

# The Supersession of Nationalism?

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## ABSTRACT

Nationalism may be “superseded” by depoliticising the nation or by replacing national cultures with “imperial” cosmopolitanism(s). The evidence to date suggests neither is a real possibility. Against any memoryless global culture, recent “geo-cultural” trends point to the proliferation of nationalisms. The underlying reasons are to be found in the uneven incidence of potent “ethno-histories”, the role of new classes generated by capitalism, and the protest against bureaucracy and regional state systems, which together are likely to ensure the perpetuation of nations and nationalism.

**I**F ANY PHENOMENON IS GLOBAL, then surely it is nationalism. Since its inception at the time of the French Revolution, the ideological movement of nationalism has penetrated every periphery and hinterland, so that there is scarcely an area of the world which has not spawned its “ethno-regional” movement or its “micro-nationalism”.<sup>1</sup> And this accords well with the original dream of the founding fathers of European nationalism, of Rousseau, Burke, Herder, Fichte and Mazzini. A world girdled with sovereign and homogenous nations, each unique, unitary and free, was an aspiration every bit as global as the dreams of free-trading capitalists or universalist bureaucrats. By elevating the local and the particular into a global and universal pattern, nationalists could proffer the hope of combining authenticity with order, spontaneity with regularity and uniqueness with symmetry, in a pluralist world of equal, if incommensurable, units.<sup>2</sup>

In the nationalist view of the world, the nation, each nation, is its own *raison d'être*. The world exists for nations, not the other way round. A world which is not composed of free, unified and unique nations, is inadequate and incomplete. The nationalist sees it as his task to complete the globalisation of the nation, to turn it into the sole norm of government and society, the one mould and inspiration of culture. Wherever the nation is absent, inauthenticity reigns.

There is, however, another quite different tradition in which the nation and nationalism figure. Or rather, two traditions, one liberal, the other socialist. For both, the nation is a necessary stage in human evolution. It represents the penultimate stage of history. Therefore, it must, and it will be superseded.

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Liberals, such as Mill or Tocqueville, accepted the present reality of the nation, and the right of individuals who so wished, to form nations. The nation seemed to offer a useful and rational framework for human association in modern epochs. Nationalism, on the other hand, like any civil religion, might easily spill over into a fanaticism which turned the means into the end, thwarting the universalising movement of history and its end, the maximisation of liberty. An evolutionary view of humanity saw history in terms of growth: growth in scale, in population, of technology, of knowledge, of mastery of nature. In this perspective, even the largest nation was but a staging post in the ascent of humanity. That is why the normative functionalists came to see in America the very type of assimilative continental modernity that heralded a unitary globe of fused cultures.<sup>3</sup>

That is also why theorists like Parsons and Smelser regarded the nation and nationalism as at first “modernising” forces, spreading central values, participation, mobilisation and the like, and later as constricting phenomena, impeding further modernisation, more flexibility, maturity, inclusiveness, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

This idea, that nations and nationalism are Janus-like in time as well as character, that nationalism can be at first “progressive” and later “reactionary”, reappears in socialist perspectives, notably in Marxism. The many ambiguities and contradictions in the scattered writings of Marx and Engels on this subject, all revolve around this dual character imputed to the nation and nationalism, when viewed through the lens of a different, class-based ideology. Marx clearly looks forward to the expected supersession of nationalism, to the internationalisation of literary cultures, and even to the withering away of the nation-state.

On the other hand, he accepted the present reality of the nation-state as the proper arena for each working class to engage its bourgeoisie in political struggle, and he even conceded that national cultures, and so nations, might remain after the socialist revolution, though the content of these cultures would be increasingly socialist, and hence standardised across the globe.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Lenin and Engels and Stalin accepted the present reality of “national self-determination” and the right of every nation to secede from feudal or bourgeois states. But they looked forward to the day when the arrival of socialism would render the exercise of that right unnecessary. A minimal state, under socialism, would respect ethnic cultures, but infuse them with proletarian values. In this way, culture would be separated from politics, and the nation would be transcended without being formally abolished.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Meaning of “Supersession”**

Here lay the true meaning, and hope, of supersession: in the depoliticisation of nationalism, and its eventual ‘withering away’. The idea of “transcendence” was premised on the separation of the ideology of nationalism from the organisational culture of the nation. If nationalism was

to fade away, the nation as a cultural formation would be synthesised in a higher stage of modernity, and so transcended rather than abolished. What might such a transcendence mean? Was it simply the enlargement of traditional nation-states, the creation of vast "super-nations", such as some sought in a federal Europe?<sup>7</sup> Did it entail the creation of multi-national states, or even area blocs composed of several "ethno-nations"?

These were all possibilities, though few could agree on the particular route by which nationalism would wither away. The only certainty was that supersession meant "taking the sting out of" the nation, by severing it from politics and government. In this view, the nation remains the basic organisational unit of society and culture, but is bereft of its erstwhile political functions. State and nation have been put asunder from each other, and one of nationalism's main premises, the congruence of culture and politics, is destroyed. In a sense, the effect of such a separation is to return to the situation obtaining before the rise of modern nationalism: in a pre-nationalist world, there might be "ethnic states", but there was no demand for them, no reason why ethnicity should become political, and therefore in most epochs and most areas, the polyethnic state was the norm, usually a large empire holding sway over many different "peoples".<sup>8</sup>

But can one return to the status quo ante? And would such a world of federal states containing several "nations", on the model of Yugoslavia, depoliticise the nation and abolish nationalism? Certainly not, on the same example of Yugoslavia. Bi-national, multi-national and federal states, unless they are culturally more or less homogeneous, have not to date suggested much optimism for a withering away of nationalism, exactly because they leave the nation intact, and even institutionalise it. Instead of inter-state wars, we see the intensification of intra-state ethnic conflict, which may sometimes verge on a desire for secession. This is true of minorities even within older, more established, industrialised and democratic states in Europe or North America. They too have become politicised, they too aspire to become nations, if they have not already achieved recognition as nations; and the same processes are at work in many of the polythnic states of Asia and Africa, even in federal states or those which like India recognise the plurality of ethnic cultures in their constitutions.<sup>9</sup>

None of this suggests that a "transcendence" of nationalism and the nation is in sight, or can be achieved by merely depoliticising the nation and returning it to its social and cultural basis. Some of the basic reasons for this conclusion will be suggested later. For the moment, I want to look at other possible meanings of "supersession", and other possible routes to its achievement.

One way of grasping the dimensions of the nation and nationalism is to construct some kind of ideal types and then contrast them with their opposites. Definitions of the "nation" range from the strictly "objective" to the purely "subjective", from the largely statist to the predominantly ethnicist, and from the primordialist to the instrumental. Common to most of these definitions,

however, is an emphasis on a distinctive culture, on a shared homeland, and on some degree of legal and economic unity. Nations are always envisaged as social groups possessing a unique history and culture, a common historic territory and a single division of labour and system of stratification within a common legal code of rights and duties. This is, of course, an ideal type; it does not deny the realities of variation, both in regional cultures and economies, and in the practice of those rights and duties. What it does affirm is that such variation derives its meaning from widespread assumptions about the common membership in a community of history and destiny, and hence of solidarity.<sup>10</sup>

How then shall we picture the unit-type which stands opposed to the nation? The difficulty is that there is more than one. The nation destroyed, or sought to destroy, village localism on one side; but it also broke up larger units such as religious civilisations and empires. It is the latter unit that must engage our attention in seeking another route for superseding nationalism. Similarly, it is not the highly particularistic cultures of villages or city-states that suggest a means of transcending nationalism today, but the cosmopolitanism of empire, the same that pervaded the later Assyrian, Persian and Roman empires.<sup>11</sup> Where shall we look for today's imperial cosmopolitanism, and does it afford a means for truly superseding the nation and its nationalism?

The standard answer here is twofold: on the one hand, there is the growing power of transnational corporations with their own networks of technology and information; on the other hand, there are the ideological networks of rival power blocs competing for military and political hegemony through the processing of imagery and information both within their bloc areas and among the politically uncommitted states. The range, resources and flexibility of both types of organisational unit allow them to put out "global" information and imagery, which amount to a form of cultural imperialism in which other, more local cultures are absorbed, and their networks of imagery and information are "swamped" by those of the technologically and politically superior blocs and corporations. Their success to date would go some way to confirming Marx's prediction of an assimilation of national cultures into a single international one, though not in the manner in which he envisaged it.<sup>12</sup>

### **Cultural Imperialism and Cosmopolitanism**

Behind these observations stands a more general perspective, or more accurately, two parallel perspectives. Both claim that industrial capitalism has spawned vast economic and political units which threaten to render older units such as the nation-state, obsolete. But the route of such obsolescence is different in each perspective. For the first, capitalist competition has bred the need for massive transnational corporations with enormous budgets, sophisticated technologies and an army of skilled personnel to match, and an ability to diversify their operations according to market needs. For these purposes, they need an equally complex and sophisticated information network

and an ability to package imagery which will reflect their definitions of their goals and services. To these ends, they rely both on transnational lingua franca and cultures, and on new systems of telecommunications and computerised networks whose very standardisation would appear to enable them to by-pass cultural differences and secure the domestic labour and markets they seek.<sup>13</sup>

A different but related perspective focusses on “post-industrialism” and the growth of a “service” society. While the nation-state and its nationalism was functional for an industrial world of many competing states, the growth of both transnational corporations and huge ideological power blocs has eroded the power of such states in proportion to the growth of global communications systems. The emphasis here falls less upon the enlargement of private property systems than upon the scale of units resulting from the growth of vast telecommunications systems and computerised networks of information. The sheer size and range of such communications facilities today render any attempt to limit information networks to the former boundaries of the “nation-state” nugatory, and “culture” therefore becomes either global or continental. It is only the existence of huge and competing ideological power blocs, themselves made possible by the selfsame communications infrastructure, that prevents a truly global culture emerging to unify humanity. At the same time, the intensification of smaller-scale communications networks makes the likelihood of a re-emergence of ethnic units and their nationalisms, possible.<sup>14</sup>

What is the content of the new world of bloc cultures that these perspectives outline? On the one hand, it is ideology, if in a rather crude manner; a broadly capitalist ideology extolling the virtues of private property and a free market, and a broadly state socialist ideology promoting the virtues of party planning and centralisation in the name of the “masses”, the proletariat or peasantry or both. (Between these, of course, come various “mixed” and “populistic” recipes). The characteristics of these competing ideologies which mark them off from earlier nationalist ones, lie in their omissions as much as in their positive aspects: their lack of reference to language or history, their indifference to family tradition or religion, above all, their lack of a popular base. They are ideologies of the state and its dominant classes, ideologies promoted “from above”, without reference to the cultural traditions of other sections of the communities they rule. In this sense, they seem to suggest a reversion to an earlier cultural imperialism of centres over peripheries and of states over culturally diverse subject populations, even if the mechanisms are sometimes more subtle.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, there is a fundamental change from any earlier cultural imperialism. Those imperialisms functioned within the matrix of competing nationalisms, as subverting extensions of the original ideology; it was a British, French, Russian, German nationalism that fuelled imperial racisms towards subject African and Asian populations.<sup>16</sup> Today’s cultural imperialisms are ostensibly non-nationalist: capitalism and socialism are universal and global systems, by definition and by intention. And they are supported in their purposes by a technical communications infra-structure, which is truly

“cosmopolitan”. Or, more accurately, an identical telecommunications base will ultimately prevail over any vestigial cultural differences in the competitive ideological superstructures to promote a truly cosmopolitan global culture. As the nationalists from Herder and Rousseau onwards knew only too well, such cosmopolitanism is the true enemy of the nation and its nationalism.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, a truly cosmopolitan culture encircling the globe would not rule out residual “folk cultures” or “ethnographic monuments” in Engels’ vivid phrase, based on dying languages and creeds, or the need for small-scale communities enjoying some kind of folk warmth and security. But such cultures are merely museological and touristic; part of that great museum for which Donald Horne has in Europe provided a recent guide-book, and which feeds a secondary commercial industry.<sup>18</sup>

### **A Global Culture?**

But let us press the question: apart from the increasingly shallow ideological component of these imperial cosmopolitanisms, what exactly would the content of such a global culture consist of? One answer, of course, would be that the question is illegitimate: a “global culture” is a contradiction. What we have today in the West is a foretaste of the global pattern to come: a pastiche of cultural styles, beneath a veneer of American modernism, underpinned by a common “technical” and “scientific” discourse. On the one hand, there is the “post-modernist” attempt to resuscitate a series of traditional, folk or national, styles and motifs in the arts, music and fashions, with all the attendant revivals of earlier themes and modes, albeit in an eclectic manner. On the other hand, there remains the unifying veneer of a discourse pioneered mainly in America, at once streamlined, standardised, mass commodity-oriented and commercialised, and answering to the technological and economic infra-structure of advanced industrial, some would say “post-industrial”, communications networks. Here we have a broad amalgam of components: a hotchpotch of denationalised ethnic or folk motifs; a “scientific” language organising them; a set of global concepts, packaged in ideological slogans; a set of standardised mass commodities; some expressions of common “human values and interests” in the face of threats to survival of the species; and finally an interdependence borne of global telecommunications systems and computerised networks, the base upon which all the other elements rest.<sup>19</sup>

Now such a “global culture” possesses three characteristics which are, or seem to be, truly novel: it seems universal, timeless and technical. We often talk of “universal” cultures in the past. Such were the Hellenistic and Roman cultures of the ancient world, and the Islamic and Christian cultures of the middle ages. Yet, these cultures were not universal in the sense that they had no connections with particular places or specific origins or special myths and symbols. On the contrary, they had become diffused from particular places and origins and carried with them, albeit eclectically, their special symbolism

and mythology. John Armstrong has even claimed that Islam and Christendom could be viewed as ethnic matrices, cultural symbol-sources for a range of smaller ethnic identities sharing a wide, but quite specific, culture with its peculiar place of origin.<sup>20</sup> Such cultures, too, were generally carried on the backs of conquering armies, and are therefore unlike the “universal” culture of the modern world. This culture cannot be easily rooted in a particular place, at least today. It may be more advanced in America and be traceable ultimately to roots in northwest Europe. But, unlike Hellenism or Islam, it has lost most of its spatial particularity in the patchwork of elements of which it is composed today.

It is timeless, too, in the sense that the mass commodity standardised culture of modernity is historically shallow: it is bereft of “roots” in any specific past, being a ceaseless pursuit of the elusive present. In that sense, too, it is anti-national; for we can only imagine the nation, as Anderson has illustrated, in an empty, homogenous time. But this global culture imagines itself in panoramic space, but not in time, and without sequence. To this patchwork global culture, time and sequence are irrelevant, even nonsensical. For the point of the culture is its immediate encompassing pervasiveness, its here and now and everywhere at once. History, therefore, has only a decorative function, and serves as a quarry for this or that element in the patchwork of a cosmopolitanism which organises the motifs in the language of scientific discourse.<sup>21</sup>

Third, the global culture is pre-eminently technical. Its use of folk elements is without any emotional commitment. Its pastiche is playful, but calculated. It is fundamentally artificial and craftlike, a matter of technical puzzles with their solutions. It is decidedly affectively neutral. In this, the cosmopolitan culture reflects its technological base, the myriad overlapping communications systems that create networks of interdependence and the discourse of technical and quantitative elements in which it expresses itself. For this reason, it is manned and operated in the first place by an increasingly technical intelligentsia, which replaces the humanistic intelligentsia of a nationalist world, and whose culture of technical discourse replaces the critique of its humanistic counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

But, we may legitimately ask, can such a global enterprise flourish? Can such a shallow and technical culture survive for long? In the past, there have always been cultures, not culture per se; and cultures are particular, historical and affective in content. In the past, imagery has been historical and particular, too, even where imperial imagery thought itself universal, as in Byzantium. There were, besides, always others to remind the most universalistic of cultures of their limits.<sup>23</sup>

It may be objected that a cosmopolitan culture that sees itself as universal, timeless and technical, cannot be measured by the standards of earlier, particular, timebound and affective cultures. To accept this argument, however, entails acceptance of the claims made by a largely hypothetical cosmopolitan culture in the face of much conflicting evidence, past and present. It suggests

a far more radical break with the past than present trends allow one to suppose. The many references to past imagery that an eclectic cosmopolitanism makes also suggest that the cultures of the past continue to inform our sensibilities and influence our social structures. Hence it is legitimate to invoke these same structures of the past in all their historical specificity.

The obstinate fact remains that past cultures, even imperial ones, are particular, historically specific and affective in content. So is the imagery of such cultures. True, it is possible today to package imagery and diffuse it through global information networks, in the propaganda machines of corporations, organisations and states. But such images are either trivial, shallow and ephemeral, or they are rooted in and take their meanings from conflicting historical cultures; and these cultures are nearly always national or ethno-regional or religious (or combinations of these) in content. They express, mirror, amplify and crystallise particular historical experiences of social groups—of classes, ethnic communities, regions and nations; the specific histories and their cultures that appear below the surface of imperial or packaged world cultures, particularly where these are relatively “history-less”. Even the attempts to create a common “European” culture stumble on this condition: they constitute a dream or project which always takes its meaning from the sum total of the diverse rooted histories which compose its presumed content.<sup>24</sup>

The same is true of symbols, myths, memories and the like, all those recurrent components of what we term a collective culture. Under special circumstances, it may be possible to manufacture traditions, as Hobsbawm and Ranger claim; but their ability to sustain themselves depends, in large part, on their capacity for harmonisation and continuity with a much longer assumed past. The traditions, symbols, myths and the like must possess popular “resonance”; they must be felt to belong to the collective experience of a particular social formation and to no other; they must be able to include and mobilise members as well as exclude nonmembers. In short, “new” traditions, like older ones, must be culture-specific, and appear to “emerge” within particular cultural matrices which express popular sentiments crystallised over several generations.<sup>25</sup> The particular force and meaning of the Russian concept of “Tsar”, though it owed much to both Tatar and Byzantine precedents, derived ultimately from the particular relationship between the rulers of Muscovy, and later of Russia, with “his” people and land; and as it developed, it acquired meanings and resonances that had no place among the Tatars or in Byzantium.<sup>26</sup>

Similar remarks apply in the case of those “identities” which both culture and imagery express and crystallise. Like Esperanto, a global culture answers no living needs, not even any collective aspirations, since there is as yet no global identity-in-the-making, not even an agreed framework for one. If identity is based on memory, albeit highly selective memory, then identities are necessarily plural and particularistic; and any attempt to create a *tabula rasa* for a global culture through collective amnesia, would simply reinforce the intensity and conflictual plurality of existing identities, through the alienation that such a drastic repression would inevitably engender.



Cultures; images; identities: all reflect the plurality of history and the particularity of social formations in the late twentieth century, as in earlier epochs. All suggest the distance from any successful cultural imperialism today, let alone a global culture or genuine cosmopolitanism that will supersede nations and their nationalisms. Once again, we have been misled by a belief in the historical primacy of the techno-economic sphere, as we were in the earlier debate about industrial “convergence”. It may not be true, as Gellner would have us believe, that in the modern world “culture replaces structure” as the fundamental principle of social cohesion, giving us the ubiquity of the nation; but, equally, the underlying assumption of the “global culture” and “supersession of nationalism” theorists that “culture follows structure”, is a poor guide to the complexities of relationships between the cultural and other spheres of human action in the modern world.<sup>27</sup>

### **Nationalism in a Global Context**

So far I have suggested only some negative reasons for the failure to date to “supersede nationalism”. On the one hand, such a hope appeared to mean, ultimately, a depoliticisation of the nation, which would leave its social and cultural basis intact, but sever it from the sphere of politics and domination. Even this hope seems very far from realisation, given the failure to date for federal or binational states to “take the sting out of” the nation, and the intensification of intra-state conflicts between ethnic communities aspiring to be nations. On the other hand, a more radical route to “supersession” through cultural imperialism and cosmopolitanism runs into insuperable difficulties. Unlike earlier ethnic, religious or national cultural imperialisms, today’s versions of “cultural imperialism” are rooted in neither time nor place, and except for their increasingly shallow ideological veneers, are composed of a patchwork of often disparate elements drawn eclectically from more particular historical cultures and motifs. The result is that, quite apart from the chaos of competing culture-producing agencies, these would-be universal cultures are interpreted differentially according to the recipients’ world-views and cultures. It is these historical cultures that appear below the surface of cultural imperialisms and undermine any truly “cosmopolitan” project. An affectively neutral and supremely technical cosmopolitanism, reflecting its telecommunications base, and manned by a technical intelligentsia, simply masks, but fails to respond to the needs of culturally diverse populations and their historical experiences. A global culture is memory-less, and the attempt to enforce it merely evokes the plurality of memories that compose particular identities the more intensely. The domain of “culture” has its own properties that cannot be reduced to any structural base in the project of superseding national cultures with a cosmopolitan culture of telecommunications networks.

If we now return from such speculations to existing trends in the field of ethnicity and nationalism, we find other, more “positive” grounds for scepticism concerning any project for “superseding nationalism”. These will

emerge from a rapid survey of what we may term some “geo-cultural” trends today.

1. *Ethnic autonomy*: The most obvious of these trends is a growing tendency for movements to emerge asserting the rights of specific culture-historical populations against other such populations and demanding control over activities within their historic territories or “homelands”. Ethnic autonomy movements within the West took many observers by surprise in the 1960s, particularly those who had adopted a model of “national integration” through assimilation of cultural minorities within older “nation-states”.<sup>28</sup>

An important characteristic of these movements is their location within a wider economic and political regional system. They emerge in a closely interlocking network of trade flows, defensive alliances and state groupings, made increasingly interdependent by a common infrastructure of technology and communications within each region. Hence they cannot be treated as isolated phenomena, even though each ethnic movement carries its specific cultural and political components.<sup>29</sup>

There is another related aspect of ethnic autonomy movements. Their clustering in time and region is in part a consequence of the growth of those very telecommunications systems which play a key role in theories of cultural imperialism and cosmopolitanism. As Richmond rightly observes, the new types of communications systems reinforce ethnic bonds within culture-areas, by massively increasing the range and density of information and messages between those sharing the same cultures, and by offering detailed examples of social and political action by neighbouring *ethnie*.<sup>30</sup>

The result is that these geo-cultural trends offer many smaller “demotic” *ethnie* undreamt opportunities for mobilisation and political action. They also encourage the intelligentsia of demotic *ethnie* to promote the cultures of their communities. By seeking to regenerate these communities through aq return to their golden ages and their natural habitats, a historicist intelligentsia is able to bring ‘its’ community into the cultural arena and engage in the competition of cultures for social and political recognition. In southern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Western Europe and North America, and in great extent in Eastern Europe, geo-cultural changes have helped to foster a series of interrelated movements among *ethnie* whose intelligentsia are “reconstructing” historic identities in a cultural competition with often stronger and culturally dominant neighbours.<sup>31</sup>

2. *Re-traditionalisation*: This is closely related to the quest for a politically effective cultural identity. A conscious movement of ethno-religious “neo-traditionalism” is also a political weapon in the new era of cultural warfare. A policy of “neo-traditionalism” integrates and mobilises otherwise often heterogenous populations against a rival external tradition and culture. The most obvious example is the effort to unite certain states and communities under a Pan-Islamic banner against the alleged cultural and political incursions of the West. This is true not only of individual states like Pakistan and Iran, but also of the wider Pan-Islamic movement from the days of al-Afghani

onwards.<sup>32</sup> It is answered, in India, by a pan-Hindu traditionalism, and within the Islamic community, the Shi'ite revolution has in turn provoked further "neo-traditionalist" trends among Sunnis. Even in the Western world, such trends can surface: most obviously in northern Ireland, but also in the Protestant/American and Catholic rivalry in Guatemala, or the return to Catholic tradition in Poland against communism and foreign influence.<sup>33</sup>

Once again, new modes of communications have made possible, and encouraged, cultural competition along ethno-religious lines, which in a few cases may even become latterday crusades of cultural power. How far the religious component of such crusades is an "instrument" of ethno-political competition is an open question; but clearly it injects another, more intransigent dimension into already charged conflicts.

3. "*Bureaucratic nationalism*": A third geo-cultural trend is evidenced in the drive of several states to create "territorial nations" among culturally heterogeneous populations and among units with relatively "empty" or disparate cultures. This is an important problem for some immigrant societies like Australia and Argentina which cannot boast, like Mexico and Peru, a pre-conquest "middle ages" and glorious culture. In these cases, states and intelligentsias must devote growing attention and resources to promoting a distinctive culture-profile, both to legitimise their status and separate identity, and to exact those sacrifices for unity and development, which their relative newness appears to require. "Bureaucratic nationalisms" may also emerge in societies whose states rule over culturally disparate indigenous populations, and where it is necessary to counter fragmenting tendencies fuelled by long-established cultures and revitalised ethnic identities. Compared to its constituent ethnic units, the culture of the state is relatively "empty": it has few historical roots, few records, and often an alien lingua franca. Out of the anti-colonial struggle, it must create myths and memories, values and symbols, compelling enough to outweigh those which inspire each of its ethnic constituents, at the very moment when wider-cultural trends are reinforcing ethnic codes and symbols.<sup>34</sup>

In this competition for loyalties, states can also make use of new systems of communications, as well as their usual coercive and extractive powers. The use of powerful radio transmitters in the cultural warfare between some Middle Eastern states, for example, is well-known, as is the state monopoly of television in many countries.<sup>35</sup> Through these and other means, state elites aim to create culturally homogeneous "territorial nations" with an historically specific variant of a wider linguistic and/or religious culture, as has occurred in several Latin American states.<sup>36</sup> In Africa, such "bureaucratic nationalisms" must compete for cultural space with more localised ethnic nationalisms, sometimes with tragic results, sometimes through mutual compromise.<sup>37</sup>

4. *Global competition*: Geo-politics abets the spread of ethnic nationalisms, while upholding the broad outlines of the inter-state system in each region. The superpowers, in particular, for their own reasons support the existing

distribution of states and their “bureaucratic nationalisms” within their respective blocs, while encouraging ethnic autonomy movements in the opposing bloc and separatisms within Third World states to which they are opposed.

The very fact that global political power is more dispersed today provides a more fluid and open cultural space in which ethnic minority movements can operate and grow. Because military and political power have ceased to be so monolithic, other sources of collective power—ethnic, religious, regional, colour-based—can flourish. New, swifter and denser communications systems can supply ideas, networks, techniques, personnel, tactics, material and exempla for aspiring ethnic movements, together with the hope, even the promise, of support from one of the great powers. In this way, great power rivalry helps to proliferate movements of ethnic autonomy and render existing ethnic conflicts more intractable.<sup>38</sup>

5. *United Nations legitimation*: Finally, one should note the ambivalent attitudes of the United Nations, which both support the ethnic nationalisms and the existing state system with its “bureaucratic nationalisms”.

As a global forum, the United Nations brings together, of course, only those units which are deemed to constitute “nation-states”. That is, only those states which can legitimise themselves in terms of the principles of nationalism can be admitted to this forum and its associated agencies, though a few ethnic movements can have observer status. But, in fact, not many of these states can be termed “nation-states” in a strict sense; they are mostly plural states, composed of more than one ethnic community, even if one is dominant. Hence, in practice, the United Nations legitimises a system of states in terms of nationalist principles which most of its member-states flout in fact, while in theory espousing an ideal of national integration. This means that the United Nations as an inter-state forum legitimises only one form of nationalism, what we have termed “bureaucratic nationalism”, and only one kind of nation, the “territorial nation”.<sup>39</sup>

But the matter is more complex. Enshrined in the United Nations Charter is the right of national self-determination. In practice, again, this has usually been interpreted according to a special reading, which placed such a right within a strictly colonial context. In other words, only anti-colonial movements of “national liberation” could qualify for the right of “national self-determination”. The fact that the “national self” of many a would-be “national liberation movement” was difficult to ascertain or the subject of fierce debate, was held to be irrelevant; it was its anti-colonial status that guaranteed United Nations support. Nevertheless, others might not restrict the right of self-determination to a purely colonial context; Basques and Sikhs, Eritreans and Tamils, Kurds and Moro, could draw moral support from generalised ideals set forth in legal terminology by the only recognised global forum, the “international community”. Here, too, global ideals stemming from a global war have helped to internationalise nationalism.<sup>40</sup>

## Uneven Ethnicity and Cultural Warfare

The geo-cultural trends enumerated above are not simply random “phenomena”, surface manifestations that lack depth and durability. Nor are they to be viewed as mere “survivals” of nineteenth century nationalisms, epigones of once genuine and powerful forces. On the contrary: they are only explicable in terms of a much broader and deeper historical perspective, which locates them as fundamental features of the modern world, likely to outlast other powerful forces of that world. For, while these forces have strengthened the role of the nation and the hold of nationalism, and continue to do so, the foundations of that role and that appeal must be sought further back, in a pre-modern epoch of world history.

The underlying reason for the diffusion and power of the nation and nationalism must be sought in the uneven incidence and intensity of pre-modern ethnic ties and sentiments. Many of the nations that we rightly recognise as “modern” have their origins in closely related ethnic communities, or *ethnie*, out of whose symbols, values, memories and myths, handed down in traditional forms, different kinds of early modern and modern elites have forged and created what we defined earlier as “nations”.<sup>41</sup> For present purposes, it is not necessary to claim a universal link between pre-modern ethnicity and the modern nation: only to note that, as a matter of historical fact, many modern nations, including some of the most influential pioneers of “modernity”, have been built up around a dominant “ethnic core”, whose values, traditions, myths and symbols, have provided the distinctive forms and driving forces of subsequent elaborations of the nation. This is true to a great extent in France and Britain, despite the important contribution of outlying or minority *ethnie*; and to a lesser extent in Spain, too, as well as Sweden and Russia.<sup>42</sup> Even in cases where the influence of a richly documented and glorious past became attenuated, as in Greece or Israel, Burma or Ethiopia, the possession of such a past and the possibility of reconstructing some of its forms, gave a sense of definition and of purpose to subjected populations, which enabled them to pursue their quests for national transformation.

What I am arguing, then, is that the fundamental ground for the diffusion and ubiquity of nations, and the power of nationalism, stems from the ubiquity and diffusion of ethnic ties and communities, which provide the model, and in some cases the crucible, for modern nations. There is, of course, no simple one-to-one correspondence between *ethnie* and their distribution and nations and their incidence. In fact, any correspondence is a very rough-and-ready one, if only because *ethnie* themselves, those named population-clusters of common ancestry myths, memories, cultures and homelands, are liable to fluctuations and ultimately even dissolution. True, *ethnie* can be incredibly durable, adapting to circumstances from one century to the next. But one has to look no further than the Assyrians to realise how swiftly the most powerful can be absorbed, and their lands, gods and even their memory forgotten.<sup>43</sup>

For all that, ethnic ties have since the bronze age and the introduction of writing, figured prominently in the historical record in practically every culture-area, providing in some cases interlocking networks of cultural association outlasting the rise and fall of empires. Two kinds of community can be distinguished, the "lateral" or aristocratic, and the "vertical" or demotic. It was in the former that the modern type of political association which we term the "nation" was pioneered, albeit quite unintentionally; but it is the latter which has furnished the vast majority of modern nations, and threatens to continue to do so.<sup>44</sup>

However, it is not just the prior existence of *ethnie*, whether of the aristocratic or demotic type, that so undergirds the structure of nations and the explosive power of nationalism. Two other aspects of this link are relevant. The first is the *felt antiquity* of ethnicity and of particular *ethnie*. Here it is quite irrelevant to point out how erroneous are the assumptions behind these feelings of antiquity. The continuing disputes of scholars over the historicity of William Tell or the provenance of Great Zimbabwe will not affect popular Swiss and Zimbabwean identification with these symbols of "their" glorious antiquity and the feelings of dignity and rootedness which they evoke. Nor will Jews be deterred by the absence of corroborating evidence for the Exodus from regarding this as their foundation charter and the prototype of their millennial experience.<sup>45</sup> One does not have to embrace "primordialism" to accept that, for the participants in any ethnic drama, certain events and personages, certain myths and symbols, possess a truly "primordial" quality, which places them at the very beginning of space and time and marks their entrance into history.<sup>46</sup>

The second relevant aspect of the link between ethnicity and nationalism turns on the uneven distribution of "ethno-history" and the ensuing "cultural warfare". A map of ethnic ties and sentiments at any point in time would reveal, not only gaps and uncertainties, but also areas of "high ethnic intensity" and "low ethnic intensity". Some areas would display a distinctive ethnic character, others would be ethnically mixed, and still others would be hazy and unclear in their ethnic quality. A map of seventeenth and eighteenth century Eastern Europe would no doubt highlight the ethnic character of Poles, Croats, Hungarians and Greeks; but it would also reveal many ethnically mixed areas and some hazy "ethno-categories" like the Slovaks, Macedonians and Ukrainians, who would later be transformed into full ethnic communities.<sup>47</sup> Since its conquest by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, the Middle East too would reveal similar patterns: on the one hand, fairly compact and ethnically distinctive communities like the Persians, Armenians (despite their diaspora) and Kurds, far-flung communities like the Arabs and Jews, and a number of small ethnic enclaves like the Druse, Maronites, Copts and Samaritans, as well as many strata of mixed origins.<sup>48</sup> Very much the same patters could be found in the world of classical antiquity, particularly after the Pax Romana had encouraged geographical mobility, trade, syncretism and intermarriage on a fairly large scale.<sup>49</sup>

This “uneven” character of ethnicity throughout history is of great significance in understanding the widespread appeal, and often unpredictable explosiveness, of ethnic nationalism in the modern world. It is highlighted by the considerable variations in each community’s ethnic heritage, or “ethno-history”. On the eve of the nationalist era, some communities could boast a rich heritage, others only some meagre remains and shadowy memories. Here, again, we should bear in mind that the truth-content of such “ethno-histories” is far less important than its abundance, drama and atmosphere, and that the distinction between “myth” and “history”, so important to later Greeks and post-Enlightenment Europeans, is quite misleading for assessing the impact of a “rich” or “poor” ethno-history.<sup>50</sup>

The significance of a rich “ethno-history” is both general and specific. To belong to a “community of history and destiny”, and be part of a larger cosmic purpose which is simultaneously terrestrial and even “kin-based”, at least in theory, may well fulfill those hopes for immortality which other belief-systems promised but failed to meet. Membership of a “super-family” that stretches back into time immemorial, and so forward into a remote posterity, helps to reassure as it defines a community and a wider purpose beyond individual mortality.<sup>51</sup>

More specifically, a rich “ethno-history” is a source of cultural power and a focus for cultural mobilisation. Conversely, its relative absence constitutes a challenge in an increasingly competitive environment; its recovery by ethnic intellectuals becomes also a function of the cultural wars increasingly waged by smaller, demotic *ethnie*, conscious of their social and political disadvantages and seeking a means of rectifying their situation through cultural mobility and the restoration of cultural dignity. So the very unevenness of ethnic ties and ethnic history is an invitation to cultural emulation and competition, once the process of national transformation begins.

One may picture this process as starting with attempts by “lateral”, aristocratic *ethnie* to create a bureaucratic state which will incorporate minority and outlying ethnic communities, and spread their upper-stratum ethnic culture down the social scale and outwards to more distant regions. In the West, the process took several centuries, and was only sporadically opposed by outlying, demotic *ethnie*, until the late nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> In Eastern Europe and in Ireland, as well as in Asia, though very small *ethnie* might be gradually absorbed, there was much greater opposition to similar attempts by multi-lingual empires to intervene in the social life of their subject populations and spread their elite cultures outwards and down the social scale. Czechs and Slovaks, for example, were mobilised by their intelligentsias in response to Germanising and Magyarising pressures; and the uneven incidence of their sense of identity and “ethno-history” spurred the intellectuals of both communities to rediscover their “roots” in the resurrected medieval history and mythology of their “unique”, but equal, identities.<sup>53</sup>

Competition and cultural warfare are also fostered by the frequent pairing or clustering of *ethnie* in interlocking “mosaics”. Quite often, patterns of

super- and subordination help to preserve, even “freeze”, *ethnie* in specific class situations of exploitation. So, when in the modern era, state intervention and mobilisation began to unfreeze these stratified “ethnic mosaics”, which had often preserved their identities and even their cultures, the unevenness in their sense of identity and heritage spurred a desire to recover whatever “ethno-history” artefacts and documents could authenticate as their own. Hence the passion for philology, archaeology, anthropology, folklore and literary history among so many ethnic nationalists; and for sociology, for the more populist among them. Hence also the many cultural-historical disputes over national territory, such as Transylvania, Ulster and the West Bank, not to mention Macedonia and its ancient royal tombs.<sup>54</sup> Hence, too, the attempts to “annex” cultures and civilisations in one’s territory that have no links with the present population, as with the Hittites and Sumerians in Turkey and Iraq.<sup>55</sup>

On a larger scale this competitive drive for ethnic recognition and equality by rediscovering and reinterpreting a rich and glorious communal past, continues to trouble our planet. Ethnic conflicts, and the cultural warfare that so often inspires them, can be found in the Punjab and Sri Lanka, among the Moro of the Philippines, in Kampuchea, in Iran, Kurdistan and Palestine, in the Horn of Africa, in Zimbabwe, Angola, in Fiji, among the Australian Aborigines and American Indians, not to mention more familiar examples from Quebec, Belgium, Spain, Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Lithuania and Armenia. Given the number and variety of “ethnic categories” whose intelligentsia may mobilise their populations on the basis of recovered “ethno-histories” in cultural competition, it would be a bold man who would predict an end to the “cultural wars” of the last two centuries, and the political turmoil they help to engender.<sup>56</sup>

### *Nationalism and Capitalism*

As if this burden on the modern world were not enough, two other more recent forces have combined to harden existing ethnic cleavages and globalise their impact. The first of these is capitalism; the second is the inter-state system itself.

The preponderant role of capitalism in the rise and diffusion of nationalism is often asserted and more rarely developed into a fullblown theory. But closer inspection reveals that the links postulated are more contingent than is usually supposed: to “derive” the nation and nationalism from the workings of (international, monopoly, uneven) capitalism, one has to make a number of historical assumptions about the nature of the Western type of bureaucratic state and the state system, about the role of warfare and the decline of the Church. There are also some unstated assumptions about linguistic diversity, religious pluralism and secularisation, and the role of communications. Only within this historical context, can statements about the role of capitalism in forging nations and spreading nationalism begin to make sense.<sup>57</sup>



The reason is not far to seek. As Marx saw, capitalism soon generates forces that must overleap any national boundaries. It has done so, and continues to do so. Yet, nations and nationalism flourish, despite the undoubted power of transnational corporations, the rise of vast telecommunications systems, and the weight of huge power blocs. If nationalism is epiphenomenal, the “nervous tic” of capitalism, then it must be one of the most enduring and troublesome in history.<sup>58</sup>

We are back with the basic assumption that so misled us in our earlier discussion of global culture: that “culture follows structure”—with perhaps a small time-lag. But the sphere of culture is not so easily amenable to this or any kind of explanatory reductionism. It possesses its own rhythms and properties, and we need to take them seriously, if we are to account for the enduring appeal of the nation. Of course, the sphere of culture, like any other sphere, possesses no absolute autonomy; its modes of communications and socialisation are often influenced, in the structures and processes of history, by different modes of production and domination. Yet it helps to keep the spheres analytically separate, if we are to make some progress in explaining the durability and ubiquity of the nation.

From this perspective, and given our earlier analysis of the ethnic origins of nations, the role of capitalism falls into historical place. Merchant, and later industrial, capitalism emerged into a Western world in which “lateral” *ethnie* were forging bureaucratic states which in turn helped to create the first “modern nations”. But, if the diffusion of early capitalism was helped by Europe’s competitive state system, it was equally spread through Europe by ethnic communities—Catalan traders, German merchants, Armenians, Jews. Moreover, the most dynamic Western states were themselves formed around certain cultural “core populations”, whose “ethno-histories” came in time to form the focus and cement of the absolutist kingdoms in France, England, Sweden, and to a lesser extent, Spain, as well as in patrician Holland. Here were forged, under the aegis of ruling classes of “lateral” *ethnie*, the first truly “national states”, and it was here that the ethnically dominant middle classes were gradually brought into varying degrees of political partnership with the “citizen-nation” of the West.<sup>59</sup>

The rise of nations and nationalism in the West must therefore be analysed in a wider context of the continuous interplay of three sets of factors: a deepening and extension of ethnic ties among “core” and “peripheral” communities; the rise of merchant and industrial capital, and the attendant growth of the “middle classes”; and the role of increasingly bureaucratized states in a competitive state system. The new forces of bourgeois capitalism and inter-state rivalry operated within a pre-existing framework of uneven ethnic ties and heritages, which often formed the “building-blocks” of political units whose competition helped to spread commodity capitalism, as much as it shaped the rising “national state” through trade and capitalist enterprise.

But these ethnic ties and heritages are not to be viewed as some inert mass, upon which capitalism and the state system exercise their “impact”. There are

also transformations within the cultural sphere, coeval with the changes in administration and economic activity, which though influenced by those changes, possess a pattern of their own; and in this pattern lies the key to the formation of nations and the appeal of nationalism. Some of patterns of transformation in the sphere of communications have been studied by Benedict Anderson. He suggests that with the decline of large-scale churches and dynastic realms, the appearance of the technology of "print-capitalism" allowed masses of middle class people to "imagine the nation", that is, an imagined community, at once sovereign and limited in extent. I am not sure that the role of churches and dynastic realms is so negative, even in the West; the nations that emerged bore a strong physical and cultural resemblance to such realms and their religious confessions after the religious wars. But Anderson is right to highlight the relative independence of the sphere of "communications", and the role of the middle class reading public in fostering a sense of cultural community.<sup>60</sup>

There is also another sphere, that of patterns of socialisation, which Anderson somewhat neglects. This included not only patterns of family and public education, but also the values, symbols, myths and memories that are transmitted through these channels, above all, the myths and memories of descent. These constitute the substance of the messages which the new modes of communication can so amplify and spread. "Print-capitalism" undoubtedly changes the content of these messages in subtle ways; the printed Bible differs from that orally transmitted in the manner it is read rather than heard in Church and read in a vernacular tongue. But old heritages, recovered and encoded in the vernacular, can be revived and inspire a new outlook, independent of changes in other spheres of human activity. Old messages, read and seen in new ways, like the Gita in late nineteenth century India, can re-socialise new generations and help to mobilise them for ethnically defined goals.<sup>61</sup>

The role of an emergent capitalism in this transformation is as agent of new classes and a new class structure, able to receive and take up the old-new messages and give them political shape. It provides the aspirant strata, which can turn the project of the ethnic nation into social and political reality. It helps to generate a new class structure within the format of an ethnically dominated state in the West. But, in other areas, the new classes which it engenders are circumscribed by the social boundaries of each *ethnie*, exactly because pre-modern empires tended to assign to each *ethnie* a particular economic and political niche.

It is through particular classes—intelligentsia, bourgeoisie, workers—that capitalism makes its most potent contribution to the growth of nations within ethnically defined states or demotic *ethnie*. Broadly speaking, more economically diversified *ethnie*, with larger bourgeoisies and intelligentsias, but also with a growing complement of other classes, will be better placed to carry through the transformation of lateral or demotic *ethnie* into modern nations. At given moments, one or other stratum or class acts as the vanguard of this

transformation. In the West, because the nation was formed on the basis of a dynastic state ruled by members of a "lateral" *ethnie*, it was the Courts, followed by the bourgeoisie and the wider middle class reading public, that pushed the process through to fruition. In the eastern half of Europe, with the exception of Poland and Hungary to some extent, the intelligentsia took the place of other strata and classes, for here the basis of future nations was a "vertical" *ethnie* or "ethno-class"—an *ethnie* which had been reduced to a subordinate exploited class position. Only an intelligentsia, however tiny, could conceive of the project of national transformation, and mobilise "their" peasantry and artisans to resist "foreign" incursions by imperial states or by the penetration of capitalism.<sup>62</sup>

Outside Europe, capitalism's role was even more varied. In some cases, like India, or among the Tartars, it clearly reinforced and facilitated the work of a powerful intelligentsia which sought to turn rather dispersed congeries of Hindu or Turkic-speaking communities into modern nations. By promoting a limited industrialisation, too, capitalist enterprise facilitated the economic centralisation so necessary for a modern nation, as well as the division of labour which nationalists promote in their project of "nation-building".<sup>63</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, the rather patchy penetration of the capitalist mode of production did not always coincide with the rise of both territorial and ethnic nationalisms in the interwar years. But, then, it could be argued that here lies one reason for the relative failure to date of "nation-building" in Africa, despite the efforts of states and intelligentsias.<sup>64</sup>

The irregular impact of capitalism in Africa raises a further "international" dimension. Capitalism's diffusion is often characterised as "uneven" in the sense of affecting different areas at different times and with varying intensities; and it is suggested that this may account for the spread of nationalism.<sup>65</sup> It would indeed be interesting to know whether this "unevenness" of capitalism coincided with the "unevenness" of ethnicity discussed above, whether more economically advanced *ethnie* with more varied class structures are also those which can boast a rich "ethno-history" and a strong sense of distinctiveness. I suspect not. (It may work for the Basques, but not the Bretons, for the Ibo but not the Hausa, for Croats but not Serbs). If not, capitalism's role is contributory rather than necessary in the rise of nationalism. But, once established, an "uneven" capitalism solidifies existing ethnic cleavages and antagonisms in communities embracing nationalism for other reasons. In other words, the global role of capitalism is to "fix" a global division of labour, with each *ethnie* and each nation occupying a definite place in regional and global systems, and to reinforce existing political trends which favour the division of the world into national units. The fact that nationalism can emerge in areas barely touched by the capitalist mode of production, and that nations and nationalism can flourish under non-capitalist modes of production, suggests that the role of capitalism in the genesis of nations and nationalism is not as universal as has been supposed, and that its effects are to be sought mainly in the global division of labour of an industrialising world

and in the different roles of contending classes within *ethnie*, nations and states.<sup>66</sup>

### Nationalism and the Inter-State System

What, then, are the political trends that have favoured the division of the world into national units, and, I shall argue, continue to do so?

They stem, I think, from the growing bureaucratisation of politics, which on the one hand favours the growth of competitive regional and global systems of states, and on the other hand, provokes chronic, if intermittent, movements of popular resistance and participation. Together, they act to crystallise and reinforce the pre-existing framework of *ethnie* and ethnic states, but transmuted into the acceptable coinage of national status.

The origins of the revolution in statecraft which created the bureaucratic state can be placed back in thirteenth century Western Europe. By the late fifteenth century, a system of states was emerging here, ruled by aristocratic families; but in the succeeding centuries the power of dynasts and their Courts increased, often at the expense of the traditional nobility. By the late seventeenth century, in France and later Prussia, a new kind of bureaucratic state was pioneered: it increasingly incorporated "scientific" techniques into military organisation and administration.<sup>67</sup> Of course, the legal basis for this transformation had been laid much earlier, but it was really only from the late seventeenth century that a more bureaucratised state began to intervene more than spasmodically in social life with the intention of creating a class loyal to the dynasty but also to the territorial state *per se*. By this time, European states were enmeshed in a "system of states" which prevented any one state from exercising hegemony, or continually sought to do so. The continual warfare that such a "system" prompted, made it necessary not only for rulers to seek increased sources of revenue from the rising bourgeoisie, but also the military and administrative services of professional "experts". To this end, bureaucratic absolutisms began to promote academies, colleges and universities, to train the required personnel for a "service class" of bureaucratic intelligentsia.<sup>68</sup>

But this weapon was double-edged. For a variety of reasons, such intelligentsia might be persuaded to exchange their service role for oppositional politics, at the urging of alienated intellectuals whose ideal of the regenerated nation appeared to offer prospects of worthier employment and even leadership in a "career open to talent". This was particularly true of those intelligentsia who had been recruited for "alien" imperial bureaucracies, and who might at any moment be rendered otiose, suspect or scorned on ethnic, religious or other grounds.<sup>69</sup>

Here was the prototype of that "dialectic" of bureaucratised state system, and alienated protest movements, which formed the historical context for the various nationalist revolutions that spread across Europe. It is important to bear in mind, first, how very small was the number of activists in these early

nineteenth century nationalist movements, even in 1848, and second, how the interlocking nature of the European state system helped to create regional links between them and between the wider constituencies of sympathisers in each state.<sup>70</sup> Here is the first concrete case of nationalism's dissemination, and its basic identity of ideals and goals across state borders. No wonder that Mazzini's vision was feared as the radical replacement of the popular-democratic nation for every European state.

The late nineteenth century extended regional state systems to practically every part of the globe, mainly under the aegis of imperialisms and their colonial systems of states. As Tilly has pointed out, these state systems always preceded the rise of nationalism and the formation of nation-states in each area. In one way, colonial state systems favoured the rise of nationalisms, particularly when bureaucratic intervention in economic production and social organisation was accompanied by political exclusion, often on racial, religious or ethnic grounds, and by cultural imperialism.<sup>71</sup> But colonialism also militated to some extent against the kind of unifying nationalism found in Europe. This was partly because the colonial state, as a foreign imposition, possessed no legitimacy in African and Asian societies and cultures, each of which comprised a series of heterogeneous ethnic groupings; hence its "territorial nationalism" was inevitably weakened as a unifying project. It was also because, unlike their bureaucratic counterparts in early modern Europe, the colonial states in Africa and Asia were mostly in a state of peace as between themselves, their military energies being directed to internal "pacification". In Europe and parts of the Middle East, warfare acted as an important agent of national unification; its relative absence in Africa and parts of Asia, undoubtedly weakened the unifying and mobilising potential of any subsequent "territorial nation".<sup>72</sup>

Despite these handicaps, colonialism and its regional state systems helped to disseminate the appeal and the organisation of nationalist ideals among the immediately affected intelligentsias of Africa and Asia. Moreover, it provided the only universally recognised political format, the so-called "nation-state", legitimated by the very nationalist principles that colonial rulers so long scorned. The weakness of its mobilising principles, in Africa at least, is nevertheless demonstrated by the appeal exercised for many by the appropriation of nationalist ideals by the territorial state's main rivals, the various *ethnie* which constitute a challenge to its unity and survival. Ethnic nationalisms, so often repudiated as "tribalism", are rightly feared, and their constituents often appeased by processes of ethnic arithmetic and the like. But the very fact that Africa now possesses two levels of "nationalism" (three if one takes the PanAfrican level seriously), potentially in conflict, once again suggests the remoteness of any "supersession of nationalism" in that continent.<sup>73</sup>

Today, regional state systems encompass every part of the globe. Their presence and power fuels nationalist movements and nation-formation in several ways. For those units where state and ethno-nation roughly coincide, the state acts as protective shell for the nation, and as representative consti-

tients in the system of states which takes many decisions for the nations of a region, as in the European Community or Comecon. For aspiring “territorial nations” composed of several *ethnie*, the backing of their regional state system and the international legitimacy of the “nation-state” format based on civic loyalty and popular sovereignty, provides considerable support. The military and bureaucratic powers at the disposal of their state elites can be used to realise their collective interests in territorial nationalism, which in turn are only further entrenched by challenges from ethnic movements within. Whether their powers and their nationalism can forge genuinely unitary nations is another matter; but attempts to do so, can only increase commitments to national ideals.<sup>74</sup>

For *ethnie* and ethnic categories, which harbour aspirations for greater political freedom, regional state systems and the global distribution of power may well encourage political protest and mobilisation against existing states. It is usual to comment on their relative lack of success to date: only Bangla Desh and Singapore have achieved independence as sovereign nation-states. But this assumes that independence is the object of every ethnic nationalism; and that every member of the unit in question is either a supporter or opponent of separatism. In fact, usually only a small minority of members opt for outright secession; the great majority aspire to varying degrees of ethnic autonomy, while strongly identifying with the *ethnie* for whom political claims are being pressed.<sup>75</sup>

With independence only one among several options, ethnic protest and ethnic movements are able to use the rivalries in any regional or global system of states to their advantage. The very polycentrism of global power, as we saw, acts as an incentive to ethnic mobilisation and conflict, provided that intelligentsia have been able to rediscover a resonant “ethno-history” and revive ethnic ties. Ethno-nationalism simply adds another layer and principle of political pluralism to that already instituted by regional state systems and the ideal of the sovereign but limited state. At the same time, its alternative principle brings many conflicts in its train, as ethno-nationalism challenges existing state systems and their distributions of regional power. Though its continual attempts to redraw the political map have been largely foiled by existing state systems since the Second World War, we should not underestimate the disintegrative potential of ethno-nationalism. One has only to glance at the most intractable conflicts today, to realise how often ethnic and national claims are involved.

### **Multi-national Nations?**

The globalisation of the nation and nationalism is today complete. There is no area unaffected by nationalist protest or free of the nation. There is no gainsaying the ubiquity of nationalism’s popular appeal, whatever reservations Western intellectuals may entertain. No other principle of government, no

other organisation of collective economic activity, no other criterion of culture and identity, is seriously considered today, despite attempts at regional or political organisation.

The burden of my argument is that this state of affairs is neither random nor recent. It is rooted in a long history of ethnic ties and identities, and given its present form and scope by the rise of bureaucratic state systems powerfully abetted by the class structure generated by an uneven and global capitalism. Contrary to many expectations, state systems and uneven capitalism have actually revitalised and transformed the scope and direction of pre-modern ethnic ties, wherever intelligentsias were able to recover or reconstruct a rich "ethno-history". It is these ties and this history that have provided the bases for the distinctive nations that the new political and economic processes helped to forge.

But the "modern nation", though of uniform principles, reveals in practice, varied forms. In particular, we are witnessing the growth of several "nations" composed of different *ethnie* which seek to preserve their differences, to varying extents. This is especially true of nations which contain two or more cultural traditions of some antiquity, as in Mexico or Peru; or whose immigrant communities wish to preserve several of their cultural attributes and thereby their ethnic identities, as to a certain extent do Italians, Irish, Jews and Blacks in America. Might not these "multi-national nations" portend, if not the supersession, at least the attenuation, of nationalism? As nations become well-established, politically satisfied, economically wealthy and industrialised, and generally participant, does not their nationalist impulse fade, and their national sentiment become superfluous?<sup>76</sup>

Of course, this argument concedes rather more than it may intend. The attenuation of nationalism is bought at the cost of the institutionalisation and universal acceptance of the nation as a political unit, indeed the sole legitimate type of polity. This is, of course, only to concede present realities and project them as the pattern of the foreseeable future. But, even here, hope outruns fact. None of the cases cited seem to show any attenuation of nationalism. Mexicans are not less nationalistic for seeking to combine, and at the same time preserve, the two cultural heritages which are their patrimony. Nor can American nationalism be shown to be less active or intense, because the "melting-pot" theory of assimilation has been largely replaced by a "unity in diversity" formula. As is so often the case, nationalism needs no pre-existent nation to emerge; it often embodies the demand for such a nation, or the aspiration to complete its formation.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps we should rather turn back to the experience of much older-established "nation-states". If the Swiss and the French cannot oblige with attenuated nationalisms, perhaps the more pragmatic British can offer some comfort.<sup>78</sup> After all, do we not habitually speak of French nationalism and British patriotism? Alas, recent studies suggest how strong has been a purely English national sentiment and its "Anglo-Saxon" ethno-history, within a wider imperial "British" ideal and practice. Recent manifestations of both

inwardlooking Englishness, and a continuing post-imperial British tradition, suggest that even here the nation and nationalism, while rarely shrill and often cultural in form, remain alive and strong.<sup>79</sup>

I do not wish to suggest that nothing can be done to contain or even damp down the fires of nationalism. Its intensity will vary with specific circumstances, some of which are undoubtedly within rational control. There are well-known examples of successful accommodations of nationalisms within and between states, usually after periods of intense conflict. But even the much-cited Yugoslav example mentioned earlier, suggests great caution. The chronic conflict of Serbs and Croats, the resentment of Slovenes, the emergence of the Muslims and the strife in Kossovo, all remind one of the power of nationalism in this most "multi-national" of states built on a series of cognate heritages.<sup>80</sup> Accommodation of nations, as in other, more powerful states, rest ultimately on the centralised power of parties and governments. Even the strongest states feel the need to come to terms with the "national principle" and postpone hopes for its attenuation, let alone any transcendence.<sup>81</sup>

So, given the unremitting conflict between ethno-nationalisms and state-based "bureaucratic nationalisms" in so many parts of the globe, given the frequent lack of any congruence between states and ethno-nations even now, the chances of a diminution of the power of nationalism, let alone its supersession, seem as remote today as at any time in the last century and a half. The nation and nationalism, accommodated or not, separately or together, will, it seems, continue to provide humanity with its basic cultural and political identities and political organisations well into the next century.

#### NOTES

- 1 Even in Papua-New Guinea, where a number of "micro-nationalisms" like the Papua-Besean movement, Bougainvillean and Highlands Liberation Front movements, surfaced, not to mention the still more recent case of Fijian nationalism; see on Papua, May (1982, chs. 1, 11, 12, 14).
- 2 On these founding fathers of nationalism, see Baron (1960, ch. 2); for Herder's cultural nationalism, see Berlin (1976).
- 3 On Mill and other liberal nationalists like Michelet, see Kohn (1961).
- 4 Smelser (1968); also cf. Eisenstadt (1970).
- 5 See his statements in *The Communist Manifesto*, but also in Marx's and Engels' correspondence on the events of 1848, as well as Engels' *Po und Rhein*; see Fisera and Minnerup (1978) and Cummins (1980).
- 6 Minnerup (1978); Connor (1984, ch. 2).
- 7 For an incisive critique of assumptions behind the "European identity", see Schlesinger (1987), particularly on the common formula of "unity in diversity" and its very special historical standpoint, cf. also Galtung (1973) on the creation of a European "supernation".
- 8 On the cultural premise of nationalism, and the lack of nations in pre-modern eras, see Gellner (1983, chs. 1-2).
- 9 For ethnic autonomy movements in North America and Europe in the post-War period, see Esman (1977), especially Connor's essay; cf. Allardt (1979). For the intensification of ethnic conflict through colonial inclusion in Third World societies, see Horowitz (1985, Parts I and II).



- 10 For discussions of definitions of nationalism and the nation, see Rustow (1967) and A. D. Smith (1973), among many.
- 11 For the Roman case, see Hadas (1950); for the Persian empire, Cook (1983); for later Assyria, Saggs (1984). But cf. Balsdon (1979).
- 12 A picture presented in Said and Simmons (1976, Introduction) and more fully by Richmond (1984).
- 13 See Richmond, *op. cit.*
- 14 Richmond, *op. cit.*, lays special emphasis on the role of a service society in a post-industrial era facilitating small-scale ethnic nationalisms, within the ideological bloc boundaries.
- 15 This lack of a popular base is evident even in communism, as practised in the Eastern bloc today; to create the "new man" means destroying the old, including his former ethno-national identities; see Goldhagen (1968). But cf. G. E. Smith (1985).
- 16 See, for example, Crowder (1968) for British and French imperialism.
- 17 See Berlin (1976); and Cohler (1970) on Rousseau's attitudes.
- 18 Horne (1984); also Ashworth (1977-80) for such "folk" minorities.
- 19 I have here telescoped together two phases of Western culture: the "modernist" trends of the 1920s onwards, and the "post-modernist" reactions of the 1960s onwards. But "post-modernism" in the arts (Stravinsky, for example) is found as far back as the 1920s, and "modernism" still finds many devotees today. The important point is that the Western pattern of a "global culture" is a melange of contradictory elements, none of which possesses deep roots or traditions.
- 20 Armstrong (1982, ch. 3); on Hellenism, see Ferguson (1973).
- 21 For Anderson's use of Walter Benjamin's metaphor, see Anderson (1983, ch. 2).
- 22 On this technical intelligentsia, see Gouldner (1979).
- 23 For the imperial imagery of Byzantium, see Runciman (1975); and for imperial imagery more generally, cf. Armstrong (1982, ch. 5).
- 24 Schlesinger (1987) discusses the cultural critics of the media's "cultural imperialism": the work of Mattelart, Stuart Hall, Morley and others, who demonstrate the ethnically variable responses to American imperialism's cultural products, lends support to our argument for the historical specificity of imagery.
- 25 Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983: esp. Introduction and essay by Hobsbawm).
- 26 Ranum (1974: essay by Cherniavsky); cf. Baynes & Moss (1969: essay by Meyendorff and Baynes) on Byzantine influence on Muscovy.
- 27 Gellner (1964, ch. 7); though he concedes the continuing role of "structure" in the form of bureaucracy in the modern world.
- 28 See, for example, Esman (1977), Hall (1979) and O'Sullivan (1986). For the critique of Deutsch's integration model, see Connor (1972).
- 29 See the excellent analysis along these lines by Orridge (1982).
- 30 Richmond, (1984); cf. Kumar (1978).
- 31 On this historicist intelligentsia, see Gella (1976) and A. D. Smith (1981, cha. 5-6).
- 32 On which, see Rosenthal (1965) for some aspects of this movement.
- 33 For Islam in Pakistan, see Banuazizi and Weiner (1986, Part III); for the Shi'ite revolution in Iran, see Keddie (1981, chs. 8-9).
- 34 For a brief survey of immigrant nations-in-the-making, see Seton-Watson (1977, ch. 5); for the project of "territorial nations" in su-Saharan Africa, see Rotberg (1967); cf. A. D. Smith (1983).
- 35 See Nettl & Robertson (1968); also the references in Schlesinger (1987).
- 36 Whitaker and Jordan (1966) for a Latin American survey.
- 37 On this conflict, see Olorunsola (1972) and Markovitz (1977, esp. ch. 3).
- 38 For linkages between ethnicity and international trends generally, see Enloe (1980); for the impact of the state systems, see Spanier (1972).
- 39 For the "plural" nature of most states, see Connor (1972); the consequences of this UN legitimisation are explored in Beitz (1979, Part II).
- 40 For the rights of non-self-governing Territories (including anti-racial movements), see Wiberg (1983); on the variety of possible "selves" seeking "determination", see Neuberger (1986).

- 41 This is a summary based on the discussion in A. D. Smith (1986, esp. Part II).
- 42 The "old, continuous nations" of Seton-Watson (1977, chs. 1-2).
- 43 An issue explored in A. D. Smith (1986, ch. 5); on Assyria, see Roux (1964, chs. 20-23).
- 44 A. D. Smith, *op. cit.*, ch. 4; for another, wide-ranging analysis of pre-modern ethnicity, see Armstrong (1982).
- 45 On Tell, see Steinberg (1976, esp. ch. 2); on Great Zimbabwe, see Chamberlin (1979, ch. 1).
- 46 "Primordialist" approaches are discussed in Fishman (1980) and MacKay (1982); cf. also Debray (1977) on primordial space and time.
- 47 For a general survey of these communities, see Pearson (1983, esp. ch. 1) and on more smaller minorities, cf. Horak (1985).
- 48 See Atiya (1968) and Armstrong (1982, esp. chs. 3, 7-8).
- 49 On which, see Balsdon (1979).
- 50 This is true even after 1800 in Europe; see, for example, the lack of interest in "objective" history in the "historical revivals" in Wales or Finland; see Morgan (1983) and Branch (1985).
- 51 For the term "super-family", see Horowitz (1985, ch. 2); for the uses of posterity, especially in periods of religious decline, see A. D. Smith (1986, ch. 8).
- 52 A. D. Smith, *op. cit.*, ch. 4; Seton-Watson (1977, ch. 2).
- 53 On the Habsburg empire's minorities and their revivals, see Pech (1976); see also Brass (1985: essay by D. Paul on the Slovaks).
- 54 For the latter, see Yalouris et al. (1980); on Transylvania, see Giurescu (1967).
- 55 See Lewis (1968, esp. ch. X) on Turkey. Even where there are historical links, as with the modern Egyptian attempt to "appropriate" a "Pharaonic" culture, they may have become too tenuous to offer more than the dignity of an illustrious antiquity (except for the Coptic minority, a cultural genealogy has too many missing links); see Jankowski (1979).
- 56 For an incisive analysis of many Third World ethnic conflicts, see Horowitz (1985).
- 57 The Marxist tradition in dealing with nationalism has been penetratingly discussed by Orridge (1981); cf. Nairn (1977).
- 58 See Wallerstein (1974) and (1976) for this epiphenomenal status.
- 59 This is a dimension otherwise ignored, as in Tilly's excellent analysis of the rise of Western states, see Tilly (1975: Introduction); and Wallerstein (1974).
- 60 Anderson (1983; chs. 2-3); cf. also Gella (1976).
- 61 On the new reading of the Bhagavad-Gita, see Adenwalla (1961); on the relation of language to national identity, see Edwards (1985).
- 62 On these eastern European nationalisms and their intelligentsias, see Sugar and Lederer (1969); and Seton-Watson (1977, chs. 3-4).
- 63 On India, see Desai (1954) and Sathyamurthy (1983); on the Tatars, see Bennigsen & Quelquejay (1960), which remains a classic study.
- 64 But see the recent analysis of capitalist development in colonial Africa in Sender & Smith (1986); cf. A. D. Smith (1983).
- 65 This is the premise of Nairn's theory of nationalism; see Nairn (1977, chs. 2, 9); he also outlines a typology in terms of degree of "historicity" (adopted from Engels' reading of Hegel's notion of "history-less" peoples) and economic development.
- 66 For a powerful critique of economic theories of nationalism, see Connor (1984a).
- 67 See Howard (1976, chs. 5-6).
- 68 Tilly and Finer emphasize this state system in Tilly (1975).
- 69 See on this, A. D. Smith (1981, ch. 6); and Gouldner (1979).
- 70 On the small size of nationalist activists in Europe, see Argyle (1976).
- 71 Tilly (1975: Conclusion); cf. Kedourie (1971: Introduction).
- 72 See Alavi (1972) for the nature of the colonial and "post-colonial" states; and A. D. Smith (1981a) for the effects of war on *ethnie*.
- 73 See Neuberger (1986) for the fluidity and complexity of these "ethnic" identities and their conflicts; cf. A. D. Smith (1983, chs. 4, 6-7).

- 74 For a sceptical analysis, see A. D. Smith (1986a); but cf. Horowitz (1985).
- 75 This is particularly true in the West; see Webb (1976) for Scotland, and more generally A. D. Smith (1981, ch. 9) and (1986b).
- 76 For this general argument, see Gellner (1964, ch. 7) and Seton-Watson (1971); cf. the critique in some of the essays in Glazer & Moynihan (1975).
- 77 On Mexican and Peruvian Indigenismo, see Masur (1966); also Morner (1971); on American experiences of ethnicity, see Gans (1979).
- 78 For Swiss patriotism, see Steinberg (1976); and more generally on post-War western nationalisms, Benthem van den Berghe (1966).
- 79 See especially MacDougall (1982), and Colls and Dodd (1986); for recent manifestations of British nationalism, see Nairn (1977, ch. 6) and A. D. Smith (1984).
- 80 See Schöpflin (1980) and Djilas (1984).
- 81 See, for example, G. E. Smith (1985) on Soviet management policies. For this and other possibilities of "federalisation", see A. D. Smith (1985).

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