

NATIONALISM AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

For we must never forget that the nationalist solution was adopted not only by many intellectuals in search of their roots but also by many others for whom a similar quest for roots, though it may have possessed other meanings, became equally paramount and for whom a similar solution, the nation, was equally necessary and attractive. It is to these others, and their national identity, that I now turn.

Smith 1991, ch.5

CHAPTER 5

Nations by Design?

As a doctrine of culture and a symbolic language and consciousness, nationalism's primary concern is to create a world of collective cultural identities or cultural nations. While it does not determine which units of population are eligible to become nations, nor why they do so, nationalism plays a large part in determining *when* and *where* nations will be formed. It is at this point that nationalism enters the political arena. As a doctrine and language of polycentric uniqueness, a modern, secular equivalent of the old doctrine of chosen peoples, nationalism might have remained a purely cultural and social vision and consciousness, largely divorced from the political realm, as was the case with many ethnic communities in pre-modern eras. The fact that nationalism often fails to recognize the boundary between the private realm of culture and the public one of politics suggests that other components of nationalism discussed in chapter 4, as well as certain features of the modern world, have a direct political impact, irrespective of the intentions of particular groups and versions of nationalism.

In other words, what we mean by national identity comprises both a cultural and political identity and is located in a political community as well as a cultural one. This is significant because it means that any attempt to forge a national identity is also a political action with political consequences, like the need to redraw the geopolitical map or alter the composition of political regimes and states. Creating a 'world of nations' has profound consequences for the global system of states as well as for individual states.

The politics of national identity are complicated by the duality of concepts of the nation, the ethnic and the territorial model, described in chapter 1. This has led to attempts to create two very different kinds of national political identity and community. The first (in historical sequence usually) has been the territorial type of political nation; the second the ethnic type of political nation. In each case a rather different model of political identity and community is

envisaged, drawing from the different neo-classical/rational and indigenous/romantic cultural sources discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter I shall be concerned mainly with attempts to create *territorial* political identities and communities; in the next chapter, with the ethnic reaction that these attempts have provoked and the problems of polyethnic states.

EMPIRES INTO NATIONS

Historians commonly distinguish the growth of the 'old, continuous nations' of the West from the more deliberate creation of nations in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. In Western Europe nations were to all intents and purposes in place before the rise of nationalism, the ideology, language and aspiration, during the eighteenth century. Outside the West the formation of nations followed the diffusion of nationalism in the relevant area. In Western Europe nations were largely unplanned. Outside the West they were largely the result of nationalist purposes and movements. The West acquired nations almost by accident; in other parts of the globe nations were created by design.¹

From a Western standpoint this distinction has much to commend it. I have, in chapter 3, argued that Western nations, the first nations, did in part antedate the rise of nationalism, and emerged as an unintended consequence of processes of bureaucratic incorporation by aristocratic 'lateral' *ethnies*, whose ruling classes could by no stretch of the imagination be called 'nationalist'. But even here we need to exercise care. It remains an open question how much weight should be attached to royal centralization and homogenization from the fifteenth century, as opposed to Jacobin and subsequent nationalisms, in creating the French nation. The element of 'design' is not wholly absent even in the English, and later British, case; witness Tudor and Stuart centralization in opposition to papal Rome and Spain, the impact of Puritan ethnic 'nationalism' and the use of a rising tide of national sentiment in Britain from 1770 to 1820.²

Nevertheless, it remains true that, by comparison with non-Western cases, the rise of Western nations owed much less to nationalism and a movement to create a 'nation where none existed'. In non-Western instances of the formation of nations the specifically

nationalist element, as an ideological movement, assumes greater importance. That importance, and hence the role of 'invention' and 'construction' in the formation of national identity, varies considerably, depending in great part on the pre-existing local ethnic configuration. It is also influenced by the nature and activities of the preceding political system and institutions.

We distinguished in chapter 3 two routes in the formation of nations. One was the process of bureaucratic incorporation leading to the rise of territorial and civic political nations, the other a process of vernacular mobilization for the creation of ethnic and genealogical political nations. If we confine our attention to the first route, we can subdivide it outside the West into an 'imperial' and a 'colonial' route, according to the nature and activities of the political system preceding the formation of the nation. In the first case the unit in question is formally sovereign and independent; it requires not a movement of liberation from alien rule but rather a transformation of its political system and cultural self-definition. In the second case not only must a new cultural identity be forged but also the unit, as a dependent colony, requires to be liberated from rule by alien powers and become independent and sovereign.

Let me start with the independent states and the 'imperial' route. How is a national political identity forged in these cases? How was, or is, it possible to transform states and empires like Russia, China, Japan, Persia, Ottoman Turkey and Ethiopia into 'compact' political communities and 'territorial nations'?

The main characteristics of the polities that initiated the processes of forming nations, and the route by which this may be achieved, have included the following.

1. Their *aristocratic base* in a 'lateral' *ethnie*. Though they may include demotic elements (as in the Russian, Ethiopian, Turkish and Japanese cases), the state is suffused by an aristocratic culture and traditions, often permeated with religious and priestly influences.
2. Their *inclusion of significant ethnic minorities*. This varies considerably, with some empires including many large minorities (for example, Russia, Ethiopia, Ottoman Turkey), others only a few (Japan).
3. The '*modernizing*' character of their bureaucratic states.

Again, this varies in degree (compare Japan with Ottoman Turkey or Ethiopia), but it represents the consolidation of a dominant ethnic core and ruling class over subordinate *ethnies* and classes.

4. The frequent use of 'official' and institutional nationalism. In order to consolidate their hold and homogenize the population into a compact nation, the ruling class seeks to assimilate ethnic minorities through an educational programme of nationalism, backed by major institutions. To this end, they promote official, establishment ideas and images of the nation, to which everyone must conform and which preclude the rise of any other ideas, symbols or imagery.

How successful has the imperial route and its programme of official nationalism proved in transforming ethnic states and empires into compact territorial political nations?

Success in this field has depended on both geopolitical and social changes. Broadly speaking, movement towards the goal of the nation-state has been swifter where the dominant *ethnie* and its rulers have been able to divest themselves of their imperial heritage, usually by redrawing their borders, as in the Turkish case, or where 'empire' did not include other, contiguous or overseas territories and their ethnically different inhabitants, as with Japan.

Socially, movement towards the goal of the nation-state has been swifter to the extent that the old ruling aristocracy has been replaced, though not necessarily by violence, by middle and lower classes, whilst simultaneously preserving and adapting their ethnic cultural heritage. Too sharp a repudiation of that heritage stores up problems of cultural, and political, identity for the future unless there is a vibrant alternative demotic community to hand within the dominant ethnic core.

Judged by these criteria, the imperial route for forming territorial political nations has had only partial success to date. This may be seen by considering a few empirical examples.

1. *Russia* The last century of tsarist rule saw both the attempted modernization (often interrupted) of social and political institutions and the use of an official nationalism to Russify large parts of the empire's populations and assimilate them through the imposition of

Russian culture and Orthodoxy. At the same time the gulf between rulers and ruled within the dominant Russian ethnic core widened, despite the abolition of serfdom in 1861; the westernized culture of the aristocracy and the Orthodox beliefs and rituals of the peasant masses expressed antithetical visions of 'Russia'.³

The October Revolution repudiated both visions for a Marxist 'proletarian' alternative that sought to turn the Russian empire into a federation of soviet republics for the most important peripheral *ethnies*. But the civil war, the building of 'Socialism in One Country' and especially the dangers of the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis brought a partial return to the traditional, even religious, heritage of Great Russian nationalism. Today that heritage is sought more openly at the cultural, if not the institutional, level. At the same time, even so partial a return under *perestroika* has been accompanied by growing nationalist demands of non-Russian demotic *ethnies*, demands that could imperil the socialist vision and its federal expression.⁴

In these circumstances it has been found necessary to delay the programme of greater cooperation between the socialist nations of the USSR and to postpone, perhaps *sine die*, the ideal of their fusion. We can no longer easily envisage the growth of a Soviet national identity or a Soviet political community except as a truly federal commonwealth of separate national identities and political communities.⁵

2. *Turkey* The last seventy years of Ottoman rule witnessed successive attempts to reform the basis of the empire (*Tanzimat*), including a resort to 'Ottomanism' through equality and citizenship for all subjects and to 'Islamism' under Abdul Hamid, which promoted the welfare of the Islamic inhabitants without abolishing citizenship for all.

But the modernizing attempts by an aristocratic Islamic élite failed amid the break-up of first the Christian and then the Muslim parts of the empire. At this point a new pan-Turkist ideology emerged among sections of the intellectuals, and it was taken up by some of the professionals and military after the *coup d'état* of 1908, hastening the alienation of the non-Turkic parts of the empire, including the Arabs.⁶

It was this Turkic ideal, shorn of its extra-Anatolian irredentism, that Kemal Atatürk made the basis of his secular, westernizing nationalism. In effect he engineered the secession of the Turkish heartlands from the Ottoman empire and caliphate, repudiating Ottomanism and Islam and pushing through a series of modernizing social and cultural reforms in the cities that would redefine the empire as a compact territorial political community aligned to the ethnic nation of Anatolian Turks. But, realizing that territorial and civic concepts of the nation require a solidary basis in a national cultural identity, the Kemalists attempted to furnish the necessary ethnic myths, memories, values and symbols by utilizing the theory of Turkish origins in Central Asia, their unbroken descent from Oghuz Khan and the antiquity of their (purified) original language (the Sun Language theory).⁷

Despite the apparent success of the territorial concept, its ethnic underpinning encountered serious problems. The small towns and villages continued to display strong Islamic loyalties and sentiments; Turkic theories and symbolism failed to replace this wider allegiance, even among the merchants. Pan-Turkism retained vociferous adherents, while Marxism also has a small following. Once again the *content*, if not the form, of Turkish national identity, proved elusive.⁸

3. *Ethiopia* It was only in the late nineteenth century that the Ethiopian state expanded into an empire under Menelik to include large numbers of Muslims, several ethnic communities and categories like the Galla, the Somali in the Ogaden and a variety of groups in Eritrea. For centuries the dominant *ethnie* on the Abyssinian plateau had been the Christian Monophysite Amhara, but it was only in this century that their rulers pursued an official Amharic nationalism that sought to create an Amharized 'territorial nation'. Modernizing policies were also begun under Haile Selassie in the 1960s but too late to overcome the serious economic problems and head off the intelligentsia's challenge. After a disastrous famine, the military revolt of 1974 deposed the Lion of Judah but continued his modernizing and centralizing policies against Tigréan, Galla, Somali and Eritrean ethnic separatisms with Soviet support and even fiercer determination. To their Marxist anti-Christian and land reform

programmes was allied an ethnic resettlement policy, one of whose aims was to promote the Dergue's vision of a socialist African territorial nation. Yet here too identity problems abound. Despite the attack on the Monophysite Church, the Amhara remain dominant, and Mengistu's regime combines Marxist with Amharic Christian symbolism; maintenance of Ethiopian borders owes more to Menelik than to Marx. Too sharp a repudiation of the aristocratic-clerical past may destroy Ethiopia's *raison d'être* if the borders are not to be redrawn.⁹

4. *Japan* Without doubt the most successful case of modernizing nationalism by the imperial route, Japan nevertheless suffers identity problems, at both the cultural and the political level.

More homogeneous and geopolitically rooted than most, the Japanese ethnic community was united in the early medieval era by the legacy of the Heian and Nara empires and by the emergence of successive feudal states (the Kamakura, Ashikaga and Tokugawa shogunates) despite long periods of civil war between feuding lords. By the early seventeenth century Japan had evolved into an ethnic state with only the small Ainu minority (later supplemented by Koreans) dwelling in the north. Tokugawa feudal absolutism cemented the congruence of state and *ethnie* by (almost) sealing Japan's borders with the outside world.¹⁰

The Meiji Restoration of 1868, led by some *samurai* factions, replaced the shogunal system by a modernizing Imperial one, open to necessary outside influences but bent on achieving political parity with the West through economic and political reform under imperial auspices.

To this end the Meiji élites utilized Confucian and peasant traditions of loyalty to one's lord, familism (*ie*) and the village community (*mura*) to reinforce the dominance of the emperor system, turn a politically passive and economically fragmented ethnic community into a more cohesive, economically centralized and mobilized political community and thereby create a Japanese national political identity. Here Meiji political nationalism created the modern Japanese nation on the basis of aristocratic (*samurai*) culture and its ethnic state, while also utilizing those demotic peasant traditions that could be integrated into the ruling imperial system.¹¹

The results have been problematic despite the secure ethnic basis of modern Japanese national identity. The emperor system (*tennosen*), as the bulwark of aggressive nationalism and Fascism during the Second World War, has been deprived of its former mystique and position and remains under a cloud, at least for the time being. With that loyalty in abeyance, the foundations of Japanese national political identity have been shaken, though some advocate a prudent 'revivalist' political nationalism. In its place there has re-emerged the periodic Japanese preoccupation with national distinctiveness, notably in the literature known as *nihonjinron* (discussions of the Japanese), which is a vital element of any cultural nationalism concerned with redefining a national cultural identity. Though formulated by intellectuals drawn from various strata, this concern has been taken up by business élites in the large Japanese companies who stress the distinctive social and holistic culture of Japan. But how far this can prove a durable and comprehensive base for Japanese national identity, cultural or political, remains to be seen.¹²

In these examples nationalism, the ideology and symbolism, has grafted a new concept of national political identity on to a pre-existing 'lateral' ethnic identity. This process has met with only partial success, depending on the degree of cultural homogeneity of the state's population – that is, the degree to which it constituted an ethnic state – and whether it was able to divest itself of empire and hence of culturally different communities. Where the process has been relatively successful, nationalist ideals and symbolism have helped to redefine an imperial community as a fairly compact nation and political community.

COLONIES INTO NATIONS

By far the greater number of non-western states started out as colonies of outside (usually overseas) European powers. In most of these cases both cultural and political identities were lacking. Any identity or solidarity that a colonial population possessed was initially the product of the incorporation and changes brought by the colonial power. In the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Belgian Congo, Kenya, Egypt, Iraq, India, Burma and Indonesia, to take some examples, the nation that is (usually still) being forged has been defined, in its boundaries and character, by the colonial state.

There is a vast literature on the colonial state. Given the variety of European colonial policies – French, Belgian, Portuguese, British, Italian, German and Russian (in Central Asia and the Caucasus) – any generalization about the impact of colonialism is hazardous. But certain aspects, while not true of every instance, were widespread.

These include the following.

1. The overseas alien ethnic basis of the colonial state and its administrative élites. As Alavi highlighted, the colonial state was an outgrowth not of indigenous civil society but of metropolitan society mixed, however, with executive characteristics not tolerated within the metropolis. In other words, the colonial state was a hybrid: an alien executive instrument of a culturally different political community.¹³
2. The creation by treaty and political fiat of administrative boundaries that only partially took ethnic boundaries into account and the bureaucratic inclusion of previously separate ethnic communities and categories within a single political system. Not only did the colonial state vastly increase the scale of many units (even in India, which had only once been united for a brief period under the Mauryas); it also for the first time defined a territorial space for the interaction and loyalty of the included populations.¹⁴
3. The growth of a territorial patriotism based on this space and limited by these boundaries. This entirely novel territorial patriotism was directly encouraged by most administrative authorities (less so in French West Africa, where a policy of 'identity' with France was practised – by African élites); it was also the product of economic exchange and economic and legal regulation by the colonial regime within each territory. The upshot was an incipient sense of attachment to 'Nigeria', 'Kenya', 'Burma' among an élite.¹⁵
4. The rise to prominence of professional and educated strata in each colony, either through direct colonial policy or, in spite of colonial barriers, through higher-level educational provision (as in the Belgian Congo). This 'intelligentsia' normally played a key role in the subsequent nationalist movement.¹⁶
5. The provision by missionaries and missionary education,

but also by others, of ideals of emancipation and liberation from colonial rule. Here the link with the intelligentsia is most apparent; it was this stratum that became most imbued with such ideals and sought to realize them in practice.

6. The depreciation of indigenous peoples and their cultures even when they were preserved, by colonial bureaucrats, traders and soldiers – sometimes on a selective basis – and often with strong racial motives.¹⁷

The nationalisms that have characterized the colonial setting are, not surprisingly, termed 'anti-colonial' by many writers. The implication is that their potential is exhausted with the achievement of their goal of independence from the colonial power. They are not 'true' nationalist movements because there is no actual or potential nation available (with a few exceptions like Somalia). There is another aspect of this anti-colonialism: its westernizing orientation, coupled with the exclusion of its proponents, the intelligentsia. These nationalisms are literally anti-colonial in the sense that they originate with the exclusion of that intelligentsia from the colonial bureaucracy and are directed at correcting this state of affairs. We are back with 'resentment', the anger and frustration of the intellectuals – now the intelligentsia – at their unmerited exclusion, heightened in this case by the one-sided love affair of so many of the intelligentsia with the West and its values. Truly, colonial nationalisms are still-born; they are imitative 'nationalisms of the intelligentsia', unable to forge real nations.¹⁸

That there *was* exclusion of the intelligentsia from the upper echelons of many colonial bureaucracies is not in dispute. Such exclusion was structural and cultural, a combination of an excess of qualified graduates and educated personnel to posts in the colonial bureaucracies, often combined with racial discrimination against black or mixed-origin candidates, however qualified, notably in India and British Africa, much less so in French West Africa.¹⁹ This helps to explain the earlier and more assertive politicization of sections of the intelligentsia in the British colonies. Yet, the fact that a strong cultural movement of *Négritude* emerged later in French territories in the West Indies and West Africa suggests that bureaucratic exclusion of the intelligentsia is only one, albeit important,

factor in the genesis of colonial nationalisms. The depreciation of indigenous cultures must also be allowed its due, as must the attempts by a semi-Westernized intelligentsia to 'return' to the peasant masses.²⁰

In fact, colonial nationalisms cannot be reduced to a single motor, however important and widespread. Their variety reflects the many differences in their backgrounds and influences. The degree of economic development of a colony and area, the extent to which capitalism has penetrated indigenous social structures, the nature of indigenous resources and infrastructure (ports, roads, etc.) the presence of settler communities, the thrust of colonial economic and political policies in each territory and the extent of urban growth and educational provision were among the many factors that influenced the timing, scope, direction and intensity of particular colonial nationalisms. Equally important was the nature of the cultural influences to which the intelligentsia and bourgeoisie in a particular colony were exposed. It has been shown that in British and French West Africa, for example, the influence of Rousseau and Mill helped to shape the aspirations, language and ideology of nationalist movements in the area, whereas in India to these influences were subsequently added those of Herder and the German Romantics, particularly in the thinking of Aurobindo and Tilak.²¹ Arab nationalists were similarly drawn to German Romantic notions of language and national soul and mission, whereas Zionism was shaped by Russian populism and by Western liberalism (in Herzl's formulations).²²

Even so brief a sketch of the factors involved in the genesis of colonial nationalisms reveals the limitations of the literal meaning of the term 'anti-colonialism'. But, by the same token, does it not also confirm their fundamentally 'imitative' and 'reactive' character? Have not the African and Asian intelligentsias imbibed their nationalisms abroad and used them to 'invent nations where none existed'?

Again, the fact that many members of the colonial intelligentsia were influenced in their nationalist thinking by European sources, whether through study or travel abroad or through libraries and books at home, is not in doubt. Nor is the profound influence of Western scholarship. It was the research of Jones, Müller, Renan, Cahun, Arminius Vámbéry, Zimmer, Rhys and other scholars that

helped to define the character, boundaries and problems of the area or community in question, as well as spreading to non-European areas the language and concepts of nationalism, even if unintentionally.²³

But such research fell on fertile soil. The 'diffusion of ideas' thesis deals with only a part of the explanation of the rise of nationalism; its relevance, as we shall see, is more for demotic nationalisms based on 'vertical' *ethnies* than for the shaping of territorial cultural and political identities. The fact is that sufficient numbers of the African, Latin American and Asian intelligentsias were receptive to European romantic and nationalist influences at particular junctures, and this requires separate explanation. I shall return to this question in the next chapter.

THE 'INVENTION' OF NATIONS?

Our concern here is with the civic and territorial nationalisms that emerged from the colonial framework to provide one vehicle for the formation of new political identities in Latin America, Africa and Asia. How far were these identities the inventions of colonial intelligentsias and their successors? How, in fact, are the new nations of Africa, Asia and even Latin America being created?

There seem to be two main ways of creating civic, territorial nations outside Europe. The first is the 'dominant *ethnie*' model, in which the culture of the new state's core ethnic community becomes the main pillar of the new national political identity and community, especially where the culture in question can claim to be 'historic' and 'living' among the core community, as with the Javanese culture in Indonesia. Though other cultures continue to flourish, the identity of the emerging political community is shaped by the historic culture of its dominant *ethnie*.

Egypt presents a striking example. Though the Coptic minority continues to flourish, it is the Arabic-language, Islamic culture of the majority of the community that predominates as the official national identity. On one level Egypt affords a prime example of the compact territorial nation; at another, its cultural identity reveals different historical layers, so that in this century a purely Egyptian 'pharaonism' can be counterposed to a broader, dominant Islamic

Arabism. These cultural differences have spilled over periodically into the political realm: an earlier political sentiment of 'Egypt for the Egyptians' gave way under Nasser to an expansionist demotic Arabism, only to return in muted form to a narrower Egyptian focus under his successors. How far Egyptian leaders can integrate their civic, territorial model with the Islamic popular aspirations of the majority remains to be seen. But in practice 'invention' of an Egyptian nation is heavily circumscribed by pre-existing ethno-religious communal ties and sentiments.²⁴

In Burma too, despite a high level of conflict, the vivid and historic nature of the dominant Burman culture reduced the scope for the territorial 'invention' of a Burmese nation. It is the Burmans and their historic culture who are likely to shape the nature of any Burmese political identity, if only for demographic and historical reasons. The conflicts with Karen, Shan, Mon and other *ethnies* are the more protracted because of the vivid, active quality of Burmese ethnicity and historic culture, even if overlaid by the ideology of the present regime and the equally vibrant quality of ethnicity among the minority communities.²⁵

In Kenya too a process of Kikuyization is apparent. Here, however, the dominant ethnic community is periodically challenged by other communities, especially the Luo. Nevertheless, the nature of a 'Kenyan' territorial nation is heavily influenced by the aspirations, needs and culture of the dominant Kikuyu community. Similarly in Zimbabwe it is Shona culture and historical memories that are likely to shape any emerging sense of Zimbabwean identity, despite the need to accommodate the aspirations of the important Ndebele minority community.²⁶

In these cases the process of constructing the nation is less one of 'invention' than of 'reconstructing' the ethnic core and integrating its culture with the requirements of a modern state and with the aspirations of minority communities. In this respect it resembles, to a certain extent, the situation of late medieval kingdoms in Europe. They too were built up, as we have seen, around ethnic cores and expanded to embrace adjacent lands and ethnic communities, which it then became necessary to suppress or accommodate. In the African and Asian cases, however, the time span is quite different, and so is the ideological context. Given the geopolitical situation, regimes in

the new states are under considerable and immediate pressure to create nations such as exist in Europe and America, if only to be able to compete in the international arena. Besides, ideologically they are committed to 'nation-building', which in practice means state-building combined with national integration and mobilization; this too requires the formation of a national cultural and political identity that clearly differentiates it from its neighbours. It is tempting to use the cultural distinctiveness of the dominant *ethnie* to hand to forge the political and cultural identity of a new nation and at the same time opt for a popular mass-mobilizing solution to the problem of creating a 'new' nation in a post-colonial framework.

The second way to create civic, territorial nations in the colonial setting is to find ways of creating a supra-ethnic 'political culture' for the new political community. In these cases there is no acknowledged dominant *ethnie*; either the new state contains a number of equally small ethnic communities and categories, none of which can dominate the state, as in Tanzania, or a number of rival *ethnies* as in Nigeria, Uganda, Zaire and Syria.

Nigeria affords the classic instance. With some two hundred and fifty ethnic communities and categories, and the three major regional *ethnies* accounting for some 60 per cent of the total population locked in political and economic competition, the colonial territory of 'Nigeria', created relatively recently by the British, furnished one of several bases for the formation of nations in the aftermath of independence. Given the near-parity and rivalry of the three main ethnic communities, the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Ibo, the construction of a Nigerian cultural and political identity was bound to be an arduous task. In the event it required two coups, massacres of the Ibo and a ruinous civil war to create the conditions for moving towards the vision of a civic, territorial Nigerian nation. Continuing unease over the political predominance of any Hausa-Fulani ethnic coalition must render doubtful any attempt to forge a pan-Nigerian identity by political means. Given the deep cultural and religious differences, the 'trapped' minority status of some large *ethnies* (Efiks, Tiv, Ibibio) and the ability of the three largest communities to 'amass' the new administrative states created by the government (to secure larger shares of federal benefits), the chances of creating a common 'political culture' out of recent West African

colonial experiences and the nationalist struggle must remain problematic.²⁷

In other cases post-colonial regimes have tried to forge consciously supra-ethnic 'civil religions'. Zaire and Syria furnish examples of this strategy. In Zaire the regime of Mobutu has inculcated and propagated a common 'Zairian' symbolism and religion in a conscious effort to weld disparate *ethnies* and ethnic categories into a new nation of Zaire, free of the ethnic strife that marked the hasty departure of the Belgian colonial power and Katanga's secession.²⁸ In Syria Assad's regime seeks to forge a new socialistic Syrian political identity on the twin bases of army and Ba'ath Party ideology. But that ideology remains strongly pan-Arab and Islamic in character, drawing on symbols and memories of early Arab glory under the Umayyads and seeking to revive Damascus as the seat of a regenerated Arab nation, thereby surmounting ethnic and sectarian differences within Syria.²⁹

The position is rather more complicated in the Indian subcontinent. Though the Punjabis provide the dominant ethnic community in Pakistan, there are a number of competing *ethnies*; yet Islam provides a rationale for a wider territorial 'political culture' and the basis for a possible national identity, albeit heavily Punjabi in character. In India Hinduism functions in a similar manner, despite the presence of large religious minorities and even more competing *ethnies* and regions. Here the modern bureaucratic state imposed by the British was captured by northern and central Hindi-speaking and Hindu élites; and they have been trying to weld the many Indian regions and ethnic communities into a single secular, territorial nation by means of a series of interlocking institutions and cross-cutting ties and through Hindu myths, symbols and customs. A social religion is used paradoxically to create a measure of cultural homogeneity above the tolerated diversity of castes, regions, languages and ethnic groups. The revival of Hindu mythology and values by the mass-mobilizing nationalists became part of the overall strategy of forging a territorial political identity based on the achievements and boundaries of British rule and an all-India civil service.³⁰

The Indian example reveals the importance both of manufactured political ideology and identity and of pre-existing ethno-religious ties and symbols from which such an identity could be constructed.

The process involved both cultural and political levels of identity. On the one hand a new cultural concept of 'India', based on the rediscovery of a heroic Indo-Aryan past and its Vedic and Hindu legacy, had to be formulated and disseminated. On the other hand this 'Indian' population had to be mobilized as a single political force, not only against the British but also against persisting local caste, regional and linguistic-ethnic identities. A civic and territorial nationalism had to provide the framework in which a more demotic, vernacular Hindu mass-mobilization could be encouraged. Here the two routes to the formation of nations coexist, sometimes unhappily, providing alternative models of inspiration and visions of 'India'.³¹

How far, then, may we legitimately speak of the 'invention of nations' from colonies by the intelligentsia? In the majority of such cases the element of 'invention' is doubly circumscribed: first by the 'sanctity' of colonial units and boundaries as the basis of the new civic-territorial nation and, second, by the presence of a dominant *ethnie* whose culture and political identity necessarily shapes the character of the state and regime and hence of the emerging nation.

This pattern is found in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Burma, Sri Lanka, to some extent in India, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Kenya, Guinea and Zimbabwe . . . The fact that many of these dominant-*ethnie* states encounter fierce opposition from ethnic minorities within the state reveals the failure to 'invent' a new political culture and mythology, one that can encompass or transcend the ethnic identities of both dominant and minority *ethnie* at a time when ethnic nationalism is mobilizing the peripheral, demotic communities and giving them a new, self-aware political assertiveness.

The attempt by dominant *ethnies* – and nations – to use the modern state to incorporate other ethnic communities in the manner of West European state-making and nation-forming processes provoked often determined opposition from many demotic *ethnies*, which the fragile new state could barely contain, let alone subdue.³² The record to date does not lend support to the view that such territorial 'creations' possess the resources and stability, let alone the ability, to furnish acceptable political cultures that transcend ethnicity or to gain legitimacy for the political domination and culture of the predominant ethnic community.

What about new states in which no one *ethnie* was dominant? Were the chances of creating an acceptable political culture and political community higher in these cases?

The record to date has not been encouraging. Detaching individuals from their primary loyalties to their ethnic communities, at least to the extent of inculcating a larger, public loyalty to the 'state-nation', has been attempted in a number of cases but has had variable results. In Tanzania, where there have been no larger ethnic communities to compete for domination, the inculcation of a Tanzanian national identity has gone farthest, aided by the drive to a particular version of agrarian socialism and by the dominance of a single party and its highly respected leader. In other states, like Nigeria and Uganda, ethnic rivalries persist despite determined centralizing policies and administrative measures designed to depoliticize the major competing *ethnies*. But there has also been progress in securing a measure of attachment among the more educated middle class for the post-colonial territorial units through the state's determined use of political symbolism in the schools, press, radio and TV. At the same time some early post-colonial regimes sought to mobilize their polyethnic populations for participatory sacrifices through the agency of a vigorous 'political religion', in which the nation was viewed as sinless and seamless and the state (and leader) was seen as its political expression, as in Nkrumah's Ghana and Nasser's Egypt. This had the effect of legitimating a relatively novel concept, the territorial nation, and its accompanying political identity – legitimation that was reinforced by the strong stand taken by continental organizations like the OAU (in 1964) to uphold the colonial partition of Africa in the form of existing colonial boundaries.³³

This commitment to the sanctity of colonial boundaries has been maintained, despite some signs of a less rigid interpretation of the concept of the unitary territorial state, at least within its boundaries, as revealed in the Nigerian Constitution's nineteen states and the 1980 Sudanese experiment with six main regions, though this has not allayed southern suspicions of northern Islamic hegemony.³⁴

Such evidence, however, as well as the relative failure of ethnic secession movements to date, is negative. It illustrates at most the coercive and economic power of the state in its role as one of the

main employers and the fiscal manager. It tells us little about the growth of a clear cultural and political territorial identity among the population at large. As we shall see, attempts to mobilize the population for greater participation run considerable risks of ethnic fragmentation, particularly where the state apparatus is not equal to the task of containment.

Even in those states that have adopted a socialist or Marxist route towards transcending ethnicity, success in creating a mass 'political culture' has been partial to date. In Mozambique a unitary, territorial concept has been created in the absence of any dominant *ethnie* and in the wake of the political unification of the movements of resistance to Portuguese rule in the 1960s. But in Angola (as in Ethiopia and Burma) ethnicity has provided a base for political divisions leading to civil war, as the rival movements of resistance to Portuguese rule, based on the BaKongo, Ovimbundu and Akwambundu, failed to unite in their guerrilla struggles. Hence any progress towards creating a primary Angolan territorial political identity is bound to be slow and shaky.³⁵

More generally, the spate of periodic ethnic movements in non-Western states, whether they originated as parts of old empires or as colonies, is evidence of the revitalization of ethnic ties among demotic communities and the ethnic politicization of ethnic categories, all of which hamper efforts to 'invent' territorial nations where none existed. It is where the new state is built up around a dominant *ethnie*, as in the West itself, that, paradoxically, the best chance of creating a 'territorial nation' and political community exists.

THE 'CIVIC NATION' OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA

Can we characterize more fully the nature of the territorial political identity that non-Western nationalists have been striving to create? What type of community is it that their nationalism seeks to realize?

The answers to such questions will, of course, vary considerably in detail, and they must not be confused with a reality that is frequently a grotesque caricature of nationalist aspirations. Nevertheless, we can, I think, single out recurrent features of these territorial nationalisms and the political identities that they aim to forge. These include the following.

1. *Territorialism* I mean by this a political commitment not simply to particular boundaries, however they originated, but to a particular spatial and social location among other territorial nations. The basis of this commitment is a belief in the importance of residence and propinquity, as opposed to descent and genealogy. 'Living together' and being 'rooted' in a particular terrain and soil become the criteria for citizenship and the bases of political community. Often such criteria are wedded to notions of return to agrarian simplicity and self-sufficiency and to the rustic virtues corrupted by urban luxury.

The nation is conceived of as a territorial *patria*, the place of one's birth and childhood, the extension of hearth and home. It is also the place of one's ancestors and of the heroes and cultures of one's antiquity. Hence from the standpoint of a territorial nationalist it is quite legitimate to annex the monuments and artefacts of earlier civilizations in the same place, appropriating their cultural achievements to differentiate and glorify the territorial nation, which may (to date) lack achievements of its own. Contemporary Iraqis may therefore appropriate the ancient Babylonian culture from Hammurabi to Nebuchadnezzar; Ghanaians may appropriate the glories of the medieval empire of Ghana many miles to the north; and Zimbabweans may seek to incorporate the mysterious monument and civilization of Great Zimbabwe into their political self-image. In other words, the *patria* must become an historic territory.³⁶

2. *Participation* Of course, all nationalisms presuppose the active participation of all citizens, at least in theory. In practice such participation is often heavily circumscribed. What is important to territorial nationalists is the active participation of all citizens on a territorial and civic basis. It is a form of territorial populism that is often practised, an appeal over the heads of chiefs, elders, religious leaders, village headmen and the like to every potential citizen of the nation (or 'nation-to-be'). In the Gold Coast Nkrumah's Convention People's Party appealed, through its rural branches, to members of different ethnic communities and categories to form a populist following for the party and its leader. The basis of that appeal was not ethnic, religious or familial but to the individual as a resident, and hence citizen-to-be, of the territory and hence nation-to-be.³⁷

Similarly, the one-party system, which allows debate within the

organization, is organized on a territory-wide basis and seeks to involve in its activities every citizen throughout the territory of the state. (There are some exceptions to this rule, and we shall return to them in the next chapter.)

3. *Citizenship* This again is not unique to territorial nations (legal citizenship being a concomitant of any nation), but it assumes a peculiarly prominent role in territorial nations and nationalisms. For here citizenship is used not simply to underline membership of the nation and differentiate 'us' from 'them' but even more to outbid the claims of competing allegiances and identities, notably ethnic ones. Given the frequent salience of the latter, legal citizenship carries strong moral and economic overtones, becoming the main device for exclusion but also the chief agency of inclusion and benefits (in jobs, education, health care, etc.), irrespective of ethnic origins.

Again, this is a conception more honoured in the breach than the observance, but it remains the touchstone for progress towards the nationalist ideal of the civic-territorial nation and the basis on which individuals can claim legal rights in the political community.

4. *Civic education* This is potentially the most significant feature of territorial nationalism and the identity it seeks to create. Observers often remark on the seriousness with which the regimes of new states embark on campaigns for literacy and primary education of the whole population and, sometimes, for (some) secondary education. Equally important is the content of that education in the territorial nations. If the curriculum is secular and Western (except in some Islamic states), its spirit is largely 'civic' in character. That is to say, education is as much for the benefit of the national community as for the individual. There is far greater emphasis on the service to the community that the individual can provide, and the debt that he or she incurs, even if this is conveyed indirectly by social approval rather than by indoctrination.³⁸

A 'civic' emphasis in the education system is not confined to non-Western or territorial nationalisms. It may be traced back to the Jacobin *patriots* of the French Revolution and was a feature of the French Third Republic and of the education systems in the modern

United States. The point is only that, in the absence of a stress on vernacular education of ethnic members, the civic element plays a greater role exactly because of the weight placed on training for citizenship in territorial nations. If ethnic cleavages are to be eroded in the longer term, it is argued, this can be done only by a pronounced emphasis on inculcating social mores in a spirit of civic equality and fraternity. Part at least of the contents of that education may be termed civic too. For it may be used to convey, through language (assuming there to be a *lingua franca*), history, the arts and literature, a political mythology and symbolism of the new nation (or the 'nation-to-be') that will legitimate its novel, even revolutionary, directions in the myths, memories, values and symbols of its anti-colonial struggle, its movements for social and political liberation and its visions of distant heroes and 'golden ages' that may inspire similar self-sacrifice today.³⁹

Cui bono? Whose interests do all these aspirations and ideals of territorial nationalists ultimately serve?

It would be tempting to answer: the interests of the bourgeoisie, the middle classes, even the intelligentsia – there would be some truth in each characterization depending on how one defined each social category – tempting, but ultimately misleading.

It may be true that, at the cultural level, nationalism, the ideology and language, is a product of intellectuals and that intellectuals tend to be attracted to its promise. At the political level, however, intellectuals proper are much less in evidence. Their place is taken, variously, by other groups. And, to complicate matters, the 'same' social category can possess different meanings in different societies.

This is relatively clear in the case of the bourgeoisie. The term can, of course, be specified precisely in the context of Marxist theory. But then its relevance is limited to capitalist or semi-capitalist societies. To enlarge it by including officers, police, top bureaucrats and politicians, traditional élites and leading members of the liberal professions, to make up what Markovitz calls the 'organizational bourgeoisie', is to dilute it to the point of destroying its explanatory power.⁴⁰ Similarly with the ubiquitous middle class(es) and the intelligentsia, which is variously described as 'free-floating' (Mannheim), 'modernizing' (J. H. Kautsky), the rising 'New Class' (Gouldner).⁴¹

In fact, the social composition of nationalist movements, viewed comparatively, is both cross-class and highly variable depending on the historical juncture and the phase of the movement. Not only 'workers' and 'peasants' (or segments thereof) but also officers, lower clergy, minor (sometimes major!) aristocrats, as well as intellectuals proper, merchants and industrialists, technicians and members of the liberal professions, can be found among their adherents. This should not surprise us. We have seen how complex, abstract and multi-dimensional is the concept of national identity – so much so that different social groups can at different historical junctures feel that their needs, interests and ideals are served in and through identification with the abstract but emotionally very concrete nation.⁴²

The question may, with these cautions, still be legitimately posed: *cui bono?* Whose interests, in particular, are served by national identifications on a territorial and civic basis at different times?

Once again it appears that one group in particular plays a prominent role in early territorial nationalisms, though other social groups are also frequently active. That group is often called the intelligentsia (here distinguished from the much smaller circles of intellectuals) if by that term we mean simply the professionals.

It was among these professionals (lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists, teachers, etc.) that early civic and territorial nationalisms found their primary support – though in certain instances a number of businessmen, managers and traders were also attracted to the promise of a centralized, regulated and territory-wide market in the new civic nation, wherever, of course, some degree of capitalist enterprise was permitted.

We should exercise caution in making such an assertion. The professionals do not usually originate the ideology of the civic nation. Theirs is a more practical role: that of disseminating the idea and realizing it in political institutions and activities. Nor do most of the intelligentsia – the professionals – usually participate in these activities. Many are concerned with their own career prospects. But then many people do not join social movements, save in exceptional circumstances.⁴³

In the ex-colonies, however, the lack of a developed civil society, the dominance of the state and its bureaucratic institutions and the need for communication skills in the development of anti-colonial

nationalisms placed the professionals in positions of leadership on the eve and the morrow of independence. In the early post-independence African legislatures the leading social category was that of the professionals, followed some way behind by the entrepreneurs, managers and traders. Many of the leaders of the Asian and African states were also drawn from the professional strata immediately after independence, and several studied in Western institutions of higher education, including Kenyatta, Nkrumah, Ho Chi Minh, Manley, Senghor and Gandhi. They were part of wider circles that, disappointed by the gulf between Western, Christian ideals and colonial political practice, sought to return to their communities and fulfil their messianic dreams through their own peoples. Yet most of them did not return all the way to those peoples; they took from the West its model of the civic and territorial nation and sought to adapt it to their communities. In other words, theirs was not a real 'ethnic solution', for it was not the particular *ethnie* to which they necessarily or primarily returned. Even when circumstances compelled them to seek their power base in one of the ethnic communities that made up the colonial state they still aspired to rule over the whole of the territory once the colonial power was ejected, and to create a new territorial nation and civic political identity above or in place of the various smaller ethnic communities.⁴⁴

There is, in fact, an 'elective affinity' between the adapted model of a civic, territorial nation and the status needs and interests of the professionals (and, to a lesser extent, of the commercial bourgeoisie). The demand of the professional is for a 'career open to talent', for an income worthy of his or her skills and for a status commensurate with the dignity of the vocation. These demands are most easily satisfied in a territorial nation with a civic ideology, albeit one tailored to local communal beliefs and needs. The equality of rights and duties embodied in a common citizenship, the lack of barriers to mobility, geographical and social, inherent in a residential territorialism, the summons to active participation in public affairs, and above all the emphasis upon a standardized, public, civic education, often with considerable secular and rationalist content – all these features of the civic-territorial model of the nation are conducive to the realization of the interests and status demands of aspiring professionals.

NATIONS BY DESIGN?

This is not the only, perhaps not the major, reason for the persistence of the territorial-civic model of the nation. It is, after all, a fundamental assumption of the inter-state order and its juridical definition of the state. But the leading role of local intelligentsias must not be overlooked. It helps to flesh out the bare structure of the inter-state system and its components by its pressure for social integration and cultural homogeneity in the public realm and by its holding up of a different image of political community from that offered by ethnic nationalists. Though the reality usually falls far short of that image, though many populations fail as yet to identify with a territorial and civic community, the pressures to do so – and thereby to achieve a measure of integration and homogeneity – remain powerful.

That such images and pressures bear different connotations in different societies, that homogeneity, civic education or territorial participation may mean somewhat different things in Angola, Nigeria and Pakistan, is undeniable. Yet there remains for many of the professionals, merchants and bureaucrats of non-Western states a common language – common concepts and symbols – of civic-territorial nationalism that underlies many of the actions of such states and their élites in the inter-state systems and by means of which they make sense of their relations and actions.

But it is only one of the nationalist ideologies and languages in the contemporary world. It faces challenges from many sides, not least from a rival form of nationalism and national identity. It is to that rival and its political consequences that we must now turn.

CHAPTER 6

Separatism and Multi-nationalism

The impact of nationalism on the rise and incidence of national identities is not confined to the creation of territorial nations. Perhaps even more significant, and certainly more explosive, has been its role in the formation of ethnic nations. It is the challenge of ethno-nationalism to the world order of states that has brought nationalism, and nations, into such disrepute in so many quarters. To assess the validity of this judgement, we need to look more closely at the impact of ethnic nationalism today and in the recent past.

We need first to recall our distinction between the two models of the nation, the civic-territorial and the ethnic-genealogical, and the two routes of the formation of nations, that of bureaucratic incorporation and that of vernacular mobilization. Those nations created by aristocratic élites from a lateral community by using a strong state to incorporate lower strata and outlying areas have predictably manifested a fervent territorial nationalism, both towards minorities within the politically demarcated territory and to enemies outside its boundaries. In contrast, those nations created 'from below' by excluded intelligentsias and some middle strata from a vertical community, using cultural resources (ethno-history, language, ethnic religion, customs, etc.) to mobilize other strata into an active, politicized 'nation', have equally predictably evinced a powerful ethnic nationalism directed both inwards to galvanize and purify the 'true' nation and its members, and outwards against alien oppressors and competitors for political power. It is this latter kind of nation and nationalism that accounts for the vast majority of active nationalisms today.

RECURRENCE OF DEMOTIC ETHNO-NATIONALISM

We can, in fact, distinguish several waves of ethnic nationalisms since the late eighteenth century. The first is the classic period of ethnic self-determination in the early to late nineteenth century,