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Liah Greenfeld; Daniel Chirot

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Nationalism and aggression

LIAH GREENFELD AND DANIEL CHIROT
Harvard University; University of Washington, Seattle

The term "nationalism," in its neutral, general sense, refers to the set of ideas and sentiments that forms the conceptual framework of national identity. National identity is one among many, often coexisting and overlapping identities – occupational, religious, tribal, linguistic, territorial, class, gender, and more. But in the modern world, national identity constitutes what may be called the "fundamental identity," the identity that is believed to define the very essence of the individual, which the other identities one may have modify but slightly, and as a result these other identities are considered secondary. The world community today is a community of "nations"; modern societies are "nations" by definition, those societies that do not view themselves as nations are believed to be not (yet) modern, and, in many cases, loyalty to the "nation" lies at the basis of social solidarity and represents the strongest motive behind political mobilization. All contemporary "nations" are derived from entities that previously possessed quite different identities. The first nation was England, which became one in the sixteenth century. The United States of America, France, and Russia defined themselves as such in the eighteenth century. Most others followed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1]

The specificity of nationalism, what distinguishes national identity from other types of identity, derives from the fact that the source of identity, in this case, is located within a "people" that is seen as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity. The "people" is a mass of a population whose boundaries and nature are defined in various ways, but that is usually perceived as larger than any concrete community and always as fundamentally homogeneous and only superficially divided by the lines of status, class, locality, or (in rare cases) even ethnicity. The specificity is conceptual. The only foundation of nationalism in general, the only factor,

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that is, without which no nationalism is possible, is the presence of a certain idea. The idea lying at the core of nationalism is the idea of the "nation."

At the time when the word "nation" acquired its modern meaning and became the synonym of the "people," it meant "an elite," and specifically "an elite of representatives of cultural and political authority."[2] It was in this meaning that it was applied, in the early sixteenth century, to the people of England.[3] The equation of the two concepts – "people" and "nation" – signified a conceptual revolution. For, while the general referent of the word "people" prior to its nationalization (so to speak) was the population of a region, specifically it applied to the lower classes and was most frequently used in the sense of "rabble" or "plebs." The redefinition of the "people" as a "nation" thus symbolically elevated the populace to the position of an elite. This symbolic elevation both reflected and reinforced a tremendous change of attitude, for with it many members of the society willingly identified with a group, from which earlier the better placed of them could only wish to dissociate themselves.

Semantic revolutions do not happen in the ethereal world of ideas, nor do they happen entirely in the mind. They happen in society and are often predicated upon changes in structural conditions. The concept of the "nation" as "an elite" was a result of a long series of transformations that combined structural and semantic elements. At each stage in this process, the concept (the meaning of the word), that came with a certain semantic baggage, evolved out of usage within a particular set of structural constraints. The dominant meaning of the word at any given time was applied within new circumstances to a certain aspect of what it corresponded with. However, other aspects of these circumstances, which did not originally correspond to this dominant meaning, became associated with the word, creating a duality of meaning. The initially dominant meaning was gradually eclipsed, a new one emerged as dominant and, while the word was retained, one concept gave way to another. The process of semantic transformation was constantly redirected by structural constraints that formed new concepts. At the same time, the structural constraints were conceptualized, interpreted, or defined, in terms of the inherited concepts, which thereby oriented social action. The definition of the situation changed as the concepts evolved, changing orientations, too.

The concept "nation" meaning "an elite" evolved in the setting of the medieval church councils, the parties of which, called "nations," represented political and cultural authority – increasingly interpreted as sovereignty – of various ecclesiastical and secular principalities. Such a concept could only be applied to the people of England if it corresponded to some aspect of this people. This means that the people of England had to act as an elite in some way prior to the application of the concept "nation," and could no longer be just "plebs." This change in status presupposed a profound change in the structural conditions of the English society. Specifically, as is explained shortly, this change expressed itself in that numbers of individuals who rose from the "people" and could be defined as of it, found themselves in positions of greatest authority. The idea of the "nation" acknowledged this experience and rationalized it. The individuals of the "people" could exercise authority because the "people" was sovereign. A sovereign people was no rabble, but an elite, a "nation." And "nation," in turn, came to mean "a sovereign people."

This semantic transformation, which occurred in England because of the structural transformation that prompted the redefinition of the "people" as an elite, signalled the emergence of the first nation in the world, in the sense in which the word is understood today, and launched the era of nationalism. But the process did not stop there.

As the word "nation" in its conciliar and at the time dominant meaning of an elite was applied to the population of England, it became cognitively linked with the existing connotations of a population and a country (political, territorial, and ethnic). When later the word was applied to other populations and countries, it was applied in the sense of "a sovereign people," which it acquired in England, and not just because (or not even necessarily because) these other populations acted as elites, but because all of them had some political, territorial, or ethnic qualities to distinguish them. As a result, the word "nation" changed its meaning once again, coming to signify "a unique sovereign people." The new concept of the nation in most cases eclipsed the one immediately preceding it, as the latter eclipsed those from which it descended, but, significantly, this did not happen everywhere. Due to the persistence and, in certain places, development and extension of structural conditions responsible for the evolution of the original idea of the nation, the two concepts now coexist.

The term "nation," applied to both, conceals important differences. The emergence of the more recent concept signified a profound transformation in the nature of nationalism, and the two concepts under one name reflect two radically different forms of the phenomenon (which means both two radically different forms of national identity, and two radically different types of national collectivities – nations). The two branches of nationalism are obviously related in a significant way, but are grounded in different values and develop for different reasons. They also give rise to dissimilar patterns of social behavior, culture, and political institutions, often conceptualized as expressions of unlike "national characters."

These differences are partly attributable to the differences in the order in which structural and symbolic factors influenced each other in the process of the transformation of identity in various cases. The adoption of the idea of the nation always implied symbolic elevation of the populace, and therefore the creation of a new social order, a new structural reality. But, although in the case of the original concept of the nation as a "sovereign people," the idea was inspired by the structural context that preceded its formation (the people acting in some way as a political elite and actually exercising sovereignty), in the latter case (the concept of the nation as "a unique sovereign people") the sequence of events was the opposite: the importation of the idea of popular sovereignty, as part and parcel of the idea of the nation, initiated the transformation in the social and political structure.

The original – English – idea of the nation was individualistic: sovereignty of the people was the implication of the actual sovereignty of individuals. It was because they actually exercised sovereignty that these individuals (of the people) composed a "nation." The sovereignty of the people in the case of the later form of nationalism, by contrast, was an implication of the people's uniqueness, its very being a distinct people, because this was the meaning of the nation, and the nation was, by definition, sovereign. The national principle thus was collectivistic, it reflected the collective being. Collectivistic ideologies are inherently authoritarian, for, when the collectivity is seen in unitary terms, it tends to assume the character of a collective individual possessed of a single will, and someone is bound to be its interpreter. The reification of a community introduces (or preserves) fundamental inequality between those few of its members who are qualified to interpret the collective will and the many who have no such qualifications; the select few dictate to the masses who must obey.

On the basis of these distinctions one may classify the basic types of nationalism as individualistic-libertarian and collectivistic-authoritarian types. In addition, nationalism may be distinguished according to criteria of membership in the national collectivity, which may be either "civic" (that is, identical with citizenship) or "ethnic." In the former case, nationality is at least in principle open and voluntaristic, it can and sometimes must be acquired; in the latter it is believed to be inherent, one can neither acquire it if one does not have it, nor change it if one does; it has nothing to do with individual will, but constitutes a genetic characteristic. It must be emphasized that ethnic homogeneity of a population (whether linguistic, racial, or other), even when seen as a characteristic of a nation, does not necessarily result in ethnic nationalism. France, perceived as ethnically homogeneous, for instance, is a civic nation. The type of nationalism, as nationalism in general, is a result of cultural construction; it reflects choices made by its architects rather than "objective reality" of whatever sort. Historically, the first nationalism to emerge, in England, belonged to the individualistic and civic type. The second, a mixed type that appeared in France, was civic and collectivistic. The third type to emerge consisted of collectivistic and ethnic nationalisms. These were exemplified first by Russia, and then by Germany. This type of nationalism was destined to become the most frequently imitated one in the late nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries.

It must be kept in mind, of course, that these are only categories that serve to pinpoint certain characteristic tendencies within different, specific nationalisms. They should be regarded as models that can be approximated, but are unlikely to be fully realized. But the compositions of the existing mixtures vary significantly enough to justify their classification in these analytically useful terms.

To understand how any particular nationalism acquired its specific form, and why it belongs to one type and not another, one has to analyze how it emerged. The processes of formation of the two basic types of nationalism mentioned above, civic-individualistic and ethnic-collectivistic, are different, because of the differential significance and impact of various factors in them, even though the very same factors can be distinguished in the emergence of every nationalism.[4] These factors fall, basically, into three categories: structural, cultural, and psychological, but the specific nature of each is a variable.

The adoption of national identity in every case (whether as a result of creation, as in England, or of importation, as in other countries) was a response to a fundamentally similar structural situation. It occurred because an influential group (or groups) was dissatisfied with its traditional identity as a result of a profound inconsistency between the definition of social order expressed in it and the experience of the involved actors. This inconsistency could result from upward or downward mobility of whole strata, from conflation of social roles (which might imply contradictory expectations from the same individuals), or from the appearance of new roles that did not fit existing categories. Whatever the cause of identity crisis, its structural manifestation was in every case the same: "anomie." This might be, but was not necessarily the condition of the society at large; it did, however, directly affect the relevant agents. Because the agents were different in different cases, the anomie was expressed and experienced differently. Very often it took the form of status-inconsistency that, depending on its nature, could be accompanied by a profound sense of insecurity and anxiety.

The specificity of the change and its effects on the agents in each case deeply influenced the character of nationalism in it. The underlying ideas of nationality were shaped and modified in accordance with the situational constraints of the actors, and the aspirations, frustrations, and interests that these constraints generated.

This often involved reinterpreting these ideas in terms of indigenous traditions that might have existed alongside the dominant system of ideas in which the now rejected traditional identity was imbedded, as well as elements of this system of ideas itself, which were not rejected. Such reinterpretation implied incorporation of pre-national modes of thought within the nascent national consciousness, which were then carried on in it and reinforced.

The effects of these structural and cultural influences frequently combined with that of a certain psychological factor that both necessitated a reinterpretation of the imported ideas and determined the direction of such reinterpretation: *ressentiment*. A term coined by Nietzsche[5] and later defined and developed by Max Scheler,[6] *ressentiment* refers to a psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred (existential envy) and the impossibility to act them out, which in many cases leads to the "transvaluation of values." The sociological basis for *ressentiment* – or structural conditions that are necessary for the development of this psychological state – are two. The first (the

structural basis of envy itself) is the fundamental comparability between the subject and the object of envy, or rather the belief on the part of the subject in the fundamental equality between them, which makes them in principle interchangeable. The second condition is the actual inequality (perceived as not fundamental) of such dimensions that it rules the practical achievement of the theoretically existing equality out. The presence of these conditions renders a situation *ressentiment*-prone, irrespective of the temperaments and psychological makeup of the individuals who compose the relevant population. *Ressentiment* could be inspired by a situation within the community that was to be defined as a nation, or by the position of this community relative to other communities. Most often the two were confounded. The unsatisfactory internal situation was interpreted as a result of foreign influence, and a community outside became the chief object of *ressentiment. Ressentiment* felt by the groups that imported the idea of the nation and articulated the national consciousness of their respective societies usually resulted in the selection, out of their own indigenous traditions, of elements hostile to the original national principle and in their deliberate cultivation. In certain cases, notably in Russia, where indigenous cultural resources were clearly insufficient, *ressentiment* was the single most important factor in determining the specific terms in which national identity was defined.[7] Everywhere it existed it fostered particularistic pride and xenophobia, providing emotional nourishment for the nascent national sentiment and sustaining it whenever it faltered.

Analytically, the three classes of variables (structural, cultural, and psychological) may also be seen as stages in the formation of nationalisms, the structural being the basic stage to which cultural and psychological ones are added. The character of the first type of nationalism (individualistic and civic) and of the first nationalism in history (the English) was essentially determined by the structural factors, while cultural factors (elements of indigenous traditions) influenced it but little, and the psychological ones (*ressentiment*) had virtually no impact. The second historical type (the French – collectivistic and civic – which we are not examining) bears the imprint of structural and cultural variables in approximately equal measure. Only in the historically third type of nationalism (collectivistic and ethnic) does the psychological factor, *ressentiment*, play a crucial formative role.

The differential propensity of nationalisms for aggressive behavior

Whenever one attempts to generalize about the relation between nationalism and other phenomena, one has to take the fundamental distinctions between the types of nationalism into account, because the character of these relations varies in accordance with the latter. Among the differences concealed by the indiscriminate use of the terms "nation" and "nationalism" are the differential propensities of different nations to engage in aggressive warfare, and the differential likelihood of brutality in the treatment of adversary populations (in particular non-combatants), while engaging in war.

The above analysis of the nature of the two fundamental types of nationalism (individualistic and civic vs. collectivistic and ethnic) and the processes of their emergence should lead one to expect from them different behavior in both respects. These expectations may be summarized in two sets of propositions:

1) Collectivistic nationalisms would be more likely to engage in aggressive warfare than individualistic nationalisms for several reasons. Individualistic nationalisms are not, in principle, particularistic, for they are based on the universalistic principle of the moral primacy of the individual. This goes for any individual, whether or not he or she belongs to the national community, and as a result, the borderline between "us" and "them" is frequently blurred. One's nation is not perceived as an animate being that can nurture grievances, neither are other nations regarded as individuals harboring malicious intentions and capable of inflicting insults. The culprits and the victims in every conflict are specified, and sympathies and antipathies change with the issues and points of view. Moreover, individualistic nationalisms are by definition pluralisms, which implies that at any point in time there exists a plurality of opinions in regard to what constitutes the good of the nation. For this reason, it is relatively difficult, in individualistic nations, to achieve a consensus necessary for mobilization of the population for war; it is especially difficult in the case of aggressive war, when no direct threat from the prospective enemy is perceived by the national population.

Collectivistic nationalisms, by contrast, are forms of particularism, whether perceived in geo-political, cultural (in the sense of acquired culture), or in presumably inherent, "ethnic" terms. The borderline between "us" and "them" is relatively clear, and the nation is essentially

a consensual, rather than conflictual, pluralistic society. Both of these qualities facilitate mobilization, and both are related to a characteristic of the process of emergence of collectivistic nationalisms.

In distinction to individualistic nationalisms that are articulated by upwardly mobile, successful, and confident groups, as happened in England (and later in the United States), often with a broad social base, collectivistic nationalisms are articulated by small elite groups. These either seek to protect their threatened status (as with the lesser nobility in Romania in the nineteenth century, or later the Sunni Arab elite in Iraq in the 1920s) or are frustrated in their efforts to improve it (as with the small, educated middle class in late eighteenth-century Germany). Such status-anxious elites define their community – the sphere of their potential influence and membership/leadership, which may be political, linguistic, religious, racial, or what not – as a "nation," and tend to present their grievances as the grievances of the nation and themselves as the representatives of the nation. To achieve the solidarity of this larger population, made of diverse strands, they tend (though not invariably) to blame their misfortunes not on agencies within the nation, whom they would as a result alienate, but on those outside it. And if they blame internal elements they define these as agents acting on behalf of or in collusion with hostile foreigners. Thus from their perspective the nation is, from the start, united in common hatred.

2) Collectivistic nationalism that is also ethnic is more conducive to brutality in relation to the enemy population during war than civic nationalism. This is so because civic nationalism, even when particularistic, still treats humanity as one, fundamentally homogeneous entity. Foreigners are not fellow-nationals, but they are still fellow-men, and with a little effort on their part, it is assumed, they may even become fellow-nationals. In ethnic nationalisms, by contrast, the borderline between "us" and "them" is in principle impermeable. Nationality is defined as an inherent trait, and nations are seen, in effect, as separate species. Foreigners are no longer fellow-men in the same sense, and there is no moral imperative to treat them as one would one's fellow-nationals (in the same way as there is no imperative to treat our fellow-mammals, or even fellow-great apes as fellow-men). The very definitions of ethnic nations presuppose a double standard of moral (or humane, decent, etc.) conduct. The tendency to "demonize" the enemy population, considered to be a necessary condition for "crimes against humanity" is built-in to ethnic nationalism, for enemy populations within them are not necessarily defined as humanity to begin with.

This tendency of "demonization" is related to the prominence of *ressentiment* in the formation of ethnic nationalisms; the latter often inspires and always reinforces the former. The object of *ressentiment*, initially perceived as superior (invariably so, for otherwise there would be no sense insisting on equality with it), and therefore as a model, comes to be defined as the anti-model once the degree of the actual inequality between it and the given ethnic nation is realized. This object then becomes, in the minds of the spokespersons and architects of that nation, the incarnation of evil, incorrigible, because also defined in terms of inherent traits, and therefore an eternal enemy. According to the characteristic psycho-logic of ethnic nationalisms, the evil other (whoever that may be) is always harboring malicious intentions, ready to strike against the innocent nation at an opportune moment. For this reason, *ressentiment*-based nations tend to feel threatened and to become aggressive – both to preempt perceived threats of aggression against them and because the evil nature of the adversary justifies aggression, even if no immediate threats are perceived, at the same time as it justifies brutality in relation to the enemy population.

These propositions, it should be stressed, are statements of probabilities. Whether nations that are likely to become aggressive or brutal actually become so depends on international circumstances and opportunities. Although in retrospect we can easily see that the roots of Serbian nationalism were potentially aggressive and brutal, it took the collapse of communism in 1989, followed by the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the passivity of the rest of Europe to activate this potential.[8]

The early cases

Although the above theory and typology of nationalism was originally elaborated in the framework of a study of the emergence of nationalism in the five first societies to define themselves as nations – England, France, Russia, Germany, and the United States of America, we claim that this theoretical model is applicable to other cases. We begin by looking at England, Russia, and Germany, then turn our attention to a number of newer nations to discuss the relationship between nationalism and aggressive propensities among them.

England

The emergence and establishment of nationalism in England was due to the massive restructuring English society underwent in the sixteenth century as a result of several independent but interacting factors.[9] The Wars of the Roses decimated the traditional, feudal aristocracy, which created a vacuum on the top of the social hierarchy and invited upward mobility. The new Tudor aristocracy was predominantly an official elite. Its emergence in the 1530s coincided with the elimination of the clergy from the key positions in the administration, which made the Crown dependent on the services of the university-trained laymen. The members of the new aristocracy were people of remarkable abilities and education, but they were recruited from minor gentry and even lower strata. Elite status, at least temporarily, became dependent on merit, rather than birth.[10] This fundamental transformation demanded justification, and it was accomplished by nationalism. The idea of the nation – of the people as an elite – appealed to the new aristocracy; nationality, as it were, made every Englishman a nobleman, and blue blood was no longer the condition for high positions in society.[11]

The growth of the gentry in numbers and in wealth, due to the redistribution of Church properties and the reorganization of the countryside, was complemented by parallel developments among the professions and the merchants because of England's growing trade and prosperity. This amounted to the creation of a broad, heterogeneous, achievement-oriented middle class that assimilated the appealing idea of the nation as thoroughly as the new aristocracy. It justified its de facto equality with the latter in some areas, as well as its aspirations for upward mobility, increased participation in the political process, and demand for more power. The representatives of this class sat in the House of Commons, and while their growing national consciousness led them to demand more power for the Parliament, the increasing importance of the Parliament, in turn, reinforced their sense of nationality.[12]

The importance of the Parliament increased, among other things, because of the constant dependence of the first Tudors on the good will of their subjects. The authority of Henry VII, who won the crown on a battlefield, was based on little more than the willingness of the people to have him as their king. He was also dependent on the Parliament financially, and thus could not afford to be disrespectful in its regard. The position of Henry VIII, too, necessitated a constantly deferential stance toward the people and its representatives in the Parliament. He

made the Parliament a party in the "great matter" of the break from Rome and, for his own reasons supported the growth of national consciousness.[13]

The great importance of Henry's break from Rome was that it opened the doors to Protestantism, which was perhaps the most significant among the factors that furthered the development of English nationalism. Although nationalism predated the Reformation and most likely contributed to its appeal in England, the already growing national consciousness was strengthened manifold when the two became confluent.[14] For a great mass of common Englishmen, the English Bible and the unprecedented stimulation of literacy were functionallly equivalent to the effects of the social elevation on the new aristocracy. This mass of readers, too, was elevated and acquired a totally new, dignified status, the sense of which was reinforced by national identity and led them to embrace it. The counter-Reformational policies of Mary Tudor were perceived as also anti-national, and succeeded in antagonizing the common people as well as the elite group with a vested interest in both Protestantism and nationalism.[15] The end of her reign, which came so soon, made this latter group the ruling group in the country for many years and brought about the identification of Protestant and national causes.[16] This identification provided the growing national consciousness with divine sanction at a time when only religious sentiments were self-legitimating, and secured it the protection of its own strongest rival. Thus English nationalism was allowed the time to gestate, it was helped to permeate every sphere of political and cultural life, and it spread into every sector of society except the lowest.

This evolution of English nationalism was due to structural, rather than cultural factors. Even the impact of Protestantism, it is important to emphasize, was structural. The relative unimportance of cultural factors in this case was related to the absence of an articulate sense of Englishness (a unique English identity) before nationalism, although, of course, some inarticulate, vague sense must have been present. The absence of an articulate English identity is explained, chiefly, by the non-specific character of the English Catholicism and by the French connections of the Crown and the nobility.

Yet, Protestantism, specifically its insistence on the priesthood of all believers, reinforced the individualistic and anti-authoritarian implications of the English idea of the nation – the people as an elite – which acknowledged and rationalized the actually existing novel social condi-

tions. Like the idea of the nation, the Protestant idea helped to make sense of the fact of massive social mobility, and particularly the possibility of upward mobility from lower strata into the aristocracy. The dignity of each believer implied by the priesthood of all corresponded to the dignity of each and the equality of all Englishmen implied by membership in the nation. This essential equality was equality in principle, of course, rather than in reality. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries England was no modern democracy. It was an imperfect protector of civil rights, especially of those of the poor and heretical; it was a society run by a small, landed elite; it was callous, and by modern standards, unjust. But the principle proved a powerful influence. For its time, in Europe, or by the standards of any of the non-European agrarian empires of that or any other age, it was exceptionally egalitarian and liberal. Because of this, as it evolved, it proved better able than any of the other European powers to absorb industrialization, rising lower-class consciousness, and social innovation, and to move toward modern standards of democracy in a relatively humane, gradual way.

English nationalism was the creation of upwardly-mobile, confident groups and it produced a confident, relatively open and tolerant elite. This did not make England a peaceful eighteenth and nineteenth-century version of late twentieth-century Sweden and Switzerland. But in view of England's extraordinary and growing strength, this type of nationalism produced a sense of restraint unusual for a dominant world power. England's wars in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries had largely limited goals – preserving the European balance of power, keeping its trade routes open, and maintaining access to the goods its economy needed. England had very little of the messianic empire-building drive of Revolutionary France, of Germany from the time of its unification until 1945, of Russia under its great Tsars or under the Communist Party, or of Imperial Japan. Nor was England ever so ambitious as to threaten its own people's life and property to the same extent as these other great powers, or many minor other imperial adventurers of the modern age. This restraint manifested itself also in the conduct of war and treatment of adversary populations. Already in the sixteenth century, Raleigh drew attention to the exceptional (by the standards of the time) humanity of the English conduct toward prisoners of war, as compared to that of the Spaniards.[17] Such humanity became a valued national trait, replacing sanguinary virtues in which feudal lords took pride. Cromwell's conduct in Ireland stands out as uncharacteristic of England's behavior in the seventeenth and subsequent centuries, although fairly typical if compared to that of other European countries of the period.

Russia

In distinction to England, the most important factor in the development of Russian nationalism was *ressentiment*, and in contrast to both England and Germany, the influence of indigenous traditions in this case was negligible. The history of Russian nationalism began with the reign of Peter the Great (1689–1725), who undertook to turn Russia into a European power, and effectively destroyed its indigenous traditions as a first step in this attempted westernization. Peter's measures were thorough: hardly any aspect of Russia's life escaped his innovations. He reformed the Church and subjugated it to the secular authority of the tsars, changed the manner of dress, attempted to make Dutch the official language and, when this failed, inaugurated the creation of modern Russian. He imported western concepts, western forms of organization (in the administration and the military), and even western cuisine.[18]

Such a thoroughgoing revolution from above was possible in Russia because the power of its rulers, since at least the sixteenth century, was truly more absolute than any in the west. The upper stratum of the society Peter inherited, the nobility, was a service estate without independent sources of power and no territorial base. The rest of the society consisted almost entirely of peasants who were legally enserfed in 1649. The nobles were land-owners with the right to the free labor of serfs, but their estates were theirs on condition of service to the autocrat.[19]

The status of the nobility was precarious even before Peter's accession, but his reforms made its very identity psychologically untenable. Under Peter, personal status was tied to rank achieved in service. Even noblemen of most exalted birth had to begin at the bottom of the service hierarchy. But because ennoblement became automatic as one moved through the ranks, nobility as such became meaningless. While noble birth necessarily bred high expectations and set young aristocrats apart from the rest, it was powerless to fulfill these expectations.[20]

Unhappy with their identity, the Russian nobility was ready to adopt a new one that would be commensurate with their sense of dignity. The framework for such new identity was provided by Peter himself, with the western concepts – of state, nation, and general good – that he imported. In his edicts, he reinterpreted his own authority as the authority of the Russian state, insisted that service was due not to him-

self personally, but to the fatherland, presented Russia as a proud nation, rather than his patrimony, and talked of the interests of the Russian people.[21] It took several generations for these concepts (which required a creation of an entirely new vocabulary) to enter the general educated (and ipso facto aristocratic) discourse. This happened during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–1796). Catherine, like Peter, was enamored of western ideas, and fostered among her noble subjects the "philosophical" spirit. Under her, the nobility completed the transition it had begun under Peter and turned nationalist.[22]

Having exchanged its estate identity as nobles for a national identity and become the Russian nation, the nobility was faced with a problem. Theoretically, nationality made all eligible to national membership equal. It protected even the lowest from the absolute loss of status and guaranteed everyone a modicum of dignity. The psychological gratification to be derived from national identity in a nation that was supposedly unique depended on the status of this nation vis-à-vis other nations. But in reality there was little to be proud of in Russia. For anyone who looked closely, Russia remained terribly backward in almost every respect when compared to the west. Furthermore, this comparison was inevitable because the west was chosen by Peter – and upheld by his successors – as the model. Russian nationalists insisted that theirs was a European state.[23] Its masses were illiterate, its technology could never quite catch up to western standards, its governing institutions were really not western because neither the nobility nor the towns had any political power, and – most conspicuously, the great majority of its own, national population were serfs, virtually slaves who could be bought and sold like cattle or inanimate objects.

The remarkable military successes of Peter the Great that led to the emergence of Russia as a formidable power in European politics, and his spectacular achievements at home, such as the creation of the city of St. Petersburg, led early nationalists to believe that the gap could be easily closed and to regard it as a challenge. But when, two generations later, their hopes failed to materialize, the admiration of the west turned into *ressentiment*, and the west itself from the model turned into the anti-model.[24]

Since, so far as the classes participating in this process were concerned, the indigenous traditions were destroyed, the Russian national consciousness was defined almost wholly on the basis of the transvaluation of the western ideals. The axis of the transvaluation was the rejection of

the individual – indeed the central western value. Community took the place of the individual, the mystical Slavic soul was substituted for reason, and liberty was redefined as inner freedom. The soulless rational individual was seen as the product of the corrupt western civilization, and it was best to stay as far away from it as possible. The simple people, the peasants, were farthest removed from its effects, and they came to be seen as the carriers of Russia's unique virtues, as the ideal, pure Russians. The peasants were defined by their blood and ties to the soil, and blood and soil became the central criteria of Russian nationality.[25]

With the discovery of the "people," the construction of Russian national identity was complete. A nation led by an autocrat and a tiny elite could only define itself collectivistically (and, therefore, necessarily, naturally, as authoritarian), because otherwise there was no way of legitimizing the type of political regime that actually existed. But Russia also defined itself as an ethnic, genetically constituted entity. As the elite and the peasant masses shared so little in the way they lived, to define the nation civically would have been to admit that the vast majority of the people did not remotely fit in as part of the desired nation. This collectivistic-ethnic nation was by definition a better nation than any in the west. Nothing the west could offer could equal its inherent qualities. And yet, the west remained the significant other and the only object of comparison for Russia. Russian national pride depended on the recognition by the west. However aggressively contemptuous and resentful of the other Europeans, the Russians remained eager to impress them. And in their efforts to do so they oscillated between conspicuous self-adulation (that received the name of Slavophilism) and attempts to emulate the west in order to surpass it (westernism).[26]

The hopes of Russian patriots for western recognition were aroused – only to be frustrated anew – many times. Russia's great rulers, Peter, Catherine, and Alexander I (1801–1825) were astonishingly successful in international affairs. Each defeated the European powers that challenged them, Sweden, Prussia, and finally Napoleonic France. They pushed the Ottoman Empire back into the Balkans, opened the Black Sea to Russia, eliminated the border nomads once and for all, and made Russia a great power, the only power England identified as a potential threat to its global hegemony after 1815. But the other side of the coin was that they made serfdom ever more onerous, crushed peasant protest, and humiliated the most enlightened members of the aristocracy who had reformist ideals. They created a modern military

juggernaut based on a backward mass of virtual slaves and staffed it with a proud, patriotic, deeply shamed and insecure noble elite. (If this sounds like a description of the Communist Party bureaucracy built by Stalin, that is not entirely a coincidence. In effect, he reproduced the same pattern, only with greater success and even more contradictions.)[27]

The Russian intelligentsia, which eventually overthrew the Romanovs, represented what seemed to be a wide array of opinions. The extraordinary cultural vigor of this class, reflected in its amazing productivity in literature, music, painting, and science in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, was ostensibly paralleled by its range of social and political positions. There were anarchists, populists, nihilists, and eventually Marxists of various types. Perhaps the difficulties of reconciling the various aspects of Russian national consciousness contributed to this explosive productivity of what was, after all, a very small intellectual elite. In 1860 there were no more than 20,000 in the intelligentsia, out of a population of some sixty million.[28]

But this seeming variety perpetuated the two archetypal views, "Slavophilism" and "westernism," that were in complete agreement about certain key points. One was that Russia had to be reformed, for in the current conditions it was for one reason or another unable to express its unique national potential. Second, all of these positions shared a feeling that the capitalist, bourgeois west was corrupt, and that Russia was superior to it, either because it was pure or because it was somehow younger. Whether on the right or the left, the intelligentsia shared a distaste for capitalism and individualism, firmly believing that both were alien to the Russian national character. There were never many moderate liberals among the Russian intellectuals; Turgenev remained a very lonely exception. Mired in conflicting emotions of love and disgust for their own society, the intelligentsia tended toward highly romanticized visions of the nation and spared no effort to make it conform to one or another of these. In the end, one such unrealistic vision was imposed by the victorious westernizing Bolsheviks (just as Peter and Catherine had imposed theirs), but at tremendous cost and, ultimately, unsuccessfully.

Collectivistic and ethnic romantic nationalism that idealizes community and scorns liberal moderation, skepticism, and individualism disregards the costs of making the nation great. Russian nationalism

cultivated glory and patriotism, combined them with a messianic sense of Russia's unique mission and deep resentment against the west, and used this mixture to disregard the practical interests of a population that lacked political representation. A nation (or, to be precise, a national elite) moved by such sentiments and possessing enormous human and physical resources, if sufficiently advanced in science and technology to maintain a powerful modern army, was bound to be an aggressive, paranoid, dangerous power. Wars that were won confirmed its sense of mission and superiority; lost ones (such as the Crimean and Russo-Japanese wars, or World War I) provoked revolutionary ferment and deep soul-searching that strengthened the belief that it was surrounded by enemies. This pattern was not changed by communism. The success of the "Great Patriotic War" consolidated the Stalinist regime and created a sense of enthusiasm that sustained a fundamentally corrupt and oppressive system for another forty-five years as one of the world's two superpowers. The failure in Afghanistan in the 1980s, minor in military and strategic terms, began its rapid unravelling.

In many, if not most, cases, Russian aggression in the past two centuries was directed against groups within the confines of what was or became the Russian Empire. The perpetuation of this Empire in the framework of the Soviet Union obscured, but did not change its imperial nature. The limits of the Russian state – the sphere of authority of Russia's rulers – were never identical with the limits of the Russian nation. This state always ruled over more nations than one. Even the two other Russias (Little Russia, or Ukraine, and White Russia, or Belorus) were never incorporated within the Russian nation, each being defined as a nation in its own right. The same applied to Georgia, Lithuania, and the rest.

This is directly related to the nature of Russian nationalism and, in turn, explains the "ethnic" problems that broke apart the Soviet Union and turned it into a cauldron of competing and overlapping nationalist and ethnic claims.

Russian and later Soviet aggression against the non-Russian nations attracted much less attention than it would have had the territories and peoples experiencing it remained independent.[29] But this in no way lessens the fact that in its treatment of the subjugated populations, Russia's many governments demonstrated the same lack of concern for human life and individual rights as they did in regard to Russia's own national population. The Russian people, its intellectuals as well as its

masses, on the whole, supported the oppressive foreign and imperial policy of their government and willingly cooperated with it. In the light of the idea that nations were individuals, possessed of a uniform will and disposition, claims that entire peoples plotted – or could plot – the ruin of Russia made a lot of sense, and it was nothing but noble patriotism to do everything one could to prevent such peoples from realizing their wicked plans, including wholesale uprooting, intentional starvation of millions, and murder.

Such policies were always presented as self-defense, and indeed the history Russians believe in is that they have been the perpetual victims, never the aggressors. Some individuals undoubtedly enjoyed doing what they were doing, but in the Russian national consciousness as a whole, war and violence had always been regarded as necessary evils. War is not an ideal to aspire to; violence is not a virtue to be cultivated. Russians see themselves as a peace-loving people and take pride in their kindness. They are proud of their ability to suffer, but they do not recognize that the worst of their suffering is self-inflicted. They have contributed to the international vocabulary the words "knout" and "pogrom," but they claim pity and charity as central national characteristics. These are just few among the many contradictions that are the stuff of the enigmatic Slavic soul, that most ingenious creation of the first Russian nationalists and the basis of Russian national identity. These contradictions, more than any other factor, shape Russian policies toward other nations and their conduct in war. There is little evidence that the demise of communism has changed this.[30]

Germany

No account of the relation between nationalism and war could be complete without the consideration of German nationalism. Unlike Russia, in the German national consciousness, at least during the first 150 years of its existence (until 1945), war, violence, and death were important positive values. There was also an indifference toward individual rights and lives inherent in the collectivistic nature of German nationalism and a predisposition to regard other populations as belonging to different species because of the ethnic definition of the German nation. Further, the prominence of *ressentiment* in its formation increased Germany's aggressive tendencies. With all this, it is not surprising that the German conduct of war increasingly sanctioned brutality and ruthlessness in the treatment of enemy populations. How this came to be needs to be explained.

Unlike English or Russian nationalisms (or the French version), German nationalism owed its creation to middle-class intellectuals, rather than the aristocracy. The aristocracy was generally satisfied with its situation in the many German states in the eighteenth century, and it was the middle-class intellectuals who experienced anomie that led them to clamor for a redefinition of their social situation and a new identity.[31]

The middle-class intellectuals, *Bildungsbürger*, were a creation of German universities. Many of them were recruited from lower classes, but, as a whole, the group was supposed to enjoy higher status than the uneducated bourgeoisie.[32] But this was a static society that did not recognize social mobility. This rendered *Bildungsbürger* marginal: they felt that their education entitled them to mobility, but instead it left them out of any of the accepted social categories. The situation was worsened in the late eighteenth century.[33] Enlightenment, which was the dominant philosophy in many prominent German states (most notably Prussia), placed intellect high in the value hierarchy, boosted the self-esteem of intellectuals and encouraged their aspirations for an exalted place in society. This led to the overproduction of intellectuals and the consequent decline of opportunities. Caught in the state of trained unemployability, often very poor and always unhappy, some of the *Bildungsbürger* turned not against the unaccepting social arrangements, but against the Enlightenment that misled them. The result of this change of heart was Romanticism.[34]

Romanticism combined certain elements of Enlightenment philosophy, such as, for example, a firm belief in the natural superiority of men of letters, and contempt for religious dogma, with the elements of a potent religious movement of the period, also opposed to dogma, Pietism. Many of the original creators of Romanticism came from Pietist homes, studied in Pietist schools, or were exposed to Pietism otherwise; the turn to it, therefore, in a way represented a return. Pietism was a form of mysticism. Its central characteristic was emotionalism, it was "a religion of the heart." It provided a way for immobile social strata, unacquainted with success but familiar with disaster, to cope with the doctrine of predestination. For people in this strata, it would make no sense to seek signs of salvation in worldly success, as did the upwardly mobile, and therefore confident, Puritans in England. And so they sought them in emotional experiences of unity with the Savior.[35] Such a premium put on emotional experiences, among other things, resulted in the cult of the Passion on the Cross, which facilitated empathy – and

thus emotional unity – with Jesus the man. The paraphernalia of the Passion – blood, wounds, physical suffering, and death – partook in the sanctity of the crucified God and soon became sacred in their own right. The cult of the Passion led to the cult of blood.[36]

Romanticism secularized the Pietist tradition and was able to perpetuate it in an environment that was less and less attuned to religion. The cult of blood lost its religious connotations, but remained a cult. The pain and violence that caused it were celebrated as expressions of a moral being; death, both one's own and that of others, became a supreme sensual and ethical experience.[37]

For collectivities, war was the equivalent of personal violence and death. The Romantic rejection of the Enlightenment, first and foremost, was the rejection of the individual as the bearer of reason. The emphasis on reason and individual autonomy, believed Romantics, crippled men, separated them from their true social nature, and rendered them marginal, unattached, and unhappy. An autonomous individual, necessarily alienated from himself, was in fact denied individuality. The only true individuals were communities, and only through self-loss in them could people recover their alienated selves. Because the sphere of their activity was defined, basically, by language, the Romantics insisted that communities of language were true moral individuals and fundamental units of humanity. But language, they held, had a material basis and was determined by race. It was this combination of language and race that created peoples, which by the end of the eighteenth century, the Romantics would often refer to as "nations." In war, for which every healthy nation had a natural predilection, it asserted its individuality.[38]

For a long time, the Romantics focused their attention on the private sphere, leaving the political implications of their philosophy unarticulated. Even though it would have been in their interest to redefine the German states (or any one of them) as a nation – for this would make them equal to the most exalted aristocracy and secure the dignity they were denied in the society of orders – they did not demand such a redefinition. This would be futile: nationalism was completely out of tune with the mood of the ruling elite and such influential groups as the nobility and the bureaucracies, and so Romantic intellectuals were not nationalist. It was the French invasion and, specifically, the defeat of Prussia that changed their attitude.[39]

The initial effect of the news of the Revolution in France was to reinvigorate cosmopolitan sentiments in Germany. At first, most of the German Romantic intellectuals admired the French, and rejoiced at the promise of the Revolution to topple social hierarchies everywhere. The attempts of the French to fulfill their promises, however, did not bring the *Bildungsbürger* the benefits that they desired and, in some important cases, for example, Fichte's, represented a threat to their personal interests. At the same time, the French invasion offered the intellectuals an extraordinary opportunity to identify with the ruling elite, and thus at least symbolically elevate their status. It also made the elite sympathetic to such efforts of fraternization because they were the ones under attack by the French. The Romantics presented the cause of the ruling elite as the "German cause," and virtually overnight turned into German nationalists. Fichte's was perhaps the prototypical case of a rapid conversion from principled cosmopolitanism and sympathy for the Revolution to intense German nationalism.[40] The rulers, especially in Prussia, welcomed the efforts of native intellectuals, whom they previously did not deign to notice, and used nationalism as a tool to ward off the French menace.[41] Since the Enlightenment and its representatives in Germany, who were the chief competitors of the Romantics for the attention of the German-speaking public, were discredited by the association with the French Revolution – the child of Enlightenment – the Romantics were left in charge of shaping the German national consciousness and were able to define it in terms of the Romantic philosophy.

The deep *ressentiment* of the Romantics toward Enlightenment in its "nationalized" form first focused on France, later on England and the west as a whole.[42] From the very beginning, however, the Jews, whose emancipation was attempted by the French and who were therefore seen as the beneficiaries of the German humiliation, came to personify western liberalism, individualism, and capitalism. Their vile nature, in accordance with the principles of Romantic philosophy, was seen as a reflection of their race, not religion, and thus there was no hope that they would ever change for the better. A new German word was invented to designate the hatred of the Jewish race: *"Antisemitismus."*[43] Since, in the final analysis, national predispositions were racially, that is biologically, determined, Germany was forever surrounded by enemies, had enemies in its midst, and was forever threatened. This sense of threat, reinforced by the experience of the French invasion but inherent in the collectivistic and racial definition of the nation, combined with the Romantic veneration of death and violence to create a very dangerous

set of motivations that lay at the core of the German national identity. There was still a long road to travel through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for German nationalism to reach the 1930s, but there is little doubt that its origins in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries gave it some of the features that produced such a catastrophe later on.[44]

German nationalism always remained partly wedded to the Enlightenment, to scientific progress and education, and to high artistic achievement. In the nineteenth century, even before the unification, the German states were much more conscientious promoters of university research and higher education than other parts of Europe. This was a great source of pride, and it is one of the main explanations for Germany's astonishing economic success in the latter part of that century. On the other hand, the dark, xenophobic, mystical Romantic strain that lay at the heart of German nationalism also remained and grew. As the aristocracy, primarily in Prussia, but then throughout united Germany, redefined its mission in military-nationalist terms, and as the growing bourgeoisie was educated according to the ideals of the early German nationalist intellectuals, this anti-Enlightenment strain was strengthened.

There is a direct line from Fichte to Wagner and Spengler. That is not the entire story, of course, but an important part of it nonetheless. Both triumphs and defeats of Germany reinforced the spirit with which it was born. Triumphant German nationalism was warlike. That Germany was united through a series of successful, aggressive wars managed by a highly militarized Prussian state, and that it emerged in the twentieth century as a leading industrial power, even as it maintained its original sense of resentful frustration against the French and English, had much to do with the willingness, even eagerness of Germans to go to war in 1914. But the loss Germany suffered in 1918 also reinforced all that was most dangerous about German nationalism. Nazism was neither inevitable nor accepted by every German, but it is not difficult to see that its spiritual antecedents were well rooted in German culture. German nationalism was, in a real sense, born aggressive and angry, and its propensity to start wars should not surprise us. Whether the shattering defeats Germany suffered in the first half of the twentieth century have finally weakened this particular, key element in German nationalism, remains to be seen. In 1989 it would have been easy to answer that everything had changed. In 1994 that is no longer quite so obvious.

The spread of nationalism and the power of ressentiment

The success of a few European countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ensured that their form of self-definition would pevail. Nationalism was not the primary cause of Europe's success, of course. The ancient centers of agrarian civilization with well-developed bureaucratic structures, complex economies, and strong religions, simply failed to match the west's scientific, technological, and economic dynamism. But the fact that the most powerful European states defined themselves as nation-states gave this model to the rest of the world, and particularly to those in the non-European world who wished to catch up to the west. Furthermore, by the start of the twentieth century, it was obvious that the combination of modern technology and nationalism allowed the Western powers to mobilize vast resources in their pursuit of national goals.

This did not mean, however, that non-western societies just adopted western values. On the contrary, most of these ancient cultures, even as their political and economic structures collapsed, and as they redefined their very identities along newly invented nationalist lines, continued to resist key aspects of westernization. In particular, the values (though not the accomplishments) of the European Enlightenment, which had practically no counterpart in any other part of the world, remained largely excluded in most non-European societies. At first this meant resistance to faith in the power of rational science to liberate humans from their troubles. Eventually, this weakened, at least among some, though far from all, educated elites. Even stronger and far more persistent, however, has been the opposition to philosophical individualism that remains pervasive to this day throughout most of the world and accounts for much of the ambivalence and hostility to westernization.

The spread of nationalism throughout the world was a necessity, just as the spread of modern technology could hardly be avoided. There was no other way to be taken seriously by the European powers except by adopting the trappings of modern nationhood. This, as much as anything, led elites in such disparate places as the Balkans, Egypt, Thailand, and Japan to adopt formal nationalism as their state ideologies. The same has been true in Africa in the second half of the twentieth century, even in former colonies with little cultural, geographical, or historical coherence except for the accident of being placed in the same colony by a European power. In some cases, as in Japan, cultural-

ly and politically unified centuries earlier, the transition was easy and very successful. In others, as in most of the Ottoman domains from the Balkans to Mesopotamia, or in Africa, it was much more difficult, and remains incomplete to this day.

The circumstances under which nationalism spread beyond the west ensured that it would tend to repeat the Russian or German patterns, not the Anglo-American one. From the French model, which was often explicitly used as an example in the nineteenth century, and which has remained influential, nationalists tended to take only certain elements: the Rousseauist emphasis on the collective over the individual and the Napoleonic-plebiscitory style of centralizing governance.

The reasons for this are obvious. In almost all cases the original promoters of modern nationalism were at least partly trained in western institutions. But their education also taught them that they, their people, and their cultures were inferior. European schools emphasized the non-western cultures' economic and political weakness. It was inevitable that "natives" trained in such schools wished to emulate the west at the same time that they became resentful of the inferiority to which they and their cultures seemed to be confined. When these elites took power, either through anti-colonial revolts, or, as in Turkey or China, through modernizing nationalist revolutions, they created school systems that immediately began to spread the same mixture of envy and frustration. In most instances, the combination proved to be explosive and to reproduce the aggressive, violent, anti-individualistic, anti-capitalist, and xenophobic nationalisms that had prevailed in Germany and Russia.

These nationalisms were born of *ressentiment*; they were created by elites who had to discover or invent elements in their own cultural traditions that could be adapted to European standards of nationalism; and they were rooted in deeply collectivistic societies. In most of these societies, the very notion of achieved as opposed to ascriptive membership in the community was utterly foreign because the individual as such had no independence.

For a time, well into the mid-twentieth century, this was not entirely obvious to the west because the English, French, Dutch, and Americans were so flattered by the emerging elites (even when they fought colonial wars against them) who spoke their languages so excellently, who claimed to be following the best of the Enlightenment European

tradition, and whose superficial demeanor was so familiar. In fact, it was the repetition, on a very large scale, of the admiration many French Enlightenment philosophes felt toward Catherine the Great of Russia. On the surface, the new nationalist projects exemplified the best of the western tradition; on closer inspection, they were radically different. Leftist intellectuals in the west in the second half of the twentieth century have repeatedly made the same error, seeing in such disparate leaders as Kwame Nkrumah and Ho Chi Minh upholders of Anglo-American liberalism and the French Revolution's defense of the "rights of man." But such leaders were more akin to Peter the Great (and his latter day successor, Stalin) than to Thomas Jefferson.

It was therefore not accidental that in the 1920s and 1930s Italian and later German and Japanese fascism appealed so strongly to non-western nationalist intellectuals, despite Mussolini's aggressive and brutal record in Libya and Ethiopia, Hitler's explicit contempt for non-Aryans, and Japan's record of wanton brutality in China. Despite their many differences Italian, German, and Japanese fascism shared an admiration for communal, anti-liberal values and for romantic, deeply resentful, aggressive nationalism. After World War II, the fascist model was discredited, and Russian nationalism disguised as Soviet Marxism became a widely admired model. But it was precisely in the late 1930s, and particularly during World War II that Stalinism became an open and aggressive defender of Russian nationalism and chauvinism in its most traditional, pre-revolutionary form.[45]

The difference between fascism and communism is not as great as each has claimed. Both hate capitalism's emphasis on individualism, and both celebrate communal values. One was based on the idealization of the primitive "folk" community, the other yearned for a return to an age of communal solidarity without class or money. And although fascism was explicitly nationalistic from the start, communism in its Russian and later Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Romanian, Albanian, and Cuban forms became so, too. It is not just because they both turned into similar forms of totalitarianism that fascism and communism became so much alike, but also because their ideological base was so similar.[46]

The revolutionary Marxist tradition and the German fascist tradition, both rooted in German Romanticism, shared a contempt for the democratic and tolerant aspects of the French Revolution, as they did for Jews, for parliamentarism, and for capitalism, all of which were somehow blended together. Marx could write:

> The god of the Jews has been secularized and become the god of the world. Exchange is the true god of the Jew. The view of nature which has grown up under the regime of private property and of money is an actual contempt for and practical degradation of nature.[47]

"Nature" and its violation by modernity and by Jews were central to Hitler's thought as well.[48]

Communism could only make a serious claim to legitimacy in practice when it became intimately tied to intense, resentful nationalism, even though, unlike fascism, its intellectual roots were ostensibly internationalist. Thus, whether it was Stalinism, Maoism, Kim Il Sungism, Hoxhaism, Ceausescuism, or Castroism, the central ideas were not just anti-capitalism, but ultra-nationalism. Communist regimes promised not just to catch up to the hated yet admired West, but in so doing, to gain revenge for having had their nationhood demeaned for so long. Where communist regimes never successfully identified with nationalism, either for want of trying, or because their regimes remained too closely tied to their Soviet patrons, as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary, they not only lacked the ability to maintain themselves without Soviet help, but they also proved to be considerably less vicious and aggressive than the cases in which communism tied itself to older nationalist traditions based on *ressentiment.*

To offer some evidence in support of this position, we compare the roots of two cases of communist nationalism in the second half of the twentieth century, Romania's and Cambodia's. We add a further comparison by discussing Arab Ba'thist nationalism because it has displayed many of the same characteristics without having much of a Marxist component. It should be obvious that there is a certain imbalance between these comparisons and those made in the first half of this article. All three of these cases concern little countries rather than great world powers. All are much more recent, and none could be said to have provided much of a model for the world. Yet, there are important similarities among them, and they resemble many other cases in the late twentieth century. Therefore, in using them, we are suggesting that despite some of their extreme characteristics they embody much of what is most typical about the nationalism of *ressentiment* as it was originally practiced by Russia and Germany and as it is still practiced in much of the world.

Romania

The part of the world that followed Western Europe and Russia soonest, or in some cases, almost simultaneously in developing nationalism, was Eastern Europe. For the Habsburg domains, the most visible and imitated example was Hungarian nationalism. Until the early nineteenth century, there was no ethnic Hungarian identity as such. The term *natio Hungaricus* referred to the free men in the Kingdom, an elite, albeit a large one, regardless of ethnicity.[49]

Nationalism developed among the middle and lower nobility, the gentry, who were unable to keep up their standard of living at a time of increasing imports of foreign goods. It was also a response to attempts made by the Habsburgs to Germanize their bureaucracy in order to centralize their empire. The lower nobility turned to higher education to obtain bureaucratic positions in the growing state machine and the legal profession, but from the 1820s on there were far more graduates than positions. The increased awareness of the outside world combined with their declining fortunes and frustrations about not being able to transform their education into secure jobs provided an ideal matrix for the growth of nationalism.

It was the spread of Hungarian nationalism in Transylvania, which was ruled by the Hungarians but had a majority peasant population that spoke Romanian, that created Romanian nationalism. It was from Transylvania that Romanian nationalism spread into Wallachia and Moldavia, the other two main constituent regions of modern Romania, which were then under loose Ottoman control but were effectively self-ruling.[50] It was in Hungary that Serbs acquired nationalism, too, in response to increasing competition with aggressive Magyar nationalism. Migrating Serbian intellectuals who were called upon to staff the state machinery and schools of newly independent, neighboring Serbia introduced the idea of nationalism there, too.[51]

In the Balkans, subsequent nationalist histories have tried to claim that there were dormant nationalist movements throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule, and that the revolts that broke out in the early nineteenth century were merely their fruition. There is no evidence that this was so;[52] on the contrary, the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire, like its pre-nineteenth century Habsburg enemy, was rather tolerant by modern standards, and the many religious and linguistic communities within its borders co-existed much better than they have since the

arrival of nationalism. It was only when Turkish nationalism itself developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Turks began to engage in ethnic massacres of non-Turks.

Balkan nationalisms were the creation of small, dissatisfied elites, whose great hopes and ambitions were then frustrated. The Balkan countries were all economically peripheral, politically weak, and increasingly dissatisfied by their failure to achieve the early promises of nationalism. All these countries spent too much on building themselves armies and overstaffed bureaucratic machines, but none was able to engineer effective economic development or solutions to problems of peasant overpopulation and continuing domination of their mercantile lives by foreigners.[53]

This was particularly the case in Romania where nationalism was also the creation of a gentry class squeezed into economic marginality by the growth of large estates on one hand and a largely non-Romanian mercantile class on the other. Jews played a growing role in trade in the nineteenth century. But as elsewhere in the Balkans, education by the state schools only prepared intellectuals for government service, and imbued them with distrust of capitalism. The nationalists adopted a code of conduct that was aristocratic and anti-bourgeois, in which honor and diplomas, not wealth or entrepreneurship were the principle sources of personal status.[54]

All this was a bad preparation for running a small, poor, weak country, and it paved the way for the growth of outsized national ambitions that could only result in destructive local wars, persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, and growing alienation from the admired Western Europeans whose approval was sought, but who mocked and bullied the Balkan countries whenever it suited their financial or diplomatic needs.

In Romania the frustration of the intellectuals, and of other segments of Romanian society was heightened after World War I. Romania was one of the great winners of the war. It doubled in size, but Romanian elites found themselves facing many more non-Romanian merchants, educated professionals, and industrialists in the new parts of the country. Combined with this was Romania's inability to develop its economy quickly enough to match the inflamed dreams of its nationalists. Nor could government positions grow quickly enough to employ the many new university graduates. There resulted an increasingly fascist young

intelligentsia. They turned to the Iron Guard, one of the most anti-Semitic, vicious rightist movements in Europe. Along with intellectual support, it also attracted substantial support from workers, particularly those with non-Romanian bosses, and from the more prosperous peasants, as well as from young Orthodox priests.[55]

The Iron Guard epitomized the mystical, religious anti-Enlightenment *ressentiment* that was the hallmark of Central European and Balkan nationalism.[56] In the 1930s, Romania could no longer launch into wars with its neighbors as before World War I, but it could persecute its Jews, and it eventually became another German ally, playing an important role in the invasion of Russia in 1941.

After 1945, the communists came to power because of Soviet occupation, but the xenophobic jealousy against the more developed countries of Europe, combined with an intense wish to catch up and show the world that Romania was capable of greatness, became crucial when the Romanian Communist Party struck out on its own, anti-Soviet path. Many of the excesses of Nicolae Ceausescu's rule from 1965 to 1989 were a direct product of strong pre-war nationalism carried to extremes. Almost until the end, his persecution of minorities, particularly the Hungarians of Transylvania, his fanatical drive to industrialize, and his rejection of foreign ways were applauded by the intelligentsia. During the last two decades of communist rule, it was the primitive nationalist historical myths developed by the pre-communist right wing intelligentsia that were taught to Romanian school children.[57]

Communism in Romania ended with the overthrow of Ceausescu in December, 1989. But almost immediately, the old strain of extreme nationalism reappeared in its original, rightist form. In fact, ultra-chauvinist, intolerant nationalism directed against Hungarians, Jews (even though there are only a few thousands left in Romania), and Gypsies was expressed by those intellectuals who had been most subservient to and supportive of the previous communist regime. They also have a sense of hurt pride that the west does not recognize the unique virtues and suffering of the Romanian people and accord them favored status in the Balkans. Although the nationalist extremists have not won power, they have a large following and have the potential to do so in future times of emergency. The point is not that they represent the only existing ideology in Romania, but that now, as under Ceausescu, and between the two World Wars, they do represent much of its nationalist tradition, and that this tradition has much in common with the darkest sides of German and Russian nationalism.[58]

Syria and Iraq

Arab nationalism in the Fertile Crescent developed in shocking and frustrating circumstances in the early twentieth century. It was barely in the process of being born when the Ottoman Empire was dismembered by the French and British. For Muslims it was difficult to be ruled by non-Muslims, who by definition adhered to an "inferior" religion, and this was worsened by the overwhelming evidence of Arab economic and political backwardness that the European presence suddenly revealed. Then, just as the first political victories were being won over the Europeans in the 1940s, there came Israel, ruled by what had historically been a tolerated but despised minority, the Jews. And this Israel has repeatedly reminded Arabs of their failures.

Arab intellectuals travelled the familiar road of those exposed to the Europeans: first, resistance, then acceptance and a wish to imitate. This was followed by a growing awareness of the contradictions between their own culture and the western Enlightenment, and frustration bred by the failure to catch up to the west. Finally, there has come a synthesis combining a modern definition of nationhood with romantic, anti-western myths about historical glories, racial and cultural purity, and religious community. Born of frustration and humiliation, Arab nationalism continues to be nourished by these same sentiments.

Both Syria and Iraq are artificial colonial creations. There was no particular ethnic or even religious unity in either one. Why Kurds in both states were not united with their Iranian and Turkish fellow Kurds, why Iraq's Shi'i Arabs were not united with Iran, why Syrian Alawites and Druzes did not wind up in Lebanon all have more to do with the military and political balance of power in the Near East in the 1920s and 1930s than with any ethnic or linguistic logic. But Syria and Iraq came into being particularly fragmented and under precarious circumstances. At first, in fact, in a way quite similar to what happened in Germany the existing political boundaries were not viewed by nationalists as significant.

Syrian nationalism originated among a class of absentee landowners who felt they were losing their elite positions. They were the urban notables in the late Ottoman period, and then rallied to King Faisal, the first ruler of post-Ottoman Syria. But Faisal was overthrown by the French (who were themselves acting largely in a spirit of resentful nationalism against the British because of their failure to recapture the

grandeur they felt they were owed after World War I).[59] Faisal was given the newly founded Kingdom of Iraq by his British sponsors.

The French deliberately played on communal and religious rivalries to try to break the power of the old elite. Their political and economic policies also damaged trade (which was already badly disrupted by the new boundaries drawn through the old Ottoman Empire), hurt traditional artisanal industries because of the introduction of European goods, and angered poor peasants whose existence was threatened by the commercialization of agriculture and the increased wealth of village elites and absentee landowners.[60] This was a common late colonial pattern of protest, and it produced a major uprising in 1925–1927. The French were able to put it down because of their use of minority ethnic groups against the Sunni Arabs. But even among minority groups there was little love for the French.

Starting in the late 1920s, and growing in the 1930s, European-trained Arab intellectuals, especially ones who had had higher education in France, at the American University of Beirut, or at other European institutions, banded together to create a more united, less communally- or class-oriented liberation movement. From the start, this was aimed at the larger Arab world, particularly because the newly educated, western-trained youths from these areas gathered together in universities where their common experiences outweighed old communal ties. Nationalism aimed at higher goals than narrow, traditional interests, it seemed more modern and progressive, and it offered better hope for the future.[61] However elite and incomprehensible the language of these young intellectuals may have been for the larger population, their program for independence resonated with the popular dissatisfaction against the French occupation. Its ultimate social goals were vague enough so that the elite notables, who also disliked the French, could feel some sympathy for its political aims.

At this stage nationalism was heavily influenced by European secular social philosophy, and Christian Arabs, with superior access to western educations, were disproportionately represented among the ranks of the young nationalists. This created a contradiction that has yet to be resolved. Wishing to modernize Arab society along western lines conflicted with the Islamic ideal of returning to the original Sunni historical community, the *Umma* based on divinely guided law.[62] Whereas both secular modernists and Islamic traditionalists could agree that foreign

domination was bad, their conceptions of the ideal Arab nation-state were radically different from each other.

The first of the successful modern nationalist parties in Syria was the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), founded in 1932 by a Lebanese Greek Orthodox, Antun Sa'adah, while he was teaching at the American Univerisity in Beirut. Starting with only University students, the SSNP's membership grew, and it became an influential movement in the 1940s, though its appeal remained largely limited to intellectual elites in Lebanon and Syria.

Sa'adah's theory of nationalism was secular and based on his understanding of biological evolution. Within Syria, by which he meant the entire fertile crescent (Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and even Sinai and Cyprus), a unique culture has risen that characterized the Syrian "race." Reviving that Syrian "nation" was the primary goal of the party. He was hostile to wider pan-Arabism, but also to individualistic western democracy. His concept of social nationalism was militaristic and unitary, a society where the national interest was above the individual's. It is not surprising, then, that observers have considered it to be similar to the fascist movements and parties in the Europe of the 1930s. It was a deliberate attempt to create a new collectivistic, ethnic nation.[63]

The pan-Arabic Ba'th (Renaissance) Party was founded in the early 1940s. Three school teachers who had gone through French Universities in the 1930s, where they were influenced by Marxist as well as right-wing nationalist philosophies, created it. Michel 'Aflak was a Greek Orthodox, Salah al-Din al-Bitar, a Sunni, and Zaki Arsuzi, an Alawi. (Alawites have a schismatic, mystical religion that combines elements of Christianity and Islam and is practiced in what used to be one of the poorest and least developed parts of Syria.) Like the SSNP, the Ba'th was an elite movement that only spread to a mass base once it was in power, but whose program of independence and Arab renewal in general had a wider appeal.

For the Ba'th, the ideal state would incorporate all Arabs. In the writing of 'Aflaq, its chief theoretician, Arab nationalism transcended all material and practical interests. It was a mystical love for the Arab nation. Western culture was rejected, and the organization of society was to be based on vaguely socialist lines. It was also an inherently dictatorial, brutal doctrine. 'Aflaq wrote:

> The nation is not a numerial sum, but an "Idea" embodied either in the total or in part of it. The Leader ... is not to appeal to a majority or to a consensus, but to opposition and enmity; he is not one to substitute numbers for the "Idea," but to translate numbers into the "Idea;"... he is the master of the singular "Idea" from which he separates and casts aside all those who contradict it.[64]

'Aflaq understood the difference between a "scientific" and a romantic conception of the nation. He entirely rejected the notion that nationalist goals should be based on anything approaching an analysis of economic and political reality. He castigated other Arab intellectuals for their "verbal investigations," which caused them to lose "the force of nerve and the heat of emotion." 'Aflaq wrote, "Nationalism is not a science; it is ... a living remembrance."[65]

That is why, despite their "socialist" ideals, which were a means of promoting collective national solidarity against class divisions, and of building up strong state power, 'Aflaq and the Ba'th were always bitter enemies of Marxism and Communism, which were viewed as divisive and anti-national. "We represent the Arab Spirit against materialist Communism," wrote 'Aflaq. Marxism was not only Jewish, but also represented the European Enlightenment, which was antithetical to what 'Aflaq believed.[66]

Although small, the SSNP and Ba'th had only two serious rivals for the attention of the intellectuals, communism, and the Muslim Brotherhood. While the latter stood for a return to the historical Islamic community, the former were the ultimate "scientific" westernizers.

After World War II Syria gained independence from France, and for a time its politics continued to revolve around the old religious, ethnic, and class divisions. But Ba'thism became popular with military and civilian officials looking for a doctrine to transcend old divisions. It particularly appealed to a group of Alawite military officers, among them Hafez al-Asad, who was to become ruler of Syria in 1971.

The Alawites were a despised, marginal, poor minority who made up about 10 percent of the Syrian population. Many of its notables had tended to be pro-French, but among those who received some modern education, Ba'thism was attractive because it merged their identity into a larger Arab unity without consigning them to inferiority. Of course, the same was true of the SSNP, which also gained adherents among Alawite and other minority officers and idealistic young nationalists. Through a series of bitter struggles, the Ba'thists became dominant and

ultimately gained power. But in fact there was not much difference between them and the SSNP, either in terms of followers or ideology. And the resentment of these Alawite, Druze, and Christian educated officers and officials eventually succeeded in mobilizing substantial numbers of impoverished, landless Sunni peasants who resented their landlords, the old urban, absentee Sunni elite.[67]

It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of Israeli success on the development of Syrian nationalism. Coming from an intellectual doctrine that was already inherently anti-western, authoritarian, frustrated by Arab backwardness, and romantically attached to dreams of past historical glories, Ba'thist nationalism had all the elements necessary for being aggressive and warlike. Syria's borders were rejected, either on the grounds that all Arabs were not included, or, in the case of those who had believed in the SSNP, because much of Greater Syria was left outside, including the district of Alexandretta, where many Alawites lived, but that the French gave to Turkey in 1939. Even if there had been no Israel, it is unlikely that these larger aspirations could have been satisfied, and in any case, achieving desirable boundaries was not a solution to economic backwardness or to the continuing domination of the world economy by the west. But the success of Israel confirmed and strengthened what had been, from the start, a world view shaped by *ressentiment.* The success of an anti-Arab, small, western, Jewish state only increased Ba'thism's tendency toward paranoia.

In the case of Syria, of course, this has been compounded by the fact that Israeli military might does directly threaten the army on which Ba'thist rule came to be based. But even beyond this, resentment of Israel and the west was almost the only doctrine that Asad's Alawite military elite could use to try to win over the old Sunni urban elite who loathed Asad. It was the only doctrine that might be able, also, to overcome the extreme division of Syrian society. Indeed, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Muslim Brotherhood, which was stong in these Sunni circles, came close to overthrowing Asad. He brutally repressed them in a civil war that culminated with the massacre of ten to twenty thousand inhabitants of the city of Hama. That made Asad's nationalistic Arab foreign policy all the more important as a way to try to win back some level of legitimacy among the urban Sunni.[68]

Asad's Syria has been a society in a state of constant war – within Lebanon, with Israel, with the Palestinians, with Jordan, with the

Americans, with Iraq, and with itself – because its fragile and artificial identity is based on a larger conception of nationalism than what can be accommodated within its borders. Ultimately, Asad essentially merged Ba'thism with the SSNP's ideal of a greater Syria.[69] In the divisive context of Syrian politics, the combination of militarism, frustrated nationalism, ideological extremism, and the nearly complete lack of broadly based democracy or open discussion, it is not surprising that Ba'thist Syrian politics have been secretive, bloody, and repressive. Nor is it astonishing that among Syria's most bitter enemies have been the Iraqi Ba'thists, dominated by Sunni Arabs who have repeatedly challenged Asad's right to speak for their movement.

Iraqi Arab nationalism was born under King Faisal who never gave up the dream of uniting the Fertile Crescent under his rule. A major problem from the start, however, was that Faisal, as an orthodox Muslim from Mecca, received his main backing from Sunni Arabs. But the Sunni Arabs were no more than 20 percent of Iraq in the 1920s. Shi'i Arabs were about 50 percent, Sunni Kurds another 20 percent, Christians
about 3 percent, Jews 2 percent, and the rest a mixture of other ethnicities, mostly Turks.[70]

Sunni Arabs occupied the leading military and political ranks of Iraq because the Ottomans had favored them, and because they happened to predominate in the Province of Baghdad, one of the three Ottoman provinces combined to make Iraq. Faisal and his successors came to rely on three groups: a new class of military officers, the old urban elite of officials, and tribal leaders who controlled vast parts of the hinterland. The other prop for royal rule was the British army.

The introduction of modern economic forces turned tribal communal lands into individual property monopolized by a small group of landowners, the multiplication of state offices created opportunities, but also competition among various ethnic and religious groups for jobs and the new schools and universities turned out idealistic, angry young men who had an easy target for their frustrations, the British and the ruling elite. But even the elite, particularly the military officers nurtured by the royal regime, shared the anti-British nationalism of the young idealists. Unlike Syria, Iraq had substantial internal autonomy from the start of the British Mandate, and was granted independence in 1932. The British had never intended to keep Iraq as a colony, but only wanted to protect their strategic and petroleum interests.[71]

Of critical importance was the creation of a modern school system. In the 1920s and 1930s a Syrian pan-Arab intellectual, Satia' al-Husri was the chief organizer of Iraq's schools. He imported many better-educated Palestinian and Syrian teachers to staff these schools, and he insisted on weeding out the Turkish and Persian influences in Iraq. King Faisal backed Husri, whose work contributed significantly to shaping successive generations of school children. The effects of this policy had few short-term results, but profound long-term ones.[72]

In the 1930s, the major political fault line of the growing nationalist movement became clear. On one hand, there were the "Iraqi" nationalists whose aim was to create a stronger nation-state based on a blend of Sunni Arabs, Shi'i Arabs, and Kurds. Opposed to them were the pan-Arabs, who looked primarily to the larger Arab world and, therefore, to the Sunni majority in other Arab lands. The conflict was fought at first in the officer corps, then later among the radical intelligentsia who added programs for social reform to their nationalism. Repeatedly, at crucial junctures in modern Iraqi history, this split proved more important than the one between radical and more moderate reformers.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the crucial division came to be between the communists and the Ba'thists, as in Syria. The communists could count on substantial support from the poor in the rapidly growing cities, but the Ba'thist appeal to pan-Arabism was more reassuring to Sunni officers and officials. Ba'thism also corresponded better to the generalized pan-Arabic nationalism that was taught by Iraqi schools.

The monarchy was overthrown in 1958 by military officers, largely because of its failure to break with the British or to support an effective anti-Israeli Arab coalition. The first period of military rule under 'Abd al-Karim Qasim relied heavily on communist support and was "Iraqi" rather than pan-Arabic. In 1963, Qasim was overthrown and murdered by Ba'thist military officers, despite the substantial popularity of the regime, especially among the Shi'i majority. The Ba'th then engaged in the large-scale slaughter of communists.[73]

The political struggle, however, was never decided by what the population at large wanted; rather it was an internal debate within a small elite that was decisive. The Ba'th did not, at first, manage to keep control, and it was ousted. But it returned to power because its pan-Arabic ideology reflected the frustrations of military officers faced by yet another defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967. When the Ba'th took

power the second and decisive time in 1968, it had no more than about 5,000 members.[74] But they were well placed in the army and this time they consolidated their power by building an effective party-police state based on terror and, after Saddam Hussein became president in 1979, almost constant war.

In actual fact, the Saddam Hussein regime became the rule of a tiny minority, not just of Sunni Arabs, but of a small number of related families from his home town of Tikrit. Whereas older regimes had had a sprinkling of Kurds and Shi'ites, and Qasim had been half Kurdish (on his mother's side), of fifteen members of the Ba'th Revolutionary Command Council from 1968 to 1977, the period during which Ba'thist rule was consolidated, fourteen were Sunni Arabs, and six were Tikritis. Tikritis held all the top positions. In large part, this can be explained by the relative poverty of the town, and the attraction of a military career for its aspiring educated young men.[75] In this respect, the Tikritis are similar, though much smaller in number than the Syrian Alawites. And they must hold on to a larger nationalism that transcends their minority status to legitimize their rule.

The popularity of the mirage of Arab unity is the key to understanding the Ba'th's success. Unlike the communists, who distinguish between classes, the Ba'thists could claim a level of unmatched universalism that appealed to the small number of military officers, officials, and school teachers who saw themselves as the vanguard of Arabism. They could play on the broadly held resentment against the west (in the form of imperialism and Zionism), which has been used to explain the repeated failure of Muslim and Arab culture to catch up to and pass the west. But because both Ba'thist regimes in Syria and Iraq have been economic and political failures, imposing heavy military costs on their populations but never quite catching up to their own image of themselves, they have had to rely on the constant manufacture of deadly enemies to mobilize their people and energize their party structures.[76]

The idea of nationalism, which originated among a small group of intellectuals, and which has been successfully manipulated by tiny ruling elites for their advantage, could not have been so used if it did not respond to two unescapable facts. First, the dominant powers in the world remain the western nation-states. Therefore, only this sort of structure is recognized as a legitimate way of organizing political life. Second, the frustrations that are intellectualized and acted on by elites do correspond to real grievances in the population. Once most of the

young are taught to express their hopes and fears in nationalist terms by their schools, these sentiments become real and can be used to mobilize support.

This is no different from the way nationalism began in Germany and particularly in Russia, as ideas held by small elites and then manipulated for political ends by those in power. This did not lessen the fact that with time nationalism became a genuinely mass ideology. As it grew in strength it retained its collectivistic, ethnic view of the world, it continued to feed on *ressentiment*, and it spawned increasing aggression. The past record of such forms of nationalism should warn us against taking them too lightly in the future.

The Khmer Rouge: A model of small power communist nationalism

When the French made Cambodia a protectorate in 1863, it was on the verge of disappearing as a distinct entity. Without French intervention, it would have become a part of the newly expansionist, vigorously modernizing Thai kingdom to its west. The Khmer kings were already vassals of the Thais. In the east, the Khmer had been gradually absorbed by the Vietnamese who were moving west after having earlier replaced the Muslim Chams in what is now southern Vietnam. At one time, Khmer civilization had dominated not only Cambodia but most of modern Thailand, and Khmer speakers had occupied parts of what is now southern Vietnam. The Thai invaders from the north had taken much of their statecraft, Buddhism, and high civilization from the Khmer and the linguistically related Mon. But the glorious epoch of Khmer-Mon civilization was long past in the nineteenth century.[77]

Nevertheless, French rule was not welcomed. Neither the old elite nor the mass of peasants appreciated the new rules and taxes, and the entire colonial period was marked by a series of uprisings, and in the 1920s and 1930s, by the spread of a Vietnamese syncretic religious movement, the Cao Dai, that was viewed as dangerously chiliastic by the French. The depressions of agricultural prices in the 1930s led to further unrest, but the level of both urbanization and education was so low that Cambodia did not, at that time, develop a major communist movement, unlike neighboring Vietnam.[78]

There was a movement to renovate Buddhism and make it more relevant to the modern world, but it was repressed by the French. The

French, in fact, relegated the traditional Khmer Buddhist intellectuals and high court culture to irrelevancy, but they failed to develop a modern school system and a new intellectual elite. Compared to the rest of Southeast Asia (with the exception of Laos), Cambodia remained the least developed, least educated country.[79]

This meant that the more developed nationalism in neighboring countries played an important role in developing modern Khmer nationalism. The first important independence party, the Khmer Issarak, was founded in Thailand, and Khmer Krom (that is, those from Cochinchina, the southern third of Vietnam) played a major role in developing both a nationalist doctrine and in the Cambodian Communist movement. The Cochinchinese had much greater access to higher French education, and as inhabitants of a French colony rather than of the Cambodian protectorate still bound by a traditional monarchical system, they had more rights.[80]

Although there was considerable unrest in Cambodia after World War II, and a lingering anti-colonial uprising, it was the better organized and highly mobilized Vietnamese Communist Party that defeated the French army and precipitated the rush to establish independent states in the rest of French Indochina in 1954. The French used the seemingly docile royal court, whose King was Norodom Sihanouk, to lead the new Cambodian state. Sihanouk proved to be a popular leader who greatly expanded the educational system. But Sihanouk was also an autocrat who tightly controlled his intellectuals. Furthermore, the Cambodian education system did not train its students for technical or commercial work, and urban commerce remained largely Chinese, as in most of the rest of Southeast Asia. Finally, the poorly trained, semi-educated graduates coming out of the new Cambodian education system had trouble finding work.

Sihanouk's foreign policy was based on befriending China and appearing to be a supporter of "Third World" progressivism. This legitimized the spread of Maoist ideology among the young intellectuals. Sihanouk, then, was a kind of Khmer Peter or Catherine the Great, or at least this is what he wanted to be. He promoted nationalism, trained a newly educated, but tightly controlled and frustrated intelligentsia, and encouraged this new elite to adopt a foreign ideology that made the contradiction between a backward domestic reality and that ideology's goals all the more glaring.

There were several different strands of nationalism that developed in these circumstances. One was conservative and culturally anti-modern and anti-western. Another was a growing communist movement that was, ostensibly, the exact opposite.[81] This is the movement that was labelled "Khmer Rouge" by Sihanouk.

It was Sihanouk's genius that he seemed, for a time, to embody these conflicting currents. Other Southeast Asians in the newly independent states after World War II tried to play similar roles, but ultimately, all failed, as did Sihanouk. Sukarno of Indonesia was at once a nationalist modernizer, a leftist, at ease with "Third World" forces and the Chinese Communists, but also a traditional Hindu-Javanese leader. U Nu of Burma was a socialist, also a leading "Third World" figure, but still very much of a Buddhist whose political roots were in the revolutionary religious movement that had organized against the British in the pre-war period. U Nu, Sukarno, and Sihanouk were all overthrown, in 1962, 1965, and 1970, respectively, by military men who were much less westernized than their sophisticated, highly educated predecessors. Ne Win in Burma, Suharto in Indonesia, and Lon Nol in Cambodia were all deeply superstitious, traditionally authoritarian figures who rose to power as corrupt military power brokers. All three also represented a particular strain of nationalism. The most successful of them, Suharto, managed to eliminate the major competing, leftist strand of nationalism by annihilating the large Indonesian Communist Party. Lon Nol tried to do this in Cambodia, but failed catastrophically.[82]

Much of the analysis of "Third World" nationalism has failed to recognize the depth of conservative, anti-modern (as opposed to simply "anti-imperialist") feeling that has been at its heart. Leaders such as Sukarno, seeminly so at ease with European ways, reinforced this mistaken perception. The association of nationalism with socialism and communism during and after World War II, for example in China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, and Cuba seemed to confirm the error. Yet, in many cases, communism captured a significant portion of that extremely anti-Western, reactive, and bitterly resentful nationalism.

Probably the critical element driving the Khmer Rouge to extreme, xenophobic nationalism was the domination of the Cambodian communists by the Vietnamese, the presence of many Khmer Krom from Vietnam in the movement, and finally, the subservience of the Cambodian communists to North Vietnam's strategic needs during the war against the Americans in the 1960s and early 1970s. This resulted in

the massive bombing of the Cambodian countryside, and embittered many of the young intellectuals leading the movement. They were able to combine anti-European, anti-imperialist sentiment with suppressed anger against their Vietnamese "big brothers" who treated them as inferiors and caused such destruction to be rained down on them.[83]

Many of the Khmer Rouge elite received some higher education in France in the 1950s after attending an elite secondary school in Phnom Penh. Saloth Sar (Pol Pot), Hu Nim, Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, and Hou Yuon all followed this trajectory. But even in their Marxist discussion circle in France, their ideology was more anti-royalist and nationalist than internationalist. In particular, from the start, in the early 1950s, these Khmer, unlike the parts of the movement that were influenced by the Vietnamese, looked back at an idealized, rural, large Khmer Empire as a model. Furthermore, they came to believe that their ethnic nation was threatened by extinction because of long-term Vietnamese aims. Saving the nation, then, became their primary goal, and this involved not primarily a struggle against the Europeans but against the Vietnamese.[84]

In 1967, the Khmer Rouge, partly inspired by the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the drastic reorientation of Chinese foreign policy in favor of indigenous extremist revolutionaries throughout Southeast and South Asia, revolted. This swung power within the Sihanouk government toward the army, and Lon Nol, its commanding general, gradually became the main power in Phnom Penh. By the time he formally overthrew Sihanouk in 1970, he was already the effective ruler. But on the communist side, though the Khmer Rouge needed Vietnamese help, they became increasingly hostile to the Vietnamese who were urging them, for their own tactical reasons, to stop their revolt, to rely more on the Russians than on the Chinese, and to follow Vietnamese policy more closely.[85]

The continuing war between the Khmer Rouge and Lon Nol, in which the Cambodian Army relied so heavily on American air power, created more peasant refugees who became recruits for the Khmer Rouge, and strengthened the climate of rural fury against Phnom Penh, the alien city of Chinese businessmen, American officials, and cruel corruption.

The scene was set for what followed in 1975. With the collapse of the American position in Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge took power, and immediately set about mobilizing to retake the "Khmer" area in Viet-

nam. One of the main reasons for driving people out of the cities, particularly Phnom Penh, was precisely to make Cambodia less vulnerable to a Vietnamese counterattack. The Pol Pot leadership believed that by mobilizing the unsullied peasant purity and strength of the Khmer, they would be able to sweep into the parts of southern Vietnamese they claimed (including Saigon), to establish a strong and independent country, and to recapture the glories of the past. The massive killings began with the starvations and horrors visited on the Cambodians driven out of their cities, and continued because of the perceived need to mobilize and purify the population for the struggle. There lay, behind it, a sense that communal peasant solidarity was an unstoppable force, and that the pure ethnic Khmer possessed exceptional virtues that would allow them to overcome the more developed and more numerous Vietnamese.[86]

By the time the Khmer Rouge were overthrown by a Vietnamese invasion in 1979 about one and a half million had been killed or died as a result of the regime's policies. The first to go had been the non-Khmer, particularly the Vietnamese, but also the Chinese and Cham. Then, those suspected of having been tainted by urban and westernizing ways were allowed to die, or brutalized and killed. Eventually, the Communist Party turned on itself and was decimated by torture, forced confessions, and executions. But to this day, the Khmer Rouge insist that they killed mostly those who were either Vietnamese or had "Vietnamese minds."[87]

Yet what brought the Khmer Rouge down was not their internal policies so much as the fact that they invaded Vietnam in 1977 and finally provoked their much bigger and more powerful, although at first reluctant neighbor into war. Surely there could be no more dramatic example of how ideas of a few intellectuals who seized power could create a war that had no reason other than their own phantasmagoric nightmares. In their hatred of Vietnam, their conviction that if they did not exterminate the Vietnamese they would themselves be eliminated as a race, their astounding faith in the ability of their people to overcome all obstacles if they were purified of western culture and impure Vietnamese blood, and their mystical credence in the power of a communally organized peasantry to overcome all obstacles, they tried to take back what they considered to be historical Khmer territory in South Vietnam, including Saigon. In May of 1978 Cambodian Radio proclaimed:

> So far, we have succeeded in implementing this slogan of one against 30: that is to say, we lose one against 30 Vietnamese killed. We need only two million troops to crush 50 million Vietnamese – and we would still have 6 million people left.[88]

After the Khmer Rouge's atrocities came to light, there was considerable shock in the West. But nationalism based on collectivistic-ethnic ideals, and deeply resentful of a jealously admired but also hated and feared big neighbor have produced similar catastrophes before, and they will again.

Albanian communism came to power because of another "big brother" that, like Vietnam, conducted its own, highly successful communist insurgency, Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Partisans also used the Albanians for their own purposes, patronized them, and threatened to absorb them in a "friendly" way. The Albanian Communist Party's reaction was not simply anti-Yugoslav but fiercely uncompromising and led Albania into being the most isolated, violent, and xenophobic communist country in Eastern Europe.[89]

North Korea, whose communist movement spent its formative years as a part of the Chinese Red Army, only survived the Korean War because of Chinese help. But the intense nationalism of its leadership also produced a level of isolation and self-reliance, as well as of internal terror that have marked it as Asia's most extremist and intransigent communist regime (aside from the Khmer Rouge).[90]

It is not, of course, as if Maoist China and the Stalinist Soviet Union did not pass through such stages, either, because of the combination of intense nationalism and great sense of insecurity. But in the cases of the North Koreans, Albanians, and Cambodians, there was the added element that from the point of view of their leaders, the very notion of self-survival was at stake, not merely the survival of a communist program.[91]

Conclusion

Analyzing some important cases of collectivistic and ethnic nationalism, and explaining the role of intellectual elites whose *ressentiment* was translated into powerful, often nightmarish realities does not prove that nationalism invariably turns out like this. Not even collectivistic and ethnic nationalisms have all been equally harsh and aggressive, as

brutal and murderous, as Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, or Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. They have not all led to the same levels of internal paranoia as Kim Il Sung's North Korea or Enver Hoxha's Albania. They need not always create a condition of almost permanent war as has Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Nor have all leaders and elites who have believed that it was their duty to prove the inherent superiority of their particular ethnic nation done as much damage to their countries as Nicolae Ceausescu.

One can look throughout the rest of the world and find examples of greater tolerance in the midst of the worst excesses. Every nationalist movement has had varying strands within it, and therefore it is hardly a foregone conclusion that every intellectual elite that creates a nationalist culture on the basis of collectivistic and ethnic criteria will produce a violent nation. On the other hand, even in England and the United States there have existed much harsher nationalist ideologies than those that, until now, always prevailed.

Nevertheless, the cases we discuss here show that the association between certain types of nationalism and aggressive, brutal behavior is neither coincidental nor inexplicable. Nationalism remains the world's most powerful, general, and primordial basis of cultural and political identity. Its range is still growing, not diminishing, throughout the world. And in most places, it does not take an individualistic or civic form. Nationalist elites in most countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and throughout the vast, former Soviet Empire want to emulate the successful, advanced western nations, but rarely do they have any faith in the individualism or intellectual tolerance that evolved so painfully and over so much time in the West. They are angry because the west is not helping them more, and they are afraid of their neighbors whom they suspect of having designs on their territories. Nationalisms born largely of *ressentiment* will remain that way. This means the underlying causes of so much of the cruelty nations have provoked in the twentieth century, both against each other and on their own people, will live on into the twenty-first.

There is an important lesson in this. We cannot predict when structural conditions will lead to political chaos and give revolutionary groups a chance to seize power, as they did in Russia in 1917, in Germany in 1933, or in Cambodia in 1975. But we can know the content of prevailing nationalist mythologies among intellectuals in various societies, and thus be prepared to interpret the ideologies of various elites once they

come to power, or even before. We know that even the most extreme revolutionaries do not make up their ideological traditions without reference to the larger development of ideas in their own societies and the world around them. We can trace the history of ideas in any given society, and see which ones are coming to the fore in its various political movements. None of the great political catastrophes that have occurred in the twentieth century should have come entirely as a surprise for those who took intellectual history and the power of ideas seriously. In the end, what continues to astound us as we see whole new sets of catastrophes is that we refuse to take seriously the ideas of those responsible, as if ideas that seem unreasonable to us did not matter. But they do.

Notes

1. The following theoretical discussion, and the sections on England, Russia, and Germany are based on arguments elaborated in Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). The second part of the article, including the analysis of other cases, is based on arguments developed further in Daniel Chirot's *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age* (New York: The Free Press, 1993) We were working on these books when we prepared this article for presentation at the National Academy of Sciences conference on nationalism and war held in the fall of 1991. The arguments presented here are more narrowly focused on the issue of aggression than in the books that came out of these projects. As the article was revised after the books were finished, however, we have made some references to the larger works for those interested in more detail and supporting evidence.
2. Guido Zernatto, "Nation: The history of a world," *Review of Politics* 6 (1944): 351–366.
3. Greenfeld, "God's firstborn: England," in *Nationalism*, 27–87; and "The Emergence of nationalism in England and France," *Research in Political Sociology* 5 (1991): 333–370.
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6. Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1961 (1912)).
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8. See Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (New York: Penguin, 1992).
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60. Philips S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 94, 168–218.
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62. Labib Zuwiyya Yamak, *The Syrian Social Nationalist Party* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 11; H. A. R. Gibb, "Some considerations on the Sunni theory of the Caliphate," in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 141.
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71. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder: Westview, 1985), 29–94.
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79. Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power* (London: Verso, 1985), 2–7, 18–21.
80. Ibid., 23–33.
81. Ibid., 169–235.
82. The history of the Indonesian army's involvement in politics, and how that led to the overthrow of Sukarno, is analyzed by Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978). On Burma, see Josef Silverstein, *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), and more recently, Bertil Lintner, *Outrage: Burma's Struggle for Democracy* (Hong Kong: Review Publishing, 1989), 24–97.
83. On Khmer Rouge nationalism, the appeal to ancient tradition, and the resentment of the Vietnamese, see David P. Chandler, "Seeing Red: Perceptions of Cambodian history in Democratic Kampuchea," in Chandler and Ben Kiernan, editors, *Revolu-*

tion and its Aftermath in Kampuchea (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series, No. 25, 1983), 34–56. William Shawcross's work on the bombing of Cambodia by the Americans explains how this policy helped precipitate such a disaster. See his *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York: Simon and Schuster/Pocket Books, 1979).

84. Kiernan, *Pol Pot*, 118–124.
85. Ibid., 258–260, 297–302.
86. Ibid., 412–421; Chandler, "Seeing Red," 50–51. Ben Kiernan's extraordinary account of what went on in the eastern part of Cambodia, adjoining Vietnam, during the rule of the Khmer Rouge is presented in his "Wild chickens, farm chickens, and cormorants: Kampuchea's eastern zone under Pol Pot," in Chandler and Kiernan, editors, *Revolution*, 136–211.
87. David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 231; Kiernan, "Chickens," 166.
88. Cited by Ben Kiernan in "Myth, nationalism, and genocide in Cambodia," paper presented at the University of Washington in Seattle, spring, 1992.
89. William E. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1963), 9-34.
90. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 32–38, 397–403; and Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 296–297, 313, 332, 350–376.
91. Ken Jowitt has pointed out the similarity between North Korean and Romanian communism, both animated by fearful and resentful nationalism exacerbated by the original weakness and dependence of these parties on outside forces. See his "Moscow 'centre,'" *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 1/3 (Fall 1989): 320, and his older "Political innovation in Rumania," *Survey* 4 (Autumn 1974): 132–151. For a comparison of Maoist China and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, see Daniel Chirot, "Egalitarian hells" in *Modern Tyrants*, chap. 6. For more general conclusions on the connections among different types of modern nationalism, tyranny, and aggression, see chapter 12.