

## **The Lenses of Nationhood: An Optical Model of Identity**

Only the most committed materialist scholars would deny that ideologies and identities have real consequences.<sup>1</sup> They can motivate revolution, power a state's domestic and foreign policies, or help to consolidate a set of political institutions. Nevertheless, the contours of these identities remain mysterious. Numerous questions have bedevilled scholars of nationalism, religion and ethnic politics. Were there nations before nationalism? What is the utility of the 'ethnic-civic' paradigm in nationalism? Do religious texts influence the nature of religious ideologies? What is the link between individual and collective identity? How are local and national identities related? Why are national identities perceived differently by their producers and their consumers? Is there any connection between classical patriotism and modern nationalism? How is Islamism related to nationalism? These and many other contemporary problems are discussed using widely divergent, often *ad hoc*, theoretical tools from several disciplines.

This paper attempts to fit these disparate debates together into a flexible and dynamic model of political, notably national, identity. This permits us to see how observable 'facts', ideology, social location, psychological predispositions and interests interact to produce particular constellations of identity at the individual level. To some degree, this is an unfashionably grand theory of identity with echoes of the Parsonian 'filing cabinet' approach. However, notwithstanding neofunctionalist writers' defense of Parsons (Alexander 1998), this model eschews functionalism, instead emphasising the complex interplay of ideology, social location and cultural resources which produce political identities.

## Referents, Lenses and Resources

Philosophers have ruminated for millennia about the nature of ultimate reality. How do we know the world? Do real phenomena impress themselves on our senses, as empiricists believe, or do we instead have an inbuilt set of mental Ideas, or categories, which determine what we see in the world, as Kant maintained? A third possibility is that we recognise images as instances of universal forms (like 'tree' or 'tribe') with the aid of social constructs like language which mediate between our sense perceptions and our inner ideas. This article will argue that all three aspects are important when it comes to identifying one's national, ethnic or religious community. One way of visualising this relationship is through the metaphor of the human eye. Our eyes work by refracting light from objects through the cornea, on the surface of the eye, then again through the lens, from whence the image of the object is apprehended by the optic nerve. Depending on our degree of abstraction, we can imagine one meta-lens (encompassing cornea plus lens), or, if we seek precision, we can isolate discrete lenses within the meta-lens (think here of a microscope), each of which affects the quality of the final image.

Now consider national identity, which shall form the largest part of our discussion, figuratively represented in figure 1 through an optical metaphor. Seen in this way, national identity arises as the product of a territorial and human population referent, the light from which passes through interpretive lenses (i.e. interests, ideology) to focus on a subset of the territory's 'facts', such as its history, genealogy, artefacts, culture or geography. This produces an image of the nation in an individual's mind. Just as object, language and ideas are needed to produce concepts,

so too the referent, lenses and 'symbolic resources' (Zimmer 2003a) are necessary for identity.

[figure 1 here]

Rotating our ideological lenses alters the way we choose and interpret symbolic resources to create our ideal image of the nation. In this way, the national 'real' is transformed into a national 'ideal'. This comes about as actors try and distil a national image which is 'positive' (i.e. high status) according to the values espoused by a particular ideology like Christianity or Liberalism. This involves a reinterpretation of existing symbolic resources. Some symbols will be dropped, some revived and in other cases there will be an attempt to reinterpret symbolic resources so as to complement the new ideological framework. This process may be compared to Tajfel's observation that universal ideologies can lead individuals who refuse to 'exit' their group to instead exert 'voice' to change their group identity. (Tajfel 1981: 279-80)

#### Referents and Symbolic Resources

Notice that this model presumes that one can never find a political identity that is unmediated by a 'distorting' lens and thus is perfectly 'true' to its characteristics, or what Oliver Zimmer terms its 'symbolic resources'. (Zimmer 2003a) In other words, a nation or ethnic group whose identity neatly reflects the statistically nonrandom distribution of geographical, genealogical, cultural, historical, institutional and other

characteristics bequeathed to it over time. Even if all interpretive frameworks could be eliminated, identity cannot function without our inbuilt cognitive machinery which reduces the infinite complexity of our sense-impressions down to a manageable focus. For this reason, no more than a handful - perhaps as few as two or three - genealogical-historical components can remain central to one's national identity.

This forces nationalists to select and exclude, as when the pre-Islamic past disappeared from Iranian school textbooks after 1979. In refocusing light from one to another subset of Iran's abundant historical and cultural resources, Revolutionary historians upgraded Shia Islamic religious culture and ignored the Zoroastrian and classical Persian past. The Revolutionary version of national identity became more ethnically inclusive (by including the non-Persian half of the Iranian population), but simultaneously became more religiously exclusive by spurning the non-Shia past. This not only alienated the 7 percent non-Shia minority, but, more importantly, the significant non-Islamist ('secular') population. (Ram 2000)

The optical model also presumes that 'real' referents and symbolic resources exist. This may be controversial in that some would maintain that referents and resources are invented. (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) There is considerable truth in this analysis. Consider the territories that comprise modern-day Turkey and Greece. These have definite spatial coordinates and may be precisely defined. In 1850, however, Greek and Turkish-controlled territories were markedly different in geographical location and spread. The same is true for the institutions and populations enclosed within their territories. Nonetheless, Turkish imperialists and Greek nationalists could point to Ottoman and Greek referents in 1850 as the starting point for their yearnings and political identities. For any given individual, at any given moment, certain territorial and demographic referents exist. Move from one individual

to the next, and from one time period to another, and things may change, but this does not preclude the existence of referents in discrete slices of space-time. That said, the boundaries of a given referent are not fully independent of ideology in the fullness of time. Ideologies such as 'greater' or 'little' Turkism/Greekness maintain a strong dialectical connection to their referents: Kemalist 'little' Turkism influenced the shape of Turkey which in turn provides the referent for contemporary Turkish identity. We shall come to this dialectic later, when we discuss figure 4.

So much for referents and their relationship to ideological lenses. What about the connection between referents - the bounded space and population we identify with, and resources? It may be objected that all referents are resources. This is true. Yet the reverse proposition, that all resources are referents, cannot be, since one's referent merely consists of a delineated boundary rather than the 'stuff' within it. Referents require at least a fuzzy sense of boundaries, but what goes on within those boundaries is a matter of symbolic resources: symbolic material which is far in excess of what any human can process into one *gestalt*. Referents are therefore substantially independent of symbolic resources. Moreover, the stock of symbolic resources often includes previous geographies, cultures and institutions beyond those currently contained within one's referent. Mount Ararat is an Armenian symbolic resource, but lies outside the contemporary referent of Armenia. 'New' referents, such as Northern Ireland, Eritrea or Israel, become geographic resources for future nationalists even if the boundaries of a referent change - i.e. if Eritrea or Northern Ireland were to be absorbed into Ethiopia or Ireland. Note as well that referents are not the same as the identities which refer to the object. 'England' or 'Zululand' is the bounded, 'real' contemporary referent one focuses upon, the object of one's strivings, but is not identical to the ideal image one has of it nor of the full set of symbolic resources

available. Finally, ethnic referents will focus on populations (i.e. Palestinians, Jews) while referring to territory as resource, whereas national referents (i.e. Jordan, Israel) will tend to encompass both territory and population.

Objections of a different kind are raised about symbolic resources, namely that scientific 'facts' like events, heroes, genealogy or culture can be synthesized or conjured up out of thin air. (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) Yet here again, the so-called 'invention of tradition' posited by some neo-Marxist historians has come under sustained criticism from those who object that inventions can only be sustained within a pre-existing plausibility structure - especially in a modern age of scientific professionalisation. In this sense, the Trinidadian Indian Muslims who tried to claim the fictitious resource of Arab descent in the 1970s were as unsuccessful in changing their peoples' identities as the Ulster-Protestant intellectuals who seek to promote a native Irish myth of origin for Protestants based on pre-Celtic Cruithin ancestry. (Eriksen 1993:72; Adamson [1982] 1991) The French no longer accept their descent from the Trojans nor the English from King Lud, if they ever did. (Plumb 1969:125-6) The filiopetist ethnic historians who tried to claim Irish Catholic, Polish or other connections to the American Founding Fathers were effectively discredited. (Shenton 1990) This is because broad limits often emerge on the plausible range of historical, archaeological, geographic, genealogical, institutional and cultural 'facts' which have been deposited over time in a particular territory. Scientists, rival groups and members of one's own community all serve to check implausible claims. This does not mean that fantasy and invention cannot survive, especially in an illiterate, closed or premodern context. However, in our increasingly reflexive world, the horizons of the nationalist imagination are bound ever closer to the empirical record.

'Too much geography and too little history', lamented postwar Canadian Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie-King when considering his vast new land and its perceived lack of historical resources for identity. Yet King was wrong: the country could do worse. Canada could have suffered, like Singapore or the Falkland Islands, from both too little history *and* too little geography. Vast wild landscapes will never serve as a Singaporean symbolic resource as they did for Canadian nationalists, French cannot be a linguistic resource for Japanese identity, nor could a German nationalist draw upon a political history in which the lands of Germany and Poland were united into a single democratic unit. The multi-lingual Swiss struggled to shore up their national identity after 1870 in the face of resurgent German, French and Italian nationalisms but - despite the urgent need to do so - could not conjure up a unifying set of genealogical ancestors. (Zimmer 2003b)

There are grey zones between fact and fantasy, of course, especially as we move increasingly further back in time or where the findings of professional sciences attain limited penetration. Overall, though, the institutional 'reflexivity' (Giddens 1991) which brings science to bear on society, and the constant challenge of national and ethnic others to the veracity of one's national narratives tends to narrow the scope for inventing symbolic resources and plausibly selling these to one's target audience. (Kaufmann 2000b:1099; Zimmer 2000)

## Ideology

This brings us to ideologies, a critical lens determining which symbolic resources come into focus for individuals who identify with the nation. Ideologies can be universal in scope or more time and place-specific. They may be secular, like

Liberalism and Socialism, or religious, like Christianity and Islam. A sample of ideologies might include Romanticism, Nationalism, Shi'ism, Arminianism, Social Darwinism or Multiculturalism. Ideologies often combine with each other, as with liberal nationalism or multiculturalist socialism. There may be acute tensions between such ideologies, with some lenses bending light one way, and others pulling it back another. But taken as a whole, these ideas can serve as interpretive meta-lenses with which to view a particular referent. As mentioned, ideologies need not be universal. They may be geographically circumscribed, such as British Unionism, pan-Arabism or Irish nationalism. Note that Irish nationalism, as an ideology, is distinct from both Ireland as a referent and the symbolic resources of Ireland, despite the dialectical relationships between these three optical components. (See fig. 4)

Since ideologies are distinct from referents, we can comprehend the possibility that a referent such as Ireland (territory, population, institutions) could exist, even if the ideology of Irish nationalism does not. It could even be the case that *individual* Irishmen and women possess an Irish national identity (perhaps viewed through the prism of Catholicism or Unionism) in the absence of a *collective representation* of Irish national identity. This informs the 'nations before nationalism' conundrum that one finds in the literature. (Uzelac and Ichijo 2005; Armstrong 1982) If we define the nation as a community which does not require the full force of post-1789 nationalist ideology but which can emerge with a high degree of cultural and territorial integration, shared imagining and common political aspiration, then 'nations before nationalism' makes perfect sense. Early modern Holland, England, Spain, Japan and France could serve as examples.<sup>2</sup> (Hastings 1997; Smith 1986) Naturally the advent of nationalist ideology (i.e. Rousseau or Herder) will endow these nations with greater



fixity and purpose, but a nationalist ideological lens is not a *sine qua non* for the existence of nations, which can exist within religious or imperial ideological frames.

Parsing out ideology from referent enables a clearer view of a number of hitherto puzzling phenomena, such as British Unionism or Spanish Royalism. Unionism, or loyalism, is an outlook that was common in British settler societies like Canada, the United States or Australia, as well as British Celtic peripheries like Ireland and Scotland. (Cole 1971) It remains a predominant worldview among Ulster-Protestants, as well as in locales as diverse as the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar. Clearly, Ulster-Protestants and Gibraltarians have a 'native' identity based on shared memories, culture and political aspirations, but they view their respective referents through an ideological lens of British Unionism. A large and growing majority of Ulster-Protestants identify themselves as 'British' when given a series of options including 'Irish', 'Ulster', 'North Irish' and the like. (*Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey* 1989-2006) However, it is equally true that Ulster-Protestants have long been suspicious of mainland Britain, whose inhabitants they view as distinct and whose government they suspect would gleefully wash its hands of problems by 'selling out' the Ulster-Protestants through a deal cut with Catholic Nationalists, as they attempted to do during 1912-14 or, some would claim, more recently during 1972-4 or 1985. (Dixon 2001) Culturally, the symbols of Orangeism and Irish-Protestant history (such as the four key seventeenth century battles of Londonderry, Aughrim, Enniskillen and the Boyne) are far more evocative than those of England or even the Crown. (Kaufmann 2007b) Hence the Protestant complaint that while northern Catholics learn Irish history, Protestants are only taught British (i.e. an irrelevant, alien) history. In short, the ideology is British, but the referent and many resources most certainly are not.

Canadian loyalists bear a great deal of similarity to their Ulster cousins: indeed, between 1900 and 1950, there were more Orange lodges (whose credo involved loyalty to the British Crown and Protestantism) in Canada than in Northern Ireland. (Kaufmann 2007a) Canada has long presented a conundrum for nationalism theorists. However, if we prise apart referent, lens and resources, Canadian national identity comes into sharper focus. The American 'United Empire' loyalists who founded English-speaking Canada came from a society which knew itself to be distinct from Britain but looked at itself through the narrative lens of British Imperialism and unity. As with the Ulster-Protestants, the imperial connection did not signify a shared identity with the 'green and pleasant land' of the English, but rather a framework with which to view their own territory and institutions. Having migrated north, the United Empire Loyalists began the cultural work of narrating their existence in a new land. British Unionism provided the ideological lens, but referent and resources were Canadian. (Wise 1993:35)

Canadian loyalism championed the superiority of British institutions like the monarchy and liberal democracy, and stressed the unity of the empire - especially the British dominions. (Cole 1970; Buckner 2004) Despite this worldly lens, anglophone Canadians were preoccupied with Canada and not the world. They expressed their Canadian national identity through a sense of being missionaries for the wider ideology of Empire. In the war of 1812, Canadian loyalists saw themselves as being in the advance guard of Empire against the American republic. Later in the nineteenth century, they imagined themselves 'a superior breed of loyal Briton' who could rejuvenate a decadent metropole. (Rasporich 1968:150) Scots, Australians and Welsh also viewed themselves as epitomising the highest standards of Britishness and carrying its civilizational standard. Hence the role played by Scottish traders, soldiers,

explorers and settlers in colonies like Canada, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong served as a source of national pride for Scots well before the emergence of a discourse of Scottish nationalism in the twentieth century. The subtext of these narratives was that the pioneering Scots had opened the doors for subsequent, more effete, English migrants. The British context lent a 'missionary' quality to Scottish national identity, but the Scots did not subsume themselves within Britishness, instead identifying Scotland as the referent to which Britishness added prestige.

The same dynamics can be observed in other European peripheries. Prior to the late nineteenth century, many Basque writers lacked a vocabulary of Basque nationalism but viewed the Basque country through the lenses of Catholic conservatism and Spanish Imperial royalism. Basque royalist writers thought along the same lines as Scottish Unionists, fingering the Basque country as the cream of empire, whose virtues exemplified those of the imperial project and would shine the way for others. Like the nineteenth century Canadian loyalists, Basques wore an international lens, but focused inward, leading them to define themselves in relation to the metropolitan core of Madrid/Castile, much as the Scots did with London/England. In expounding their Basque national identity, writers often spoke of the Basque country as the brightest light of the empire, or as exemplifying the Catholic virtues and enterprise of the Spanish empire, and juxtaposed this to the more sluggish Castilian regions of Spain. At no point was Basque Royalism strictly dissolved within a purely Spanish reference point. Here we can more easily see how Basque national identity could antedate Basque nationalism. (Jacobson 2006)

Whether the narrative takes a 'missionary' form or the Old Testament 'covenantal' form, ideologies tend to endow the particularisms of nation and ethnic with a sense of wider importance and legitimacy. (Kumar 2003; Roshwald 2006;

Armstrong 1982) Universal ideologies should not, however, be mistaken for true cosmopolitanism: the ideological context almost always revolves around the particular referent whose purposes it answers. Iranian Islamism after 1979 partakes of this quality. On the surface, the rhetoric is that of an unbounded, universal Islam. In reality, the Iranian elite remains focused on Iran as referent and is principally concerned about the reputation of Iran within the Islamic world. Iran's foreign policy exploits are accompanied by the message that Iran's fights are not for the selfish interest of Iran but for the wider cause of Islam. In the process, Iran becomes a missionary for Islam and hence reaps the psychic rewards of being a missionary nation. Khomeini's recourse to a language of nationalism during the Iran-Iraq War and Ahmedinedjad's 2007 reference to the superiority of ancient Persia *vis á vis* ancient Greece exposes the national gaze lying just beneath the veneer of its Islamic cosmopolitanism.

Much the same is true of Islamism, as Sami Zubaida points out, with most Islamist conflicts rooted in a national setting. (Zubaida 2004) Thus the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Hamas, its Palestinian offshoot, are deeply embedded in local contexts and conflicts. Palestinian nationalists try to project their struggle as not just a parochial battle, but a wider Islamic one in which the chosen Palestinians defend the holy al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem against defilement by the Jewish infidel. (Roshwald 2006:135-8) Notice that the focus is on Palestine rather than Mecca or the Umma. Palestinians are the heroes of this epic, and other Muslims the often ungrateful beneficiaries.

Soviet socialism betrays a similar juxtaposition of local referent and universal ideology. Already, prior to 1917, Russians had appropriated the role of the chosen people within the Tsarist empire, as had the English within the British Empire and

Anatolian Turks within the Ottoman empire. As a result, the Russians were easily able to adopt the mantle of missionary leader within the structures of the new Soviet Union. Soviet ideology spoke Russian, despite the ethnic 'younger brothers' represented in the toothless Congress of People's Deputies. Russification accompanied the ideology of 'Soviet Man' and it was expected that the federal Soviet achievements would eventually wither away, leaving Russian as the language of socialism. (Suny 1993: ch 1) In this manner, Soviet ideology proved to be the lens through which a Russian referent could be glimpsed. Russians were missionaries for socialism, and thus the universal ideology of socialism glorified their particular nation. Socialist ideology is now dead, but the glories of the USSR live on as a symbolic resource. Hence the paradox that nostalgia for the Soviet Union serves as an expression of Russian nationalism today.

The Soviet case proved a template for others. Thus the 'socialism in one country' or 'national in form, socialist in content' slogans developed in the USSR, in which a universal lens was applied to an irreducibly parochial context, proved the most popular global template, adopted by the Chinese, Vietnamese, and others. This was also true of pre-USSR communist parties in neighbouring states. Latvian communists, for instance, were highly self-conscious in envisioning Latvia as the vanguard nation of socialism. (Suny 1993, chs 1-2) It was the same for Revolutionary France, whose Declaration of the Rights of Man and determination to spread its liberal virtues issued from a sense of French missionary stewardship whose consciousness was firmly anchored in language and territory.

This existential reflex had been honed through the pre-Revolutionary notion of France as 'Eldest Daughter of the Church', the standard-bearer of the universal ideology of Catholicism. France was but one of a series of 'nations before nationalism'

which arose in the early modern period during a period of Reformation and counter-Reformation. Holland's sixteenth century Calvinist Protestantism helped to endow the nation with a sense of divine election and holy mission against Catholic Spain. And all this before the age of popular sovereignty and Rousseau. (Roshwald 2006:171)

Along the Islam-Christian frontier in the middle ages and early modern period, these two religious ideas spawned notions of jihad or crusade among Christian ethnic groups like the Russian Cossacks or Muslim ones like the Moors and Berbers. (Armstrong 1982) The vocabulary of nation and ethnics was absent, but the referents and identities were present. The glory of Islam or Christianity was centred upon the tribe or kingdom as referent, rather than the more elusive Umma or Christendom whose myth-symbol complex - despite the holy cities - remained more abstract. These medieval tribes and kingdoms, with their political boundaries, myths, heroes and histories, in turn furnished symbolic resources for subsequent nationalists.

### Ideology and Identity

Ideologies are not identities, and in theory could function as unselfconscious ethical worldviews. Socialism is not coterminous with socialist identity or the socialist people. The latter may emerge as a networked group which develops an emerging 'figurative nucleus' of symbolic resources like heroes, 'poetic spaces' and hallowed events. (Smith 1986b: ch 7; Moscovici 1984) The socialist community then, like the Muslim umma, must be distinguished from the ideology of socialism or Islam, with its particular worldview. One can have the worldview without the identity, as with a 1960s Vietnamese nationalist whose socialism is purely ideological and has no concept of being part of any socialist 'people'. Here socialism serves as a conduit for

his Vietnamese national identity. Likewise, one can have the identity without the worldview, as with the secular Zionist who identifies as a Jew but lacks the biblical worldview with its associated concepts of covenant and divine election. (O'Brien 1988)

It is worth reflecting on the latter process, which involves an ideological worldview producing a symbolic byproduct whose accretions can supersede the original ideology. In this way, the universal becomes particularised. Universal ideologies are set in this world and are actuated by particular people performing concrete acts in distinct places and developing unique rituals and cultural codes. Over time, therefore, ideologies have this-worldly careers, accumulating symbolic resources (i.e. history, geography, culture) which are located in a national or ethnic space and can thus be appropriated by later generations of nationalists. Liberalism in America and France, socialism in Vietnam and Russia, Shi'ism in Iran or Protestantism in Scotland are prominent examples of this process by which universal ideologies deposit layers of symbolic resources in particular places for subsequent generations of nationalists to use. Sometimes the initial ideology can lose its universal light, yet strongly persist as a vibrant particularism. One thinks of the Mennonites, Druze, Copts, Sikhs, and Jews, whose early proselytism has given way to religious endogamy, sanctification of heroes and boundary maintenance as religious movements become ethnic groups. (Smith 1986b: 86-7, 111-13) The Mennonites were initially anarchist yet are now better known for their ethno-communalism. Protestantism was initially about stripping away ornament and hierarchy, yet the ultra-Protestant Orange Order in Northern Ireland is so drenched in ritual, symbolism, banners, hierarchy and 'degrees' that its detractors describe it as 'popish'. (Edwards 1999) In effect, universal ideology can morph into identification with the ideology's

symbolic resources. None of which takes away from the fact that new ideologies are required to interpret these symbolic resources.

### Ethnic-Civic Dilemmas

The role of ideology in nationhood is central, but remains poorly theorised and falls between the stools of the main paradigms in nationalism theory. The so-called 'modernist' interpretation of nationalism maintains that war, the logic of power, industrialism, bureaucratisation or other functional or material needs led to the rise of the nation-state. (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990) The ethnosymbolist school counters that modernity only consolidated and spread a pre-existing ethnic consciousness to wider social strata. Cultural institutions and repositories of collective memory already existed, but became intensified and placed on more secure institutional foundations in the modern period. (Leoussi 2006) Modernists emphasise material forces, but admit that Enlightenment ideas and notions of secular religion were important.

Ethnosymbolists stress cultural-historical continuities, but allow a key role for new ideologies like Rousseauan liberalism, Romanticism, Social Darwinism and scientific racism in modifying the character of nationalism.

Once again, an optical metaphor helps to clarify what is happening. An English nationalist, for example, might employ not just one, but several lenses when considering her English referent. In the mid-nineteenth century, a British Unionist lens could share space with both liberal and Romantic ones. The outcome would be to focus light on the 'British' symbolic resources of the Monarchy, union flag and imperial triumphs, but for this to become elided with 'English' genealogical resources like an Anglo-Saxon genealogy, 'green and pleasant' landscape, as well as English



liberal traditions harking back to the Magna Carta and Glorious Revolution. Where Romantic thinking is paramount, this lens causes all symbolic resources to be interpreted in a timeless manner: be this Anglo-Saxon genealogy, 'ancient' liberal institutions, the agrarian landscapes of Constable or the English language. When the ideological emphasis shifts to liberalism, the story becomes one of Whig development, and symbolic resources reflect change rather than eternity: the British techno-economy and military receive light from the lenses, as does a narrative of being the leader in the march of new liberal-democratic values. British genealogy, where it is even considered, is read as the product of diversity and change, as with Daniel Defoe's poem about the mongrel origins of the English, 'The True-Born Englishman'.

In reality, Enlightenment liberal, Romantic, and, later, Social Darwinist ideological lenses happily coexisted, thus many nationalists embraced *both* an 'organic' perspective which highlights timeless ascribed traits, and a 'voluntarist' orientation which concentrates on the economy, military, values and recent institutions. (Zimmer 2003a) Likewise, individuals could often shift their emphasis from one set of ideological lenses to another. Hence the apparent mystery of individuals espousing one sentiment one moment, and a completely different one the next. American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, exemplified this, when, in 1846, he clearly adopted his Enlightenment spectacles, boasting of his country as the 'Asylum of all nations...the energy of Irish...Africans and Polynesians, will construct a new race'. Meanwhile, around the same time, in a Romantic mood, he placed the symbolic emphasis elsewhere: 'It cannot be maintained by any candid person that the African race have ever occupied or do promise ever to occupy any very high place in the human family...The Irish cannot....(Goldman 1992: 242-44)

This discussion flags up the fragility of the 'ethnic-civic' concept in nationalism studies. There is not space here to trace the meteoric rise of this construct and the equally savage attacks to which it has been subjected. There are two debates surrounding this question. The first concerns whether ethnic and civic are useful heuristic devices as Weberian ideal types of nationalism (Nielsen 1999; Kuzio 2002); the second asks whether real people and cases can be neatly allocated into one of these two boxes. (Janmaat 2006; Shulman 2002) In terms of the former, for example, critics claim that the 'ethnic' category of nation actually breaks down into a multiplicity of sub-types (i.e. cultural, racial) which do not always hang together. Thus nationalism may be romantic, but shrink from the 'ethnic' language of genealogy and race, as in late nineteenth century Switzerland. National identity may focus on language, but do so in an inclusive mode, as in contemporary Quebec or Catalonia, or in an exclusive manner, as in Estonia, interwar Poland, or Japan. Reigning anti-imperial (i.e. separatist) ideologies may be Romantic, as in Germany in 1806, or they may be Enlightenment-driven, as in French Canada in 1837-8. So-called 'ethnic' nationalism may be separatist, as in the nineteenth century Polish case, or statist, as in Germany or France at the turn of the twentieth century.

In view of these problems, Oliver Zimmer developed the notion that the whole ethnic-civic concept be disaggregated into two components, 'boundary mechanisms' and 'symbolic resources'. Zimmer specified organic and voluntarist mechanisms of identity construction. Critical of the term 'civic' nationalism, he remarked that 'it conflates a particular symbolic resource (political values and institutions) and a specific mechanism of identity construction (voluntarism) into a single concept....' Meanwhile, 'ethnic' nationalism 'tends to arise when the 'historical past' is *perceived*

*through an 'organic' (i.e. deterministic) lens.* ' Note the appearance, however fleeting, of the metaphor of mechanisms as lenses. (Zimmer 2003a: 178-9, emphasis added)

Zimmer's brilliant formulation drew upon his analysis of the Swiss case, where a Romantic nationalist lens was applied to the polyethnic Swiss referent, precluding a focus on genealogy and hence leading to an emphasis upon the timeless, premodern Swiss Alpine landscape and its confederate-era democratic institutions. (Zimmer 2003b) This was organic, but certainly not 'ethnic'. Indeed, genealogy could be approached voluntaristically, as with the emphasis on hybridity and multiple ancestry in variants of, for example, American, Argentine or English nationalism. The same is true of political institutions: the ancient English Parliament or Swiss popular democracy can easily be perceived as a timeless, organic outgrowth.

Zimmer's reconceptualisation is effective, but the notion of mechanisms, or lenses, needs to be expanded to encompass the wider realm of ideology since ideologies serve as the Weberian switchmen for the voluntary/organic mechanism. Ideologies thereby act as lenses which highlight specific symbolic resources and not others, and do so in voluntary or organic ways. The predominant western ideologies of today, it may be argued, are neoliberalism and multiculturalism. Both induce voluntarist interpretations of symbols among dominant ethnic groups, though multiculturalism can legitimate an organic posture among ethnic minorities. In addition, ideological lenses often shade into one another where complementarities permit. Neoliberalism and multiculturalism, for instance, are frequently yoked together into a liberal-cosmopolitan whole despite their left-right contradictions. Nowhere is this more evident than in Canada. Canadian neoliberalism, with its emphasis on free trade, globalisation, pan-Pacific markets and the like, makes common cause in the national imaginary with multiculturalism's emphasis on

diversity, openness, toleration and an antipathy to boundaries. As a consequence, many Canadian nationalists don these ideological cloaks to proclaim that theirs is the country which best exemplifies the neoliberal and multicultural virtues of openness to globalisation, economic competitiveness, diversity and change.

The referent for these imaginings remains Canada, its people, and its institutions rather than those of the globe. The change in the country's interpretation of its own symbolic resources, which took place in the 1966-71 period, was almost as dramatic as Iran's in 1979. With the enthusiastic embrace of the New Left ideal of multiculturalism by Canadian liberals of the Trudeau period came a radical shift from an organic to a voluntarist view of the country's genealogical resources. (Igartua 2006; Breton 1988) Whereas once the country's bicultural French-British character was trumpeted, now its 'multicultural' genealogy took centre stage, despite the fact that only a slender minority of Canadians in the 1960s lacked British or French ancestry. European multiculturalists undertook a similar journey after the 1980s, stressing the migratory and 'mongrel' lineage of European nations to counteract established ideas of ethnic homogeneity. It remains an open question whether such constructs have convinced a skeptical public, though growing demographic diversity in Europe may render such multicultural interpretations more persuasive.

Canada today envisions itself at the centre of the universal ideologies of neoliberalism and multiculturalism, i.e. liberal cosmopolitanism. Substitute the lens of British liberal imperialism for that of liberal cosmopolitanism and one is instantly transported back to the Canada of a hundred years ago. The ideologies have changed, but the referent and resources remain much as they were, notwithstanding Canada's new genealogical diversity, itself hastened by the incongruence between the liberal-cosmopolitan Canadian ideal and its 1960s bi-ethnic reality. The claim that

Canadianism is universal while Quebec nationalism is parochial is often touted by English-speaking Canadians, but when we peel back its lenses of universal ideology, we find the same preoccupation with a national referent in Canada as we do in Quebec. (McRoberts 1997; Gagnon 2007)

### Instrumental Considerations

Upon closer inspection, the optical apparatus of identity can be shown to reveal greater complexity. (See figure 2) Referents, for example, can consist of cities, regions, nations, non-territorial ethnic groups like the Jews, multi-national empires, trans-ethnic enclaves like socialists or Muslims, or supranational polities like the EU. Lenses, meanwhile, go well beyond ideology to encompass more individual factors like social location, material interests and even psychological predispositions. These aspects are particular to individuals or groups of individuals, and allow us to more clearly specify why patterns of national identity vary between individuals and groups within a nation. Whereas ideologies (including collective representations of national identity) are typically *produced* by intellectuals and state elites, situational and psychological lenses refer instead to the *consumption* side of the identity equation. Material interests sit somewhere in between, exerting a strong effect on both producers and consumers of national identity.

[figure 2 here]

No discussion of political identity can be complete without considering material and political interests. Instrumental considerations can skew the selection and

interpretation of particular symbolic resources among both 'producers' of national ideologies and 'consumers' of its message. Let us begin with 'producers' of national representations. A power-hungry national leader will reach for historical resources which legitimate this self-interested aim. Examples of favourable historical resources for irredentist expansion would include Pre-Trianon Hungary, pre-partition Ireland and Cyprus or the ancient Javanese kingdom which extended to East Timor and West Irian. By contrast, state elites who seek to safeguard their independent power base, like Taiwan or Eritrea, will de-emphasise shared Chinese or Abyssinian histories and accentuate the aboriginal Taiwanese past or Eritrea's distinct Italian colonial history. Important trading or strategic incentives might nudge a nation to downplay contentious episodes from the past which might impair such relations. Hungarian nationalist elites, for instance, have, when seeking to distinguish themselves from their Austrian co-imperialists (in the pre-1914 period), emphasised their 'Asiatic' eastern steppe genealogy and folk culture. Thereafter, when adopting an irredentist pose against their Romanian and Slovak neighbours, they accentuated their western form of Christianity (i.e. non-Orthodox) and pre-Ottoman history. (Höfer 1995: 72-5) Likewise, Catholicism is an important symbolic resource for western European Christian Democratic parties. A shared Catholic Europeanism helped to gloss the national symbolic tensions (not least over the legacy of World War II) which could have divided the original signatories to the Treaty of Rome which established the European Community in 1957.

Situational Lenses: Individual Vantage Points on the Nation

Social psychologists carefully distinguish between collective representations and the individuals who bear social identities which correspond - imperfectly - to those representations. (Tajfel 1981; Farr 1996) The message is clear: individual identification with collective myths and symbols is not the same phenomenon as the collective representations themselves. In addition, collective representations of entities like nations and ethnies can vary and compete, as well as overlap and reinforce each other. As John Hutchinson points out, Slavophiles and Westernisers in Russia, no less than French monarchists and republicans or Iranian nationalists and Islamists, drew on different usable pasts to produce alternative collective representations of the nation. (Hutchinson 2005) These then serve as new ideological lenses competing for the attention of individuals. Even if there was only one collective representation, 'officially' decreed by the state and reinforced throughout society (as perhaps in North Korea), this message would be received differently by individuals depending on their social and geographic location. Given this variability in the production and consumption of the nationalist message, can we even speak of something as concrete as 'the' identity of a nation or ethnie?

Evidently our optical model needs to add another layer, or lens, of complexity beyond ideology and interests in order to cope with this problem. We might think of situational lenses in much the same way as ideological ones, refracting light from a given referent to illuminate particular symbolic resources in voluntary/organic ways while ignoring others. It is increasingly agreed that locals do not always oppose new national projects, but often perceive the nation differently than state elites in the capital. Historians like Alon Confino, Celia Applegate and Oliver Zimmer have underscored the idea that local, regional and dynastic identities in nineteenth century Europe were not simply eclipsed by the nation, but often complemented it. (Jeismann

2006: 25) Rather than a simple story of *gemeinschaft* becoming steamrolled by a modern *gesellschaft*, a productive dialectic of identity often took place. Towns and regions tended to see their locale as a microcosm of the nation, and local elites appropriated national symbols like the French Revolution or Sedan Day in Germany and married them to local narratives. Nationalism reinforced local pride, and the local could reinforce the national. In 1880s Hamburg, for instance, local maritime traditions recalled Hanseatic trading glories, and town fathers imagined their city as a leading engine of the new Germany's nascent imperial ambitions. This was reciprocated by Kaiser Wilhelm II who told them: 'You are the ones who connect our fatherland with invisible ties to distant parts of the globe...for this our fatherland owes you a debt of special gratitude' (Umbach 2006: 74)

The local, or 'heimat' vision of the nation indelibly shapes it. Rural areas and small towns, whose demography is usually more homogeneous than cities, tend to view their nation in the same manner. The Romantic movement juxtaposed 'artificial' cities to more natural, virtuous rural idylls, but this idea resonated with rural dwellers and rural-urban migrants, whose tightly-knit 'village' vision of the nation collided with the often messy, polyglot chaos of the cities to produce alienation. The upsurge in American 'WASP' ethnic nationalism in the 1890-1924 period had its roots among the Protestant majority of the small towns and rural areas. Ku Klux Klan revival in the northern states in the 1920s was a native Protestant response oriented not towards blacks but against the largely Catholic or Jewish northern cities. It was most prominent among working-class, rural-urban Protestant migrants. (Jackson 1967) Prohibition of alcohol in 1920 was as much a Protestant 'symbolic crusade' against an alien Catholic, urban culture as it was a principled ethical movement. (Gusfield 1963) Likewise, in interwar Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, rural ethnic



homogeneity collided with an urban reality dominated by German-speakers and Jews to produce village alienation and a call for a nationalism based not on institutions but upon an organic reading of 'authentic' native peasant folklore, language and genealogy. (Höfer 1995; Zimmer 2003c)

Regional and class lenses also colour identity in distinct ways. Middle and upper-class residents of the English Home Counties are more likely to imagine an England of stately homes, village greens and clipped 'received pronunciation' speech than working class inhabitants inhabiting the council estates and terraces of Wigan or Cumbria in northern England. The same dissonance in identity can be found between peripheries and 'core' regions like New England in the nineteenth century United States, Île de France in France or Buenos Aires/Rio de la Plata in Argentina, from where 'official' national identities are promulgated. The local is used as a metaphor for the national, and members of dominant regional groups see the nation as an extension of themselves.

The same holds true for dominant ethnic groups, especially among those living in homogeneous contexts. White Americans living in the relatively homogeneous countryside or small provincial cities are more likely than urbanites to focus on symbolic resources like western settlement, whiteness or Christianity as all-American symbols. African-Americans, Hispanics and urban whites, by contrast, are more likely to think in terms of a multiracial nation, and ethnic minorities will stress the nation's immigrant or slave genealogical past while eschewing historic resources like western settlement. Ideology is obviously a key lens here, but so is geographic location. Multicultural interpretations of the nation are consequently a product of both a New Left ideology *and* the urban imagination, and construe the nation as the multicultural city in macrocosm, i.e. as more diverse than the nation's representative demography

would suggest. Thus the urban white television producers of Hollywood and advertisers of New York depict a plural nation which much of small-town America does not recognise.

As with white Americans and the United States, the English see Britain as England writ large: so much so that they confuse the terms 'English' and 'British' in a way no Scot could imagine. (McCrone 1997) Class and status also act as important situational lenses. As Hutchinson points out, the French bourgeoisie - linked to republican ideology - steered attention to the Gauls as a genealogical touchstone while the more aristocratic monarchists highlighted the Franks as the nation's true ancestors. The same was true in nineteenth century England with the Anglo-Saxons serving as the exemplars for the middle-class Whigs and Normans for upper-class Tories. (Hutchinson 2005) Regionally, Southern Americans in the antebellum period espoused a Norman-Cavalier myth of descent to distinguish them from an imagined Anglo-Saxon, Yeoman North. (VanHoosier-Carey 1997) Northern Portuguese, meanwhile, entertain a more 'Germanic' self-conception than southerners, eschewing Moorish historical resources in a more strenuous way than those from Lisbon and its environs. All of this suggests that class or regional lenses can fuse with ideological ones when it comes to interpreting symbolic resources.

This analysis of local, regional, ethnic and class situations can extend to gender and lifestyle perspectives, all of which reinforce the national referent by hotly disputing its character. (Hutchinson 2005) Our optical model might suggest that fragmentation is the rule, but this probably depends on the degree to which sub-groups in society contest the 'official' version of the nation's identity. Andreas Wimmer points out that where individuals' social identities overlap, a consensus develops which resembles what we think of as 'the' national identity. We can think of

the coherence of national identity as waxing or waning to the degree that individuals converge in their view of the nation. (Wimmer 2007) When individuals' interpretive lenses diverge - irrespective of the unity of collective representations and 'official' national discourse - the national 'we' shrinks to a symbolic minimum, signifying social conflicts which may catch fire as political movements, especially if politics operates outside a democratic framework.

### Psychology

Ideology, situation and interests are the main lenses through which the national referent is glimpsed. A final category of lens, principally related to the 'consumption' side of national identity, is psychology. Some individuals are simply more psychologically predisposed to identify with certain symbolic resources in the national repertoire - and to do so in voluntary or organic ways. Anomie and alienation experienced by individuals or groups during periods of rapid social change may prompt a desire for a more organic, timeless interpretation of a nation or religion's symbolic resources. Inter-war German nationalism or the Islamism of second-generation European immigrants may be considered examples of this kind of response. (Brown 2000; Greenfeld 1992; Fromm 1960) Stronger evolutionary predispositions among certain individuals for genetic continuity and collective nepotism would have a similar effect. The reverse could also hold, with, for instance, wealth, peace, stability and security leading to higher ontological security and a more voluntarist view of symbolic resources. (Inglehart 1990; Norris and Inglehart 2004) Likewise, those whose evolutionary predispositions incline them toward individualism might favour a more voluntaristic interpretation of national symbols so

as to maximise space for 'optional ethnicity'. (Waters 1990) Similar mechanisms could operate with respect to family structure, childhood experiences and personal biographies which might skew an individual's inclinations toward voluntary or organic responses, with a predilection for some symbols and not others.

### National Identities Can Become Ideologies

Let us return to the optical model in all its complexity, as in figure 3. We may well be able to imagine how the juxtaposition of particular lenses may lead an individual to 'see' a specific national picture which highlights certain resources and not others. This identity will be distinct to the individual, but may well overlap significantly with the identities of other individuals in a territory to produce a consensual national or ethnic identity. Such an identity may come to be codified into a collective representation by the media, historians, the state, patriotic societies and the like. If a consensus on symbolic emphases is long-lived, it may calcify in certain ways to produce a distinct *mythomoteur*<sup>3</sup> in which certain symbols are viewed as important 'boundary symbols' or 'border guards' and are interpreted in regular ways for long periods of time. (Armstrong 1982; Smith 1986; Smith 1991: 23) The French emphasis on liberty and language, or the Jewish emphasis on its Abrahamic genealogy and distinct faith are examples. Thus groups of individuals can produce collective identities, which can in turn influence individuals in the manner outlined by Giddens' theory of structuration. (Giddens 1984) This produces the full, dynamic model, as shown in figure 4, in which individual identities can crystallise into collective ideologies, affect interests or shape referents.

[Figure 3 here]

[Figure 4 here]

Naturally the importance of symbols in a nation's collective representation will also depend on the symbols used by the relevant others against which the group identifies itself (i.e. Muslim mass conversion to Judaism would lower the significance of religion as a symbolic resource of Jewishness). That said, such oppositional relationships and memories can often be extremely long lasting, as with the French-English or Chinese-Japanese antinomies. Complex patterns of collective consensus, such as the defensive and fragile sense of identity of Ulster-Protestants, Israeli Jews and Afrikaners, or the confident missionary identity of Americans and English, are also important and may endure for centuries. (Roshwald 2006: 234; Kumar 2003) All of which should alert us to the dynamic nature of this model in which an overlap of individual identities can produce a new national representation (based on a distinct interpretation of symbolic resources) which then serves as a particularist ideological lens (i.e. Zionism or Irish nationalism) to take its place alongside other, more universal ideological lenses which it may complement or contest. Thus individuals' national identities, when codified into collective representations, can become ideologies - lenses influencing individuals' subsequent interpretation of symbolic resources. Identities involve an individual 'seeing' a particular pattern in symbolic resources, and placing distinct emphases therein. In this sense, collective representations serve as ideological lenses which steer individuals' identity with their nation in a certain direction, leading to less individual variation and a greater degree of uniformity in national outlook.

Can this rescue the 'ethnic-civic' idea? After all, could it not be said that American or French national identity has crystallised into a collective representation in which a voluntarist interpretation of the country's symbolic resources has been institutionalised? Could the reverse not be said about Japan or Ireland, with their organic, 'ethnic' national identities? This would also lend credence to those who argue that nationalism in the 'immigrant societies' of the New World is qualitatively different to that of Asia and Europe. (Doyle and Pamplona 2006; Smith 1991: 40) A claim sometimes used to assert that the integration of immigrants is more problematic in Europe than in America. (Jenkins 2007:24, 113, 170; Salins 1997) 'Germans just can't believe that it [American national identity] is not based on blood', remarks Francis Fukuyama, who views the American model as more conducive to assimilation than the European. (Fukuyama 1997)

The notion that certain societies are characterised by a 'civic' form of national identity, independent of the strength of liberal, socialist or other universalist ideology, is the logical conclusion. Yet even a brief glance at the history of France, Ireland or the United States shows that all have experienced both organic and voluntarist moments. The Dreyfus Affair in France, the 1924 National Origins immigration act in the U.S. and De Valera's Gaelic-Catholic ethnic nationalism in Ireland are one side of the story; 1789 in France, the Civil Rights Act in America and the repeal of restrictions on abortion in Ireland showcase a different aspect. To wit, the biorhythm of 'ethnic nationalism' runs countercyclically to that of liberalism, with 'ethnic' or 'civic' nationalism a tail wagged by the dog of ideology. (Joppke 2005; Kaufmann 2002, 2000a) True, the historic discourse of liberals or other universalists in a particular setting is an important symbolic resource for subsequent liberals who wish to advance a more inclusive interpretation of their national identity. Their liberal

interpretations of the nation's identity - here one thinks of Renan in France, Defoe in Britain or Crèvecoeur in the United States - can help future liberals legitimate their arguments. Such liberal national collective representations can persist for generations, but only in ideologically hospitable climes. A return to a more illiberal *weltanschauung*, as in the 1900-1914 period, would shatter existing collective representations and produce a rapid reorientation of even the most 'civic' nation's identity in an organic direction as ideological lenses rotate.

Having said this, the realm of symbolic resources is one where the Old/New World distinction has some merit. The fact that European settlers conquered aboriginal peoples in the Americas and Australasia and subsequently grew through immigration is important because it problematises a nationalist discourse of native indigenes. The aborigines of Europe (i.e. Basque or Celtic-speakers) and Asia (i.e. Nagas, Karen), by contrast, were largely assimilated/exterminated in a time lost to historical memory, so a more plausible claim to indigenes on the part of organic nationalists becomes feasible. Even here, however, the Basque country, Hokkaido in Japan, and the more inaccessible parts of Taiwan, South China, India, and Indochina give the lie to any simple New-Old World differences. In addition, most New World societies have founding ethnic majority groups, with immigration stemming from very few sources until the twentieth century. In this regard, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana and a few other plantation societies are multicultural exceptions rather than the rule. Spanish, British or French-dominated New World settler genealogies are as much a resource for these nations as their immigrant or liberal origins, albeit for organic rather than liberal nationalists.

The case of 'New World' societies shows that while resources clearly matter, ideology, material interests and other lenses are typically sufficient to swing the

valence of national identity in an organic or voluntarist direction. Postcolonial societies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, face a different dilemma. They tend to lack *both* the 'traditions of statehood' and the majority settler ethnic origins and culture which have played a strong role in much of the Americas. Thus we find a heavy emphasis on 'official' collective representations of nationhood, strongly influenced by ideological lenses like socialism, nationalism or Islamism. Lacking unifying genealogical, historical and cultural resources, such nations either fabricate these or search for contemporary projects (warfare, architecture) to provide symbols. When ideological consensus breaks down, dominant ethnic coalitions, such as those led by the Kikuyu of Kenya, BaKongo in Congo or (South) Ivoirian in Côte D'Ivoire, assert a more organic national identity based on their own genealogy, whose exclusions can lead to war. (Horowitz 1985: chs. 7 and 8; Marshall-Fratani 2006; Jackson 2006)

Ethnic diasporas face a distinct predicament: most of their symbolic resources are located in their homeland, yet they must identify themselves in such a way as to confer meaning upon their existence in their host societies. One option is to point to ethnic symbols which have been generated in the host society, such as the geography of ethnic enclaves like East Los Angeles for Mexican-Americans, or Chinatown in San Francisco for Chinese. There are also new ethnic symbols like Mexican-American 'lowrider' cars, Algerian-French rap music or Jewish-American slang. New world ethnic histories, like Japanese wartime internment or Polish immigrant experiences at the turn of the last century (i.e. Ellis Island, factory labour) are other resources that may be used to minimise dissonance between host and homeland. With very few exceptions (i.e. diaspora Jews, Armenians), diaspora symbolism in the hostland lacks the richness that it contains in the homeland.



Some immigrant groups will have more hostland resources than others.

Identification with a comfortable hostland diaspora identity is often difficult due to the absence of ethnic resources in the hostland. Nevertheless, the lenses of ideology, material interests and psychological alienation are also crucial. Muslims in Europe come from a poorer background than their middle-class brethren in the United States and enter the host society at the bottom of the status order while American Muslims can situate themselves as 'white', i.e. above both African and Hispanic-origin Americans. Islamist ideology, combined with psychological alienation and a paucity of symbolic resources in their host society, alters the identity equation for many European Muslims. A mythic, trans-ethnic umma thereby takes precedence over homeland ethnic roots as Bangladeshi, Turkish or Maghrebin Arab. (Malik 2007)

#### Theoretical Implications

We have arrived at the terminus in our journey through the optical model. This begs the question: so what? The partisans of today's theoretical debates will want a clear answer as to which theory has achieved 'most favoured' status in this model. In other words, what is the relative weight which we should attach to ideology, interests, situation, psychology and symbolic resources when it comes to explaining patterns of political identity? This would be to ask a question that the model cannot answer. Instead, the model provides an overview of the whole: of the psychological, structural, geographic, material and historic factors which shape identity; and of the individual and the collective. It offers a heuristic tool which enables us to visualise and juxtapose competing theories and ask questions about how different explanatory variables interact over time in particular cases. It enables us to come to grips with the

vexed question of the relationship between collective and individual identities, between the observable national discourses produced by elites, and the invisible shared understandings which link individuals. We can simulate what happens to identity at the individual and group levels with a change in the ideological climate or the constellation of interests, or with a shift in individual(s) social location and psychological stimuli.

The theory permits us to see that sociobiological theories are anchored in psychology, instrumentalist and rational choice theories in interests, while ethnosymbolist arguments locate the power of nationalism in historically-stable particularist ideologies, anomic psychological predispositions and the historic endowment of symbolic resources. This raises the interesting issue of continuity for ethnosymbolist theory since ethnosymbolism rests on three explanatory stools: ideology, resources and psychology. For example, the argument that the national consciousness of the ancient Greeks is not continuous with modern Greek nationalism, or that this continuity was interrupted, is a sensible one. It is a critique of the nationalist conceit of 'retrospective nationalism', the idea that 'our nation' has always been conscious of its being. (Smith 2004) In other words, that 'we have always had' this national ideology.

For Umut Özkirimli, abandoning the idea of a continuity of consciousness is fatal to ethnosymbolism, as he explains in his critique of John Hutchinson, where he states that the meaning of Joan of Arc (in France), 'as Hutchinson the postmodernist reminds us, changes from one group to the next, and fluctuates over time... I do not see how the suggested synthesis between ethnosymbolism and postmodernism can work. (Özkirimli 2007, forthcoming) However, the optical model suggests that Özkirimli has only kicked away one of the three stools underlying the ethnosymbolic

argument: the continuity of particularist ideology. It may well be the case that the medieval French deposited symbolic resources (including writings about how they saw their world) which constrained subsequent interpreters. Even if French collective consciousness was interrupted, the very existence of medieval French symbolic resources like Joan introduces an element of path-dependency and constraint into the imaginings of the modern inhabitants of France. Resources are multiple and far from definitive, but their variety is not infinite: as with the Trinidadian Indian Muslims, modern French inhabitants could not invent an Arab past no matter how ideologically, psychologically or instrumentally advantageous.

A similar tale can be told for resources like the Bible, Koran or American Constitution. They do not singularly determine the identity of Christianity, Islam or the United States, but they remain powerful resources which may be pressed into service by future religious or national interpreters even if there is a major irruption in Christian, Muslim or American consciousness. The difficulty in attaining gun-control legislation in the United States, for instance, is increased by the Second Amendment, which will stand as a resource for future gun advocates even if the American gun culture, gun advocacy consciousness and the NRA can somehow be broken. Similarly, even in the event of Turkish or Persian national consciousness being forgotten, the significant pre-Islamic symbolic resources of these non-Arab Muslim countries will remain beneath the surface as sources of inspiration to future revivalists. They thereby make a successful unitary Muslim identity less likely and more fragile, though it is nearly impossible to quantify such an effect. The Phoenician legacy in Lebanon, Carthaginian legacy in Tunisia, Babylonian inheritance in Iraq and Moorish legacy in Spain may currently be dormant, but they do hint at certain possibilities which future national or ethnic leaders may choose to focus upon. They

also offer material for opponents of future national visions who can accuse new constructs of being untrue to the 'facts' of a territorial referent, thereby introducing plausibility constraints upon future inventors. In this sense, even seemingly 'dead' symbols can exercise influence from the grave over future identities by tipping the balance of probabilities in one direction or another.

This becomes especially likely if the resources are plentiful and time-hallowed (as with pre-Islamic archaeology and history in Egypt and Iran). It is less important where a particular territory has experienced sustained influence from all over the world. Perhaps cultural crossroads like Central Asia or Mauritius may qualify as offering unlimited possibilities for choice, though even here there are wide differences in the contribution of each historic source to the symbolic bank. As for the rest, resource endowments are much more circumscribed and hence more path-determining. It should also be stressed that future national 'archaeologists' searching for usable resources can re-enter into the consciousness of previous eras by reading contemporary accounts and imaginings. As noted, John Hutchinson, a leading exponent of ethnosymbolism, has recently admitted that nationalism is a highly episodic rather than continuous phenomenon. He defends ethnosymbolist theory against its critics on the grounds of symbolic resources rather than discursive continuities. In his response to Özkirimli's critique of ethnosymbolism, Hutchinson replies: ' His [Özkirimli's modernist] model fails to give weight either to the history or the content of the ethnicity in the name of which nationalists act...' (Hutchinson 2007, forthcoming)

None of this should be taken to imply that the optical model endorses ethnosymbolism. Far from it. Ethnosymbolism does not trump instrumentalism, sociobiology or anomic mass society theory simply because its power derives from

three explanatory alternatives rather than one. Those three sources in combination may well explain less of the variance in the thoughts and actions of individuals than the single sources which the other theories draw upon. Instead, the point is that an optical model helps us to locate the explanatory sources of any theory. Given a particular individual(s), one may even be able to assign degrees of strength to each explanatory aspect of the model for a particular case in order to predict how individuals and collectives may identify.

Can an optical model speak to concrete questions of power? The model says more about the *shape* that political conflict may take than it does about the *scale* of such conflict, which quantitative political scientists trace to factors like low income, difficult terrain, semi-democracy and state weakness. (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Marshall and Gurr 2003) Yet an optical model is suggestive in that if contending identity shapes or memories clash, conflict is more likely. Greater Turkism and Greater Greekness are more likely to spark international conflict than 'little' versions of the two, though 'little' versions often press hard upon internal minorities and hence may be more likely to stoke intra-state ethnic conflicts. Organic interpretations of certain symbolic resources may render adjacent identities less flexible, leading to inter-ethnic conflict, though voluntarist readings of politics may incline a society toward belligerent expansion and international conflict. Thus the most prominent domestic opponents of American and Russian imperial expansion in the nineteenth century were not liberals, but Anglo-Protestant and Slavophile ethnic nationalists who feared cultural dilution. (Moorhead 1994; Hutchinson 2005; Beisner 1968)

Though culture differences *per se* have not been found to correlate with violence, memories of previous independence do. (Gurr 2000; Marshall and Gurr 2003) Thus a sensitivity to variations in symbolic resources might add considerably to

the power of large-N quantitative models. Quantitative applications of this optical model would certainly place a heavy burden on coders and surveyors to accurately gauge the strength of the resources and lenses operating in a given situation, something which would demand a great deal of local knowledge and survey depth, but - given the breadth of emerging tools like the Minorities at Risk dataset - is not outside the realm of the possible.

## Conclusions

This article attempts to delineate a comprehensive theory of political identity based on an optical metaphor. It is especially applicable to national and ethnic identities. The theory envisions individuals' national identity arising from the juxtaposition of a territorial referent, interpretive lenses and symbolic resources. 'Light' from the referent passes through the lenses to focus on specific resources in voluntary or organic ways. The principal lenses are ideology, interests, social and geographic perspective, and psychological predisposition. Each lens refracts light from the national referent upon certain symbolic resources to create a distinct national identity for each individual. Individuals' national identities frequently overlap in content, and this may lead to the production of national discourses, or collective representations, which act as further ideological lenses that can draw the national identities of individuals into closer alignment over time. In this sense we can speak of a shared sense of national identity which may last for a considerable period of time. Even so, variation in the popularity of ideologies and fluctuations in the material interests of the elites who produce national discourse, combined with the divergent

social locations, interests and individual psychologies of those who consume national discourse often leads to challenges to 'official' versions of national identity.

This model does not favour any particular theory of nationalism, but instead arrays various explanatory factors and their interactions in one space to show how different constellations produce particular patterns of national identity among individuals and groups. In the process, it reveals why there can be national identities before nationalist ideologies take shape, why both supply and demand factors are important for national identity, why the ethnic-civic dichotomy so often breaks down and how local and regional identities relate to the national. It bridges the individual and collective levels of analysis and clarifies the complex interplay between universal ideology and particularist identity. The model also offers a meeting ground for competing theories. It foregrounds the role of psychology, situational factors and ideology, which sit uneasily within the reigning ethnosymbolist-modernist or primordialist-instrumentalist paradigms. In the final analysis, an optical model of identity can be adapted to suit referents beyond the nation, such as local, supranational or transnational communities. Though more of a heuristic device than a predictive tool, the various lenses and resources could in principle be coded for quantitative strength to predict outcomes in particular cases or in cross-national datasets. This, however, would require considerable knowledge of the symbolic resources and interpretive frameworks operating in each case.

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<sup>1</sup> Many rational choice theorists accept that an agent's interests can extend beyond wealth and power while a considerable number of neo-Marxists allow at least some scope for ideological motivations. Furthermore, even if they shun the role of culture, materialists accept that identities and ideologies can arise as second-order phenomena.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this was Hastings' counter to Smith's claim that while nations have modern roots, fully-fledged nations could not exist without the post-1789 ideology of nationalism. (Hastings 1997)

<sup>3</sup> Defined by Armstrong as 'the constitutive myth of the ethnic polity'. (Armstrong 1982)