

Nationalism is arguably the leading mobiliser of people in the world today. Sociologists, like their counterparts in other disciplines, largely subscribe to an iconoclastic view of the nation which views them as modern. Moreover, postmodernists assert that nations are increasingly losing force in postmodernity due to the emergence of cross-cutting identities like class, religion, region and gender. Anthony Smith strongly challenged the first, 'modernist', assumption with his classic *Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986). In subsequent texts, he gave shape to the new school of 'ethnosymbolist' theory. In *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (2005), John Hutchinson, Smith's first disciple, dramatically expands the boundaries of the ethnosymbolist argument to engage not only 'modernist' but postmodernist critiques of the nation.

The most innovative feature of the book is Hutchinson's response to the postmodernist critique. He concurs with their invocation of multiplicity, but claims that multiple identities are neither new nor nation-weakening. Indeed, far from undermining the nation, multiple identities actually help to constitute nationalism. This works through nations' accumulation of usable pasts or 'mythical layers' which various class, religious, gender or other strata legitimate their particular intra-national struggles. For instance, by the sixteenth century, liberals in England invoked their Anglo-Saxon usable past against their Tory colleagues who occasionally drew inspiration from their supposed Norman ancestors. This divide even emerged in the American civil war as Southerners identified themselves with the Norman past against the 'Anglo-Saxon' Yankees of New England. In France, liberals invoked the Gauls while Catholic traditionalists looked to the Franks. In Iran, Revolutionaries looked to Iran's Shiite religious past while the Shah espoused the pre-Islamic Persian past of Cyrus and its Indo-European connections. Modernisers and traditionalists in many societies either look to different layers of their past or advance different interpretations of shared symbols like Joan of Arc or St. Patrick. Hutchinson claims that nations' concrete historical experiences are deposited as resources for subsequent social movements and suffuse the discourse of most class, regional, religious and other intra-state actors.

Chapter one succinctly advances an ethnosymbolist critique of the modernist cult of Anderson, Hobsbawm and Gellner. Rightly zeroing in on the modernists' static conception of the pre-1789 world, Hutchinson recounts how religious evangelism, civilisational faultlines, anti-imperial rebellions, migration and long distance trade shattered the pristine modernist vision of insular local masses and cosmopolitan imperial elites. The dynamism of premodernity ultimately led to ethnogenesis in many places at different times, though the post-1789 world of the modern nation-state greatly institutionalised the process and deepened nationalism's social penetration.

Chapter two brings a tight statement of how cultural revival in the romantic period, beginning in the early nineteenth century, energised nationalism among *both* minority and dominant ethnic groups. Traditionalists like the Orthodox Jewish rabbis or Ottoman imperialists often sought a return to a religious-imperial past, rejecting nationalism. On the contrary, modernisers sought to emulate the leading western nations, while revivalists carved a 'third way' which looked to the past, but often to a new and neglected version of the past, in order to support reform. Chapter three details the social conflict within nations discussed previously.

The book's final two chapters address arguments from theorists of globalisation and postmodernisation who allege that nations are being superseded. Here Hutchinson turns the tables on his adversaries. Globalisation, he notes, is neither new nor western, but a recurring civilisational phenomenon going back thousands of

years. More importantly, globalisation, now as then, can spread ideas of nationalism or ethnicity, and can engender backlash (then anti-imperial, now anti-global or anti-American). Many in the West may legitimately ask whether, in the absence of crises in their societies, cultural nationalism can ever move from the fringe to centre stage. Nonetheless, this book will prompt even the most ardent futurist to reflect on her certainties. In sum, the book makes an original contribution to the literature and deserves to be added to the reading list of both students and researchers in sociology.