing, 'a perspective on the world' – to use Brubaker's words – does not deny its reality; it construes its reality in a different way (Brubaker 2004: 219). It argues that nationalism and its paraphernalia are, far from being given, socially constituted and have become 'sedimented' over time.

If the first step of the theoretical framework consists of defining nationalism as a particular form of discourse, a way of seeing that is at once socially constituted and institutional, hence 'real' in its consequences, then the next step involves identifying the claims of the nationalist discourse. I would argue that the nationalist discourse makes three sets of interrelated claims:

1. *Identity claims*. The nationalist discourse divides the world into 'us' and 'them', 'friends' and 'foes', positing a homogeneous and fixed identity on either side and stressing the characteristics that differentiate 'us' from 'them'. The identity claim is political, in two ways. First, it states that the values of the nation have absolute priority and that loyalty to the nation

overrides all other forms of loyalty, individual or collective. Second, it presents the nation as the ultimate source of (political *and* social) legitimacy – hence of sovereignty.

2. *Temporal claims*. The nationalist discourse always looks back in time, seeking to demonstrate the 'linear time of the nation', its undisputed diachronic presence. The particular past the nationalist elites opt for reflect present concerns and is usually deployed to legitimize the decisions they took regarding the eventual shape of their nations. Nationalist projects invest considerable resources in establishing meaningful links to a past that is often problematic – promoting social amnesia, or the forgetting of aspects of recent or more remote experience that are not congruent to the narration of their respective nations. An obsession with history and the propagation of its 'authentic' version through schooling and other ideological state apparatuses are some of the means through which the particular temporal claims of the nationalist discourse are introduced and imposed.
3. *Spatial claims*. The nationalist discourse is also haunted by a fixation on territory, the quest for a 'home', actual or imagined. This involves the reconstruction of social space as national territory, often with a force and intensity that erases alternatives and grafts the nation onto the physical environment and everyday social practices. It also encompasses processes of territorial imagination; remembering of lands lost, irrevocably or temporarily, or longing for territories that lie beyond, the perennial object of nationalist desire. It presumes an inextricable link between the nation and its natural environment; the landscape, the physical and built environment of entire areas are often seen as formative of the national character or soul, or conversely as indelible marks of a nation's presence in a specific territory, proof of the validity of its claim over a tract of land its members would call 'home'. (For a more detailed discussion, see Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008, Chapters 3 to 5.)

These claims enable us to distinguish the nationalist discourse from other, similar, discourses. It is true that all ideologies or collective belief systems, notably religion, can be construed as discursive formations, or particular ways of seeing and interpreting the world, organized around practices of exclusion. Yet it is the combination of these three sets of interrelated claims that gives nationalism its distinctive mark. Temporal and spatial claims are particularly important in that respect, as identity claims that are invoked by the nationalist discourse have, to use Appadurai's words, 'pre-national expressions and non-national applications' (2000: 135). Without some idea of 'territorial sovereignty' and 'temporal continuity', however, the modern nation-state loses all coherence.

On the other hand, our analysis of the claims of the nationalist discourse should not lose sight of their *contingent* and *plural-heterogeneous* nature. The nationalist discourse tends to present its choices of identity, past and territory as

the reflection of the immutable 'essence' of the nation, without reference to its internal diversity – along the lines of ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexuality, place in the life cycle and so on. Yet these choices are neither predetermined nor inevitable; they are the outcome of a dynamic and contentious process which involves diverse intentions. We should thus adopt a perspective that sensitizes us to the mechanisms through which these choices present themselves as 'natural' and 'inevitable', ruling out or suppressing alternative configurations of identity, past and territory that are available at any given moment. This is akin to what Foucault called 'eventalization' which implies 'rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies, and so on, that at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal, and necessary' (2002b: 226–7), or what Brubaker terms an 'eventful' perspective that treats nationhood as something that 'happens' (1996: 20–1). Such a perspective permits us to see that the definition of the nation is an ongoing process, with no sense of closure; that 'identity is always structured by a plurality of relations' (Walker 2001: 620), and can never be fixed; that pre-existing cultural commonalities and affective ties could have become the basis of quite different kinds of identities in altered circumstances; that nationalist genealogies are highly complex constructs which, despite their claim to offer linearity and continuity, are marred by ambiguity, discontinuity, and disruption; that the geography of a nation is not 'given', as nationalists themselves have difficulty in reaching a consensus on delineating the national homeland, depending on their particular definitions of the nation, its past and its future prospects. In short, it shows us how the choices of the nationalist discourse are actually the sedimented and contingent outcomes of social practices that can be challenged or changed (see also Sofos and Özkırımlı 2009).

The third and final step of our theoretical framework consists in identifying the mode of operation of the nationalist discourse – or the different ways in which human beings are made 'national' – which would in turn enable us to explain the profound emotional legitimacy nationalism commands. We have already pointed to the material and institutional structures that underpin the nationalist discourse. The dominant nationalist project, that is the winner of the struggle for hegemony between various nationalist projects, *consolidates its hegemony* by *reproducing* and *naturalizing* itself.

It needs to be noted at the outset that the process of reproduction of nationalism is not just an 'effect' of the state; it is also a manifestation of what Foucault calls 'infra-power' (*sous-pouvoir*), 'a web of microscopic, capillary political power … established at the level of man's very existence, attaching men to the productive apparatus, while making them into agents of production'. Foucault is careful to stress that he is not referring to the state apparatus, or to the class in power, but to the whole set of 'little institutions situated at the lowest level' (2002b: 86–7). Hence, in Balibar's words:

> A social formation only reproduces itself as a nation to the extent that, through a network of apparatuses and daily practices, the individual is instituted as *homo nationalis* from cradle to grave, at the same time as he/she is instituted as *homo economicus*, *politicus*, *religiosus*. (Balibar 1990: 345)

Several commentators have drawn our attention to 'trivial everyday experiences' that contribute to the 'felt reality' of nationhood. Everyday trivia (currency, TV news, flags, tipping conventions, conversational styles, and so on), notes Eriksen, 'often goes without saying because it comes without saying, and shared implicit conventions and notions, or taken-for-granteds, create a sense of community which is linked with space rather than time' (2004: 54). Edensor points to 'popular competencies' ('everyday practical knowledge which enables people to accomplish mundane tasks'), 'embodied habits' ('forms of bodily hexis and social interaction … as practical, embodied knowledge') and 'synchronized enactions' ('the enduring repetition of daily, weekly and annual routines, and entrenched notions about *when* particular actions should be carried out') of everyday life (2002: 92–6) and Wodak *et al*. to common 'emotional attitudes' and 'behavioural dispositions' internalized in the course of socialization which consolidate a sense of national identity and transform nationalism into a 'habitus' or 'lived practice' (Wodak *et al*. 1999: 28; see also Puri 2004: 59, 67). In many ways, then, 'the nation's presence in the generic citizen's daily life is more latent and unconscious than it is in his incidental, occasional relation to national symbols, spaces, narratives, and rituals' (Berlant 1991: 4). It follows that the national cannot be subsumed by that which is 'symbolic'; it is also constituted in the volatile settings of everyday life. This is what gives the nationalist discourse part of its power. As Berger and Luckmann argue in their classic *The Social Construction of Reality*:

> The reality of everyday life is taken for granted *as* reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply *there*, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I *know* that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubt about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life. (1966: 23, original emphasis)

The reproduction of nationalism is key to its transformation into a system of absolute values, a – highly gendered and sexualized – language of morality. The nationalist discourse tends to naturalize itself, hiding all traces of construction and making its claims and values seem self-evident and common sense. This is what lies at the source of 'reification', a problem we have touched upon in previous chapters. Berger and Luckmann define reification as:

> the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly supra-human terms. Another way of saying this is

> that reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products – such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will. Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world. (1966: 89)

Reification enables nationalism to 'congeal' itself and turns it into something 'real' that is no longer permitted to be contested in the public arena (Suny 2001b: 865). An awareness of the tendency of nationalism to naturalize and reify itself requires us to focus on the processes through which nationhood becomes a significant site of identification, to explore how the national comes to be socially established as 'reality'.

This brings us to nationalism's relationship with power, to its tendency to establish its hegemony. 'Hegemony', in a Gramscian sense, connotes:

> a sociopolitical situation, in his terminology a 'moment', in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious, is implied. (Williams 1960: 587)

The essence of hegemony is 'legitimation', not manipulation. The fact of hegemony, writes Gramsci, 'presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed' (1971: 161; see also Mouffe 1979; Showstack Sassoon 1982; Lears 1985; Femia 1987). The successful nationalist project attains the 'compromise equilibrium' by incorporating ideological elements from competing nationalist projects, and embarks on a process of self-reproduction and naturalization until its values become 'common sense'. Gramsci uses the term 'common sense' to denote the uncritical and partly unconscious way in which people perceive the world. Common sense 'represents itself as the "traditional wisdom or truth of the ages", but in fact, it is deeply a product of history, "part of the historical process" ' (Hall 1996a: 431 and Simon 1991: 29). On the other hand, hegemony is attained not only through the state machinery, but also through 'civil society', 'the ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions … which operate to shape, directly or indirectly, the cognitive and affective structures whereby men perceive and evaluate problematic social reality' (Femia 1987: 24, 44; see also Hall 1996a: 428).

As it is based on consent and a compromise equilibrium with competing

(subordinate) projects, hegemony can never be achieved once and for all. In that sense, the hegemony of a particular nationalist project is never total. In Raymond Williams's words:

> A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure … Moreover … it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own. (1977: 112)

This is where Gramsci and Foucault intersect, since for Foucault too 'discourses are not once and for all subservient to power'. They can be an instrument or an effect of power, 'but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (cited in Mills 2004: 40). However potent the nationalist discourse may be, the society, precisely due to its internal diversity, produces alternative projects (identities, values, and so on) in defiance of the much-desired homogeneity. These projects stand in a complex relationship to the values imposed and reproduced by the dominant nationalist discourse – oscillating between conflict and compromise. Here we might use the concept of hegemony, as William Roseberry suggests, to understand struggle, or the ways in which the words, images, symbols, organizations and institutions of the subordinate populations to talk about or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself (1996: 80). When a particular nationalist project achieves hegemony, it determines the boundaries of the 'speakable', defines what is realistic and what is not realistic, and drives certain goals and aspirations into the realm of the impossible (Scott 1985: 326). In such a context, even 'forms and languages of protest or resistance must adopt the forms and languages of domination in order to be registered or heard' (Roseberry 1996: 81).

Increased sensitivity to the processes whereby nationalism creates its hegemony leads us to explore the alternative representations that have been silenced or repressed by the dominant nationalist project. It invites us to study the nationalist discourse from below as well as from above, with a view to discovering the ways in which the 'dominated' challenge and subvert the dominant discourse. It reminds us that nationalism, like all other discourses, is a form of power.

The theoretical framework I have outlined above enables us to address some of the central questions around which the classical debate on nationalism revolves. It does not engage with the question 'when is the nation?' directly as it posits that nations can only be defined within the discourse of nationalism. From this perspective, the more crucial 'chronological' question is 'when is the nationalist discourse?'. Obviously, this question is no more inconsequential than the previous one, for the discourse of nationalism emerges out of the

combination of several processes of historical change and various unforeseeable contingencies. It is thus not possible to say exactly when, where and how all the elements that constitute the nationalist discourse came together for the first time. Still, it would not be too far-fetched to say that most of the processes and claims associated with the nationalist discourse, such as the modern state, the idea of popular sovereignty and a world of 'nation-states', came to prominence in the modern era, roughly from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. We should however note that the existence of the nationalist discourse is only a 'necessary', not a 'sufficient', condition for the emergence of a particular nation. The factors that lead to the creation of the 'nation' should be studied separately in each particular case – without falling back on single factor explanations, as most 'modernist' theories do. Several factors, political, economic or sociocultural, coalesce to form nations, and the factors and their particular combination change from one case to the next. In that sense, neither the result of the processes of nation formation, nor the ensuing shape of the nation are predetermined.

Do nations exist *ex nihilo*? Certainly not. Various other forms of collective identities and cultural commonalities did exist in the pre-modern era. Contrary to what the 'ethnosymbolists' argue, however, not all of them were 'ethnic', let alone 'nationalist'. As we have argued elsewhere, ethnosymbolist thinking suffers from what we might call 'retrospective ethnicization'; it ethnicizes the past, a past that is much more complex, contradictory and ambiguous than we are led to believe. What is considered rather unproblematically to constitute an *ethnie* is at best a constellation of processes which are the product of cultural and social strategies divorced from ethnic logics and considerations, often unrelated to each other, even accidental (see Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008, Chapter 1). Whatever they were – ethnic, religious, locality based – these pre-modern cultural materials started to matter 'politically' only in the modern era, that is after the emergence of the nationalist discourse. In other words, it is the nationalist discourse which takes pre-existing cultural materials and turns them into nations.

Were the nationalists of the modern era constrained by the existence of these pre-modern cultural materials? Not much. It is the selection process that matters, the ways in which these materials are used and abused by modern nationalists, and this necessarily reflects present concerns. The meanings, contents and purposes of pre-existing materials change after they are 'adopted' by the nationalist discourse. It is true that the present cannot alter the past, but it can ignore certain elements and emphasize others, exaggerate the relevance of some, trivialize that of others, and it can certainly distort realities. It needs to be stressed that we are not talking about pure manipulation here. Sometimes the choices of the nationalists are not the product of conscious political design, but of various contingencies. On most occasions, the quest for the 'discovery' of manifestations and expressions of a 'national' soul is not necessarily the result

of a preconceived nationalist project, but a response to perceptions of modernity as decadent or too artificial, and the perceived need to look for forms of cultural authenticity. The collation of different cultural practices, often from distinct spatial and historical contexts, into an apparently coherent corpus of 'national' culture is also not necessarily the product of some sort of calculated intervention. In fact, we should emphasize the possibility that such efforts may have been the result of accidents, acts of misrecognition, and invention, or a combination of all these factors. The ultimate incorporation of these into a nationalist discourse, however, may have had more to do with the fact that human actors have the capacity and indeed the compulsion to turn even non-purposeful action into purposive action, that is, to reflect on and rationalize it (for a more detailed discussion, see Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008 and Özkırımlı 2003b).

The theoretical framework I have suggested also permits us to tackle the question 'why would people willingly lay down their lives for their nations?', which forms the heart of the 'ethnosymbolist' or 'perennialist' critique of 'modernist' approaches. As we have pointed out in Chapter 5, drawing on Laitin's critique of Smith's work, this question takes 'resonance' for granted, explaining willingness to sacrifice by people's deep attachment to their nations. Yet this is far from being the whole story. Many people simply refuse to kill or die for their country, and when they do, it is not clear what they are killing or dying for – for their country, to protect their immediate locality and their loved ones, or simply out of fear (see for example Colley 1992: 308–19 on the British case)? In any case, the mechanisms we have described above, that is the processes through which nationalism strengthens its hegemony, naturalizes and reproduces itself, go a long way towards explaining the power and widespread appeal of nationalism. These mechanisms show the extent to which nationalism is implicated in our everyday experience, forming part of 'interpersonal networks' of which we are a part. As Eriksen reminds us, the 'sense of being in the same boat and living in the same world, with a shared destiny' results from 'regular interaction, small exchanges and mutual courtesies, webs of kinship and neighbourly relations', not from some unaccountable feeling of attachment to the 'imagined community' of the nation (2004: 56–7):

> the institutionalized form of nationhood builds on and reinforces non-national social relations and identities in which people invest trust, resources, solidarity, and hopes for the future … To the extent that nationally and locally defined solidarities actually coincide, threats and opportunities for national identities therefore ramify into local affairs and impinge on the fates of many people. (Tilly 1994: 18; see also Herzfeld 1997, Chapter 1)

In short, there is nothing inevitable or mystical in people's zeal for their nations. Nationalism is not simply 'a "narrative" to be recited, a "discourse"

to be interpreted and a "text" to be deconstructed', a depiction Smith imputes to what he calls 'post-modernist' readings of nationalism. If it is a narrative or a discourse, it is one which is at once institutional and socially constituted; it is one which has all the backing of the 'ideological apparatuses' of the state and of 'civil society'; it is one which 'seeps quietly and continuously into reality' (Anderson 1991: 36) and forms the framework of the world as we know it.

More generally, to what extent is the theoretical framework I have proposed above 'post-modernist'? Several commentators have in fact used this label to refer to my earlier work, including the first edition of this book (see for example Hutchinson 2005: 5 and 2008: 19; Hearn 2006: 200, 250; Pozo 2002: 76; Leoussi 2002: 256). Even if we leave the general arbitrariness of 'academic name-calling' aside, there are three problems with the imputation of the label 'post-modernist' to the present framework of analysis.

First, almost no scholar of nationalism who uses this term in their descriptions of other people's work define what they mean by 'post-modernist'. In fact, the label is often used in a dismissive way, in a way not too dissimilar to most other labels, to pour scorn on approaches that stress the multiple, fluid and constructed nature of ethnic and national identities – a truism most social scientists would readily accept today. Yet, as Walker explains, there is no one post-modernism. Hence 'epistemic post-modernism' which considers post-modernism as a 'historical condition' and argues that the modern era is at an end should not be confused with 'methodological post-modernism', which is at bottom a philosophical and methodological critique, or 'positive post-modernism' (read 'constructivism') which exploits deconstructionist methods and insights to analyse established beliefs and social practices, not only to challenge them, but also to transform them (for this classification see Walker 2001; see also Agger 1991). If we adopt Walker's classification, the theoretical framework I am suggesting can be located somewhere between methodological post-modernism and constructivism, with some modernist overtones. To put it differently, the terminology and methodological assumptions I use have some affininites with post-modernism construed as 'philosophical and methodological critique', but the analytical framework itself is firmly grounded in (the study of) historical processes. I do reject 'positivism' and 'metanarratives', and the possibility of a 'grand' theory of nationalism, but I do not underestimate the significance of particular historical contexts or the value of political, economic and sociocultural factors in understanding nations and nationalisms.

Second, post-modernist accounts have often been accused of having no truth claims by their critics. If all voices are the same in the sense that no voice or no truth can be privileged, then all claims have equal legitimacy, writes Walker; 'the perspective of the oppressed therefore has no greater truth or justice behind it than the perspective of the oppressors. Consequently, post-modernism tends to leave the margins exactly where they are – at the margins' (2001: 628; see also Burr 1995: 173 and 180). A normative discussion of nationalism is beyond

the scope of this book; yet even at a purely analytical level, the framework presented above does have a truth claim as it claims to suggest an alternative reading of nationalism and a hopefully better way of making sense of its claims and widespread appeal. Needless to say, this account is 'partial, committed and incomplete' too (Clifford 1986: 7), and the particular theoretical framework I am proposing is not to be seen as more 'authoritative' than its counterparts. The only test of a particular theoretical perspective is how well it works in understanding and analysing 'real-life' cases, and my framework is no exception (for an application of this framework to the cases of Greece and Turkey, see Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008).

Finally, the charge of post-modernism usually comes as a package deal, with the imputation of a belief in the decline of nations and nationalism. 'Post-modernists tend to adopt an attitude of radical scepticism towards nationalism', Hearn argues referring to my work, 'viewing it as a system of representations with an illusory nature that must be exposed, and then transcended' (Hearn 2006: 246; see also Smith 2000: 61 and 1999: 167–9). This view is misleading however, for at least two reasons. First, it is one thing to believe that nationalism 'should be' transcended, quite another to believe that they 'are being' transcended or that they are thus 'illusory'! In that sense, Hearn seems to confuse a normative claim with an analytical one. Second, as I have been at pains to show throughout this chapter, nationalism is neither illusory nor artificial, but – at the risk of reiterating – socially constituted and institutional, hence 'real' in its consequences and a very 'concrete' part of our everyday lives. As Ernest Renan put it more than a century ago, 'nations' had their beginnings and they will have their end, but there are no indications that this will happen any time soon.

Nationalism studies today

Where does nationalism studies stand today? It would not be inaccurate to say that discussions of nationalism display a tendency to 'bifurcate' into a classical debate, centred around the question 'when is the nation?' and the tug-of-war between the 'modernists' and their self-appointed nemesis, the 'perennialists', on the one hand, and newer, more versatile, debates, branching out of the classical debate, with the rise to prominence of a growing number of approaches that seek to go beyond the question of the date of origins of nations, on the other. The two debates run parallel to each other, at times intersecting, yet never completely overlapping. It may still be too early to talk of a 'post-classical' debate as newer debates are too heterogeneous to form a coherent corpus, hence defy any easy categorization. In that sense, we do not know whether the classical debate will be supplanted by newer debates, and if so, when.

On the other hand, it needs to be acknowledged that newer debates could

not have arisen without the theoretical advances made by their predecessors, particularly the discussions that surround the question of definition and of the relationship of nations and nationalism to processes of modernization. Yet the increasingly polemical nature of the classical debate does more to hamper our understanding of nationalism today than to further it. It is one of the contentions of this book that we should stop pondering over the question of the 'antiquity' of nations and problematize what we often take for granted – the various ways in which people become, and remain, 'national'.

On a theoretical level, one way of moving ahead might be to formulate 'partial' theories, that is theories that would explain different aspects of national phenomena, rather than trying to produce a 'general' theory of nationalism. After all, as Calhoun remarked, 'grasping nationalism in its multiplicity of forms requires multiple theories' (1997: 8). This is what Breuilly suggests when he speaks of breaking nationalism down into a series of different fields, 'not so much in terms of approaches but in terms of the subject matter'. Studying ethnic conflict regulation or national self-determination, or the intellectual history of ideas about nationality are different topics, argues Breuilly, 'and one of our problems is when we jump from one subject to another, promiscuously constructing artificial histories of a non-subject' (2005: 126).

A second way of proceeding might be to follow the advice of scholars like Brubaker, Laitin and Wimmer, among others, and study the cases where nationalism 'does not' work – failing, for example, to mobilize the masses into action. Obviously, the absence of ethnic and nationalist violence does not imply a concurrent lack of nationalism; nationalism continues to exist in the interstices of daily life even when there is no visible crisis or conflict, as a way of seeing and interpreting the world. This might induce us to explore nationalism 'from below', the ways in which 'normal' people challenge or subvert the values and identities imposed on them. This is what Foucault means when he suggests 'taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point'. 'Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its rationality', says Foucault, we should analyse 'power relations throught the antagonism of strategies'. We should try to find out what society means by 'sanity' by examining what is happening in the field of 'insanity'; what we mean by 'legality' by looking at the field of 'illegality' (2002b: 329).

The third way of theoretical inquiry is complementary to the first two, and involves the opening up of the field of nationalism studies into new areas and fields of research, and the embracing of new epistemological perspectives. As I have pointed out earlier, we already see the beginnings of this tendency in works which bring the insights of social psychology (Billig 1995, Reicher and Hopkins 2001) and psychiatry (Greenfeld 2005; Kecmanovic 2007) into the study of nationalism, or explore issues as wide ranging as 'nationalism and emotions' (Suny 2006, Langman 2006), 'nationalism and the internet' (Eriksen 2007), 'queer nationality' (Berlant and Freeman 1992), and so on.

On the empirical level, the value of 'theoretically informed' comparative case studies needs to be emphasized more than ever. As Segal and Handler argue, 'the most reliable key to recognizing what is otherwise taken for granted – and for seeing the contingency of what is absolutized by virtue of being presupposed – is comparison' (2006: 61). At present, the field is saturated with a vast number of abstract theoretical works and individual histories with relatively little interaction between the two. Theorists of nationalism generally refrain from applying their ideas to particular nationalisms, contenting themselves with passing references to a limited number of cases for illustrative purposes. Historians of nationalism, on the other hand, remain innocent of recent theoretical developments in the field, embracing, more often than not, descriptive narratives of particular nationalisms. What we need is to bring the two together and test our theoretical frameworks against historical evidence, reformulating and improving our initial assumptions as we go along, enriching our analyses with empirical insights based on 'real-life' cases.

It is clear that nationalism is not a temporary glitch in the unstoppable advancement of humanity into a more 'universal' or 'global' order. A hallmark of modernity, however we may define the latter, it obstinately refuses to loosen its iron grip on our ability to structure and generate meaning, our conceptions of space and time, and our imagination. We should thus continue asking questions and probe deeper into the logic of nationalism, building on, yet never content ourselves with, the conceptual and theoretical advances of our predecessors, in order to clear the fog that continues to surround it at the dawn of a new century.

Further reading

Some of the ideas that form the basis of the theoretical framework I have outlined here can be found in Özkırımlı (2003b; 2005, Chapter 7; 2007 and 2008). For an application of this framework to the cases of Greece and Turkey, see Özkırımlı and Sofos (2008).

The arguments developed in this chapter also draw on Balibar (1990), Bauman (1992), Verdery (1993), Billig (1995), Eley and Suny (1996a), Calhoun (1997), Wodak *et al*. (1999), Suny (2001b), Brubaker (2004 and 2006), among others. In this context, see also the classic works by Foucault (2002b), Gramsci (1971) and Berger and Luckmann (1966). For a useful introduction to Foucault's work, see Mills (2004). On Gramsci, see Williams (1960), Mouffe (1979), Showstack Sassoon (1982), Femia (1987) and Simon (1991). For an excellent discussion of post-modernism and nationalism, see Walker (2001); for an application of Gramsci's concept of hegemony to nationalism, see Roseberry (1996).

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