

In today's world, immigration is rapidly transforming many western nations while the spread of global communications further challenges the nation-state. In this climate, questions about whether the nation is antique, and can draw upon ethnic roots, or is modern, and hence a more shallow product of shifting political imperatives, become increasingly important. The two books reviewed here go some way towards helping us to understand the nature of nationalism and help to update the 'classic' literature on the subject from the 1980s.

Aviel Roshwald has established himself as an expert on nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Middle East. These areas, along with western Europe and North America, furnish the empirical raw material from which the book's theories are hewn. Roshwald's book is also refreshingly up-to-date, encapsulating the most recent historical case work and the latest theoretical developments. The book builds upon the revisionist 'ethnosymbolist' school of nationalism theory. This school rejects the idea that nations are primordial and organically flow from our genetic predispositions, but also criticises the mainstream view that nations are exclusively modern phenomena and created by modern state elites (or sub-state elites) for functional or instrumental reasons. Instead, Roshwald defends the idea that nations derive their principal power from the encoding of cultural myths and symbols within historical institutions, and the fact that these collective representations need to resonate with the masses and their existing collective understandings in order to take root.

Roshwald claims that early instances of nationalism first appear in the ancient world, rather than in 1789. In ancient Israel and Athens, mass sentiments about a shared 'imagined community' roused large numbers of people to political action. The book goes on to trace the tension between ascriptive 'ethnic' and voluntary 'civic' elements in nationalism to ancient Israel, where an 'ethnic' myth of descent from Abraham coexisted with the more 'civic' covenant with God, in which membership rights are conditional upon individuals accepting the duties stipulated by the covenant. Roshwald views social contract theory as a secularised variant of covenantal theory, demonstrating one way in which a Judaic conceptual architecture laid the foundations of secular nationalism in the late eighteenth century. The book also shows, in a fascinating departure, how ancient Jewish nationalism in turn harked back to a yet more distant past by using archaic Hebrew inscriptions. Here, surely, is cultural nationalism *avant la lettre*.

Next, the book identifies four nationalist reflexes: victimhood, violation, chosenness and mission. These categories play a role, to a greater or lesser extent, in most nationalisms. For instance, the narrative of Jewish nationalism draws heavily on motifs of victimhood at the hands of various oppressors, from the Egyptians to the Nazis and Arabs. Similar concerns have also animated many others, such as the Ulster-Protestants, Afrikaners or Serbs, who wove a narrative of being alone in a hostile world. Themes of victimhood are less in evidence in American or British nationalism, where a sense of mission tends to take centre stage and the nation is cast as spreader/defender of the creed. In many cases, History may replace God as the anointer, but the essential framework is set by the antecedent religious tradition. Roshwald convincingly shows how the foreign policy of a wide range of nations - not least the USA - is conditioned by its symbolic traditions and collective psychology.

Another innovative contribution of the book is the way it reconceptualises time and foregrounds the role of nationalism in guarding against the human fear of oblivion. Roshwald contends that annual national rituals and analogies with past

events serve to bind members of the nation to their forbears across time. The collapsing of time between events 'then' and 'now' creates a sense of immortality and trans-historical kinship (i.e. 'circular time') which is exceptionally comforting and powerful to people. Nationalism is, however, caught between its imperative of making time stand still, and its modernising thrust of collective self-improvement. Like the 'ethnic-civic' dilemma, nationalism thus tends to straddle the tension between circular and linear time. Roshwald moves from description to prescription in considering the dynamics of ethnic conflict in situations as diverse as Texas, Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland and the Balkans. The book outlines a new theory of symbolic magnification in which threat perceptions are magnified by established collective psychology, creating positive feedbacks. Thus a group like the Jews, with their historic fear of violation and victimhood, will tend to overestimate the scale of the threat posed by enemies.

The last section of the book, namely that on the ethnic-civic debate, is well-written, but does not advance our understanding quite as dramatically. The book could also have confronted the key issue of whether cultural deposits/frameworks or political imperatives have been more important in explaining the character of nationalism. This said, Roshwald's book has certainly opened up new theoretical vistas and should be read by both academics and their graduate students.

Baycroft and Hewitson's *What is a Nation*, named after Ernest Renan's famous essay of 1882, revisits Renan's question more than a century later. In so doing, it provides an important synthesis of the vast literature on European nationalism in the 'long nineteenth century' from 1789 to 1914 which has emerged from the historical profession. This is no mean feat. Though history takes nationalism more seriously than any social scientific discipline, its emphasis on the primary document has often stymied wider theorising. This book's theories remain modest, but are grounded in its wealth of detailed case studies. In the process, it aims to convey a sense of the complexity, nonlinearity and contingency which is a hallmark of nationalist processes on the ground. This invariably involves a thoroughgoing assault on the ethnic-civic dichotomy as 'too imprecise and anachronistic to form the basis of an explanatory model' (p. 336).

In addition to an introduction and a substantial conclusion, the book consists of fifteen essays, largely case studies or based on a small number of comparisons. In *toto*, they traverse Europe from Scandinavia to Spain, Britain to Russia, and span the breadth of the 1789-1914 period. The authors are generally younger or mid-career scholars with a sound grasp of both theories of nationalism and recent historical scholarship in their respective geographic bailiwicks. They therefore bring a fresh and timely approach.

The essays generally coalesce around a number of observations. First, the authors find that ethnic and civic aspects of nationalism, far from conflicting, have often complemented or reinforced each other. The French may have based their original national project around notions of popular will, but, as Timothy Baycroft notes, French nationalists - including Republicans - eagerly employed 'ethnic' characteristics where possible, with Republican school textbooks tracing French history back to 'our ancestors the Gauls' and Joan of Arc. Oliver Zimmer adds that the ostensibly 'civic' Swiss also made as much as they could of their ascribed, 'natural' characteristics like their Alpine geography and their pre-modern history of resistance to the Habsburgs. In other supposedly civic settings like Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Spain and Britain, genealogical myths of ancestry flourished under the influence of

romanticism. Meanwhile, in central and eastern Europe, nationalist idioms - though initially based on culture and *völkish* themes - also sought to build 'civic' structures on top. Serbia's rapid extension of the franchise in 1877 suggests that those outside western Europe were no less likely to avail themselves of civic mechanisms when given a chance by the Great Powers.

Second, many of the papers take care to examine the trajectory of citizenship laws, a major focus of Rogers Brubaker's landmark study on France and Germany. These are shown for what they generally were: an unimportant policy area subject to all kinds of practical vagaries and hence a poor litmus test of the character of nationalism. The foreign-born were generally an insignificant element in the population, and the nub of many citizenship debates turned on the posture of cities and regions toward domestic migrants. Restrictive national citizenship was thus a byproduct of local-national conflicts, whether 'ethnic' narratives were present, as in Germany, or absent, as in Switzerland. (pp. 71-4, 115-16) Meanwhile, in 'civic' France, those arguing in favour of a change to *jus sanguinis* were not reactionaries, but modernisers who claimed that this principle was more in keeping with the spirit of the times than that of *jus soli*, an aristocratic holdover. In the end, *jus soli* was retained as much for contingent and pragmatic reasons as anything else.

Finally, as Mark Hewitson writes in his conclusion, liberalism in the nineteenth century meant many things beyond constitutional liberties: popular sovereignty, a shared *lingua franca*, 'progress' and civilisation were at the forefront of the liberal creed. (p. 333) Liberalism in this period was squarely focused on prising church from state and winning political freedoms from dynastic interests. It favoured nation over king or Pope, but generally remained noncommittal on questions of national symbolism. This meant that liberalism had no qualms about hitching its chariot to ethnic nationalism. Conservatives and socialists did not deviate widely from these tendencies, and it is a mistake to view cultural politics in this period through post-1945 spectacles.

Could the collection have been improved? The book generally delivers on its aim of foregrounding the complex nature of 'real' nationalism. However, having knocked down the ethnic-civic straw man, it is less innovative in proposing an alternative. The low-level theory proposed by Hewitson in his conclusion, based on five sources of conflict, while sound, seems a bit cautious, and prompts us to reach for Occam's razor. In this respect, Oliver Zimmer's fine-grained attempt to prise apart the voluntary-organic dichotomy ('mechanisms') from the various 'resources' at nationalists' disposal (i.e. history, language, geography, institutions) stands out as the only essay tall enough to rise above this parapet. Clearly, further theoretical work remains to be done. That said, Baycroft and Hewitson have produced a superb collection that will certainly make a scholarly impact and help to define the terms of reference for nationalism studies in the coming generation.