

NATIONALISM AND CIVIL SOCIETY: DEMOCRACY, DIVERSITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION*

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Abstract In the wake of communism, nationalism has regained prominence as a source of global tension and instability. These problems, and nationalism itself, are often dismissed as transitional difficulties rather than studied as basic to the modern world. This paper argues, to the contrary, that nationalism is produced by central features of the modern world, including the ongoing process of globalisation. Its centrality derives first of all from the need to identify the 'self' implied by the notion of political self-determination. This ties nationalism to democracy. But nationalism is also shaped in problematic ways by modern individualism. Metaphorically, the nation is often treated as an individual. Nations are also commonly conceived of as categories of like individuals rather than as webs of social relationships. This places an emphasis on sameness which often makes nationalism an enemy of diversity. It also provides the basis for arguments that national identity should take precedence over other competing identities – regional, familial, gender, interest-group, occupational, and so on. Nationalism is particularly potent and problematic where diverse institutions of civil society are lacking or fail to provide for a diversity of public discourses and collective identities.

In 1989, the self-declared 'free world' revelled in the collapse of communism. Capitalism and democracy seemed simply and obviously triumphant. The cold war was over. Everyone would live happily ever after.

Of course, there would be 'transitional problems'. Word came of fighting in Nagorno-Karabak. It crossed some minds that many residents of Soviet Central Asia might find fundamentalist Islam more appealing than American capitalism. Enthusiasm for Lithuanian nationalism was occasionally dimmed by memories of Lithuanian fascism and anti-semitism. But in an efflorescence of faith in progress not seen since the nineteenth century, most Western politicians and intellectuals confidently saw 'excesses' of nationalism as at most minor detours on the road to capitalist democracy. Even thinkers on the left joined the enthusiasm and, embarrassed by seeming association with the losing side, hastened to forget the lessons of history and the need for serious analysis.

But 1989 imperceptibly gave way to 1992, and anxiety began to regain a little intellectual respectability. Still, it has taken quite dramatic events, from Ethiopia to the former Soviet Union, and especially Yugoslavia, to focus attention on the possibility that nationalism might be more than a passing problem. Serbian talk of 'ethnic cleansing' brought shudders of recollection,

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yet many treated it – like the Nazi ideology it recalled – as a throwback to the pre-modern. It is no accident, however, that ‘ethnic cleansing’ is the project of academics and technicians, not of peasants, just as Nazism was rooted in scientific discourse and technological dreams as well as old hatreds. Both are fundamentally and horribly modern. And if nationalism is a central problem of post-communist transitions, this is because it is a central way of organising collective identity throughout the modern world.

Academics have repeatedly announced the death of nationalism, but like that of Mark Twain’s demise, the reports have been greatly exaggerated. In one of the most recent waves of assertions, analysts correctly observe that states are having difficulty organising and controlling global markets, multinational corporations, large-scale migration flows and internal ‘tribalism’. Yet these analysts seldom consider the possibility that, rather than spelling the end of nationalism, all these trends and difficulties are its occasion. All encourage the renewal and continuing production of nationalism because nationalism is the rhetoric of identity and solidarity in which citizens of the modern world most readily deal with the problematic nature of state power and with problems of inclusion and exclusion. Rather than following state-building in a neat correlation, nationalism is most an issue where the boundaries and power of a state do not coincide neatly with the will or identity of its members or the scale of action undertaken by other collective actors.

Nationalist claims are one genre of answers to the question of what constitutes an autonomous political community capable of ‘self-determination’. These claims come in two main versions: one places crucial stress on the ethnic or cultural similarity of the members of a political community; the other on their common citizenship in a specific state (with its characteristic modes of political activity). But in both versions, nationalist answers to the question of what constitutes a political community underestimate the importance of the institutions, networks and movements that knit people together across lines of diversity internal to nations and states; they underestimate, in other words, the specifically sociological problems of social integration.

Nationalism appeared in the post-1989 discourse on transitions to democracy – and in theories of democracy generally – primarily as a hazard to be avoided, not as a central dimension of the subject. Yet nationalism is directly and fundamentally involved in questions about the social foundations for democracy. Leaving nationalism to one side theoretically – and to often anti-democratic activists in practice – the discourse on transitions did sometimes take up the question of what social foundations enable a collectivity of people to organise their institutions through popular political participation. It did so most prominently under the rubric of ‘civil society’. This concept was invoked to account for the various resources outside direct state control that offered alternatives to the state organisation of collective life. In many invocations, thus, the role of more or less self-regulating markets or processes of capital accumulation was not distinguished from the roles of networks of interpersonal relations, social movements and public discourse.

The significance of this became apparent when the economic challenges of

post-communist transition began to compete with efforts to increase democratic participation. Various different programmes for the rapid creation of 'free-market' economies, thus, were all claimed by their proponents to strengthen civil society whether or not they increased the capacity of ordinary people to join together in associations and movements or otherwise to create a public sphere capable of shaping social and political decisions on the basis of rational-critical discourse. Many of these programmes of economic privatisation, in fact, did relatively little to increase the extent of popular participation in decisions regarding investment and economic structure. While some did seek to increase opportunities for entrepreneurship and the development of new small businesses, others focused more on transferring large-scale state enterprises to 'private' owners. The link between the two was faith in the importance of subjecting as much as possible of the formerly 'administered' economies to the discipline of the market. The market, however, was understood as an abstract, impersonal and self-regulating force, and moreover one that either did or should transcend national and state boundaries.

A tension was created, in short, between the pursuit of democratisation and the pursuit of economic development. The former was seen as essentially a matter of domestic institutions and actions, while the latter involved participation in an increasingly global economy. The constraints and demands imposed by the effort to compete in this global economy were and are frequently cited as reasons for limiting or postponing the project of increasing democratic participation. Indeed, perhaps paradoxically, voters in the new electoral democracies have even been persuaded on several occasions that voting with their wallets meant voting against democratisation. The prestige of the cadres of international economic consultants brought in to replace the cadres of communist central planners has often been placed behind such conclusions. The result often has been to replace the imperatives of party and state bureaucracies with the imperatives of impersonal market forces as interpreted by technical experts and politicians.

In confronting so dramatically the tension between economic globalisation and the pursuit of democracy through domestic institutions, the ex-communist and newly independent states of Eastern Europe highlight an issue faced much more generally in the contemporary world. A broad range of commentators and pundits have pointed to globalisation and suggested that the era of the nation-state is at an end.¹ The mobility of capital and impossibility of containing economic activity within the bounds of state control allegedly suggest that states are no longer crucial units of organisation and power. This misrepresents, however, the nature and significance of economically driven globalisation. First, this is not an entirely new trend, but a continuation of the historical pattern of the whole modern era. Second, this economic globalisation may reduce certain capacities of states, but it does not make them less important or imply that in general they are likely either to break up or amalgamate. Modern states have always existed and derived much of their significance from their contraposition to other states in a 'world system' that has always been too large for any single state to control. States

have existed in part to manage economic – and also military – relations to cross their boundaries. What is most distinctive about the current globalisation is not that it creates a level of global integration that states cannot readily manage, but that it brings close to completion the process of continuously incorporating more and more parts of the world into the capitalist world system.²

The travails of Eastern Europe reveal that incorporation into the global economy does not stop states from being crucial arenas of struggle. States remain the organisations of power through which democratic movements have the greatest capacity to affect economic organisation. Given the current organisation of the United Nations, states remain the highest level of institutional structure at which programmes of democratisation themselves can consistently be advanced. And states remain the most crucial objects and vehicles of efforts to achieve ‘self-determination’ or autonomy as a political community. As states remain of crucial importance, so too does the ideology of nationalism. Characteristic of the whole modern era, this reflects the constitution of the modern world system as a system of states. The primacy of national identity is implicit in both sides of the Eastern European transition. It is what gives force to the notion of using domestic institutions to attempt to position a people in the global economy. It is also what constitutes the most basic notion of a people capable of claiming rights over and against a government. This is equally the case whether the claims are those of secession or more simply of self-governance without change of borders. The definition of boundaries and constitution of a collective identity are crucial components of the constitution of a political community in the modern world system of states.

The problems of collective identity formation are commonly ignored by democratic theory. They are, however, endemic to modern political life. Nationalism, as the most potent discourse of collective identity, appears alike in projects of unity and division. It may, thus, be an irony of history but it is not a sociological contradiction that Western Europe is pursuing the path of unification at the same time that Eastern European countries are being rent by nationalist splits. By the same token, however, this reveals that nationalism is not itself an adequate explanation of such processes of integration or disintegration so much as it is a political rhetoric in which many of them are pursued.

Discussions of the idea of nation and of social integration need therefore to be joined. The theory of democracy needs to deal with both of the two senses in which they raise the question of how political communities are constituted. The first is the bounded nature of all political communities, and the embeddedness of all claims to constitute a distinct and autonomous political community in relationships of contraposition to other such communities or claimants. The second is the web of relationships that constitutes a people (or nation) as a social collectivity existing independently of common subjection to the rule of a particular state.

Civil society

It is not mere coincidence that the opposition to totalitarian rule and the transition to democracy have brought ideas about civil society to the foreground. The language of civil society – though often sociologically underdeveloped – has been the most prominent way in which claims to peoplehood and self-determination have been grounded in appeals to social integration. The events of 1989 catapulted this concern from academic circles to the broader public discourse. The phrase is now on the lips of foundation executives, business leaders and politicians; it seems as though every university has set up a study group on civil society and the phrase finds its way into half the dissertations in political sociology. Too often, the phrase is invoked without sorting out whether civil society means Milton Friedman's capitalist market policies or social movements like Solidarity or the sort of 'political society' or 'public sphere' beloved of thinkers from Montesquieu to Tocqueville and Habermas, and once thought to exist mainly in cafes and coffee houses.³

Two basic questions are raised in discussions of civil society. First, what counts as or defines a political community? Second, what knits society together, providing for social integration? There are several contenders in each case: state, market economy, cultural similarity (for example, nationality), social networks, political participation by autonomous agents. The idea of civil society entered political philosophy and social theory as a way of describing the capacity of self-organisation on the part of a political community, in other words, the capacity of a society to organise itself without being organised by a state. If society had such capacity, then 'the people' integrated in that society could better be seen as the source of political legitimacy rather than merely the object of rule. In some early uses – notably the Scottish moralists, including Ferguson and Smith – the notion of civil society referred to all such non-state capacities for social organisation. The economy was not only included, it provided a key example. To these early capitalist thinkers, the self-regulating character of markets demonstrated the possibility for social organisation without the direction of the state.

As Charles Taylor (1991) has argued, however, it is crucial to distinguish two different branches of the discourse on civil society. While one followed Ferguson and Smith in stressing the economic-system character of civil society, the other followed Montesquieu, Rousseau and Tocqueville in stressing social relations entered into by autonomous agents. The Eastern European discourse of the 1980s and much of the recent usage blurs important distinctions between the two.⁴

The issue is not solved by declaring that civil society must be kept conceptually distinct from capitalist economic organisation. On the contrary, capitalism itself appears in both voluntary and systemic guises. On the one hand, capitalist ideology typically asserts that capitalist economic life is precisely the realm of free social relations. It offers a model of capitalist life as quintessentially the activity and relationships of owner-operators of small businesses and individual consumers. One might object that there are relations

only among buyers and sellers, but one cannot deny that capitalism offers certain genuine freedoms. At the same time, capitalist ideology itself negates its proffered freedom by reference to the immutable 'laws' of the market. It claims that the systemic character of markets dictates that interference from states or other collective actors (unions, social movements, etc.) must be kept to a minimum so that the capitalist system can organise itself. This kind of limit on free collective action is asserted by capitalist ideology itself, even when it refuses to recognise the salient distinctions between giant corporations and human individuals, or the inevitable dependence and mutuality between capitalist economics and certain forms of state support.

Nonetheless, capitalism *did* historically and can still play a special and crucial role in the growth of a civil society. The early growth of capitalist business relations provided essential support to the development of a sphere of political discourse outside the realm of state control. This is not to say that businessmen were the primary protagonists of the bourgeois public sphere. On the contrary, various state employees from ministerial clerks through to university professors, and dependants of aristocratic sponsors, played far more central roles in the eighteenth century 'golden age' of the public sphere. But the development of a public discourse in which private persons addressed public issues was made possible, in part, by both the policy issues posed by the growth of the non-state dominated market activity, and the creation of settings for such discourse in coffee houses, journals and other forums operated as businesses.⁵

It is crucial not to accept capitalist ideology uncritically, and therefore to imagine that capitalism is somehow by itself an adequate support for democracy or a viable alternative to state power. It is equally crucial not to ignore the role of certain kinds of at least quasi-autonomous business institutions in facilitating the development of a sphere of public discourse and capacity for social organisation outside the immediate control of the state. Above all, we must look beyond capitalism (and more generally beyond the narrow realm of the economy as a putatively self-sufficient and self-regulating system) to seek (a) the extent to which societal integration can be accomplished through webs of interpersonal relations, and (b) the extent to which both these social relations and the more abstract ones of the economy can be organised voluntarily through public discourse. Only when these possibilities are addressed do we have a conception of societal integration that can serve as foundation to a theory of democracy.

In other words, from the point of view of democracy, it is essential to retain in the notion of civil society some idea of a social realm which is neither dominated by state power nor simply responsive to the systemic features of capitalism. The public sphere of civil society cannot be simply a realm in which representatives of state authority vie for attention with economists claiming to predict the economy like the weather on the basis of its reified laws. It must include an institutionally organised and substantial capacity for people to enter as citizens into public discourse about the nature and course of their life together. This capacity depends not just on formal institutions, but on civil society as a realm of sociability.

In this conceptualisation, civil society must also be a realm of intermediate associations. Communities, movements and organisations (from churches to political parties and mutual aid societies) are all potentially important. Although the nationalist impulse is sometimes to condemn these as intrinsically 'partial', this needs to be affirmed as one of their major virtues. For it is precisely in such partial social units that people find both the capacity for collective voice and the possibility of differentiated, directly interpersonal relations. Such intermediate associations are also the crucial defences both of distinctive identities imperilled by the normalisation of the mass, and of democracy against oligarchy.⁶

Hidden in this discourse – in two centuries of public discourse as well as in the last few paragraphs – is the problem of identifying 'the people' who may be members of a discursive public or a civil society. From its earliest instances, from classical Athens through to revolutionary America or Enlightenment Europe, the democratic public sphere has been marred by exclusionary tendencies. Not just slaves, but non-natives, aboriginals, propertyless men and women have been excluded at various points from both direct political participation (for example, voting) and from participation in the discourse of the public sphere. Some other exclusions seem more justifiable, though the theoretical status of the justifications is complex: the participation of children, criminals and the mentally incompetent is almost universally restricted. In short, 'the people' have not all been citizens.

That democracy has always been restrictive has certainly been noticed. But there is an equally basic version of the question 'who are the people?' which is less often posed. When we say, for example in relation to the break-up of Yugoslavia, that we believe in the right to 'self-determination', just what self is involved? The notion of self-determination is basic to democracy and yet both neglected by democratic theory and shrouded in illusions of primordiality. The problem of self-determination is that for every socially relevant self we can see internal divisions and vital links to others. There is no single, definite and fixed 'peoplehood' which can be assumed in advance of political discussion.

Moreover, as 'no man is an island unto himself', no nation exists alone.⁷ Each is defined in relation to others and exists within a web of social relationships that traverse its boundaries. Supposed historical autarky was never complete, and modern attempts to close borders have had only partial and temporary success (see, especially, Brubaker 1992; Noiriel 1988). Conversely, claims to indivisibility are always at least partially tendentious and often (as in the United States pledge of allegiance) recognitions of the successful application of force to preserve unity. In short, do we speak of Macedonians, Croats and Serbs, of Yugoslavians, of Slavs, of Christians and Muslims, or of Europeans? The answers are obvious only from particular and partisan vantage points. Too often it is only forcible repression which makes us sure we see a true national identity. We lack a theory of the constitution of social selves which will give descriptive foundation to the prescriptive notion of self-determination. We are poorly prepared to talk about national identity or nationalism.⁸

Nationality and nationalism

The illusion of primordiality. Ideologues of nationality almost always claim it as an inheritance rather than a contemporary construct. This is true whether the inheritance is conceived as a 'primordial' identity, rooted deep in the mists of ancient history, or as deriving from a more recent founding moment like the French Revolution.⁹ The notion of inheritance is not by any means simply false, for national identity is something that shapes individuals – a Durkheimian social fact, external, enduring and coercive – not a matter of completely free individual choice. Claims to ancient origins and especially primordiality are, however, problematic. At the very least, they nearly always radically oversimplify the complexities of national identity and history. The issue is not just whether people are members of one or another nation, or whether a particular claimed nation has the right to self-determination, but what it means to be a member of that nation, how it is to be understood, and how it relates to the other identities its members may also claim or be ascribed.¹⁰

Such notions of primordial inheritance are among the bases for the widespread illusion that somehow earlier traditions and identities can just be picked up and the communist era treated as an inconsequential interregnum. Among some groups in Russia, for example – and in a good deal of Western discussion of Russia – the idea is current that the 'real' Russia is that of the Tsars. To some this means an ancient spiritual identity, preserved through long travails and waiting to flower again as beacon to all Slavs. To others, this means a political and cultural development, moving forward rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Russia could aspire to European leadership. Protagonists of each interpretation imagine that somehow when the pall of communism is lifted, the Russians of the late twentieth century will begin to write like Tolstoy, and pick up the torch of an interrupted political development. In this remembered history, the struggles against the Orthodox religion, against Tsarist rule and rural landlords, and between *narodniki* (populists), bourgeois democrats and various stripes of socialists, are somehow submerged and communism becomes something both alien and accidental, not an outgrowth of national history.

In Hungary, it is easier to make the case that communism was something imposed from outside, but it is still not obvious that the nation can simply go forward in 1992 as a direct extension of that of 1945's imposed communism or 1921's repression of revolution. Is national identity simply ancient and timeless? Or has it been forged and remade in centuries of struggle? What is the relationship between the Hungary which struggled against Habsburg rule – and flowered under it, the Hungary which struggled to maintain independence and build a modern state in the early twentieth century, that of Nazi rule and resistance to it, that of communism, both domestic and imported, that of the Georg Lukács who lived in Budapest and the one who lived in Moscow, that of 1919 (just after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire), 1956 (rebellion against communism and its crushing) and 1989 (the collapse of communism)? Different answers to these questions flow from different visions of what it

means to be Hungarian. There are similar questions to every country's history, and they are central to the reasons why nationalism is always caught in an intimate but ambiguous relationship with history. Nationalist movements always revere martyrs and cherish sacred dates; they always give nations a history. But as Ernest Renan wrote in perhaps the most famous essay ever written on the subject:

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial. Unity is always effected by means of brutality . . .

(Renan 1990 : 11)

The issue goes further. History is problematic for nationalism and the tacit assumption of national identity because it always shows nationality to be constructed, not primordial. The history which nationalism would write of itself begins with the existence of national identity, continues through acts of heroism and sometimes struggles against oppression, and unites all living members of the nation with the great cultural accomplishments of its past. It is usually not a sociological history, of diversity forged into unity, of oppression of some members of the nation by others, of migration and immigration, and so forth. Precisely because it is not a sociological history, it allows all present-day Russians to identify with nineteenth century novelists, and for the Westernising efforts of Peter the Great to make him now a nationalist hero. And even in cosmopolitan Budapest, it encourages some Hungarian patriots to identify with Magyar horsemen, accept centuries of international influences, and yet think of Hungarian Jews as members of an alien nation.

So nationality is not primordial but constructed. It is, moreover, a construction specific to the modern era and to the emergence of a modern world system in which claims to statehood became crucial bases for standing in world affairs, and potentially for autonomy, and in which claims to statehood can be justified most readily by professions of nationhood. This does not make nationality or the sentiments of nationhood any less real. But by the same token, nationality is not *more* real than many other identities which people may claim, or feel, or reproduce in their social relations. The nationalist claim is that national identity is categorical and fixed, and that somehow it trumps all other sorts of identities, from gender to region, class to political preference, occupation to artistic taste. This is a very problematic claim.

It is not easy to define nationalism. There are important variations where different cultures are at issue, where conquest has subordinated one group of people to another, where older ethnic groupings are being recast in terms of the idea of nation, and where an attempt is being made to forge a new unity out of previous diversity. It seems better to see nationalisms in terms of family resemblances (following Wittgenstein) rather than to search for an essentialist definition of nationalism. When we speak of nationalism we, thus, speak of a somewhat arbitrary subset of claims to identity and autonomy on the part of populations claiming the size and capacity to be self-sustaining. For the

purpose of any specific analysis we may want to include, say, the religious and political struggles in Northern Ireland or keep them distinct; there is no perfect boundary, no criterion of selecting nationalisms which includes all the familiar cases we are sure we want to consider without also including a variety of dubious outliers.

With more confidence, we can address the underlying factors which gave rise to nationalism and made it a major genus of identity-claim and source of political mobilisation in the modern era. Indeed, by noting these underlying factors we can see why in a strong sense only the modern era has produced nationalism. People have always been joined in groups. These groups have derived their solidarity from kinship and other forms of social (including economic) interconnection, from a common structure of political power, from shared language and culture. But in the modern era, cultural and social structural factors have converged to create and disseminate the notion of national identity and make it central.

Individualism. Culturally, the most decisive idea behind nationalism (or national identity) is the modern notion of the individual. The idea that human beings can be understood in themselves as at least potentially self-sufficient, self-contained and self-moving is vital. It is no accident that Fichte is crucial to the histories of both individualism and nationalism. For Fichte's notion of self-recognition, of the person who seemingly confronts himself (or herself) in a mirror and says 'I am I' is inextricably tied to the notion of the nation as itself an individual. Just as persons are understood as unitary in prototypical modern thought so are nations held to be integral. As Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) has indicated, this involves a seeing time as the external history through which the nation as an enduring and unitary being passes rather than as the differentiable internal history of the nation. The process of individuation is important, not just metaphorically, but as the basis for the central notion that individuals are directly members of the nation, that it marks each of them as an intrinsic identity and they commune with it immediately and as a whole. In ideology, at least, the individual does not require the mediations of family, community, region, or class to be a member of the nation. This is a profound reversal of the weight of competing loyalties from the pre-modern era (and much of the rest of the world). In this we see the sharp difference of nationalism from the ideology of honour and lineage, and the chilling potential for children to inform on their parents' infractions against the nation.¹¹

Nineteenth century ideologues of nationalism emphasised a world-historical (or evolutionary) process of individuation in which the world's peoples took on their distinctive characters, missions and destinies. Or at least the world's 'historical nations' did so; others lacked sufficient vigour or national character; they were destined to be failures and consigned to the backwaters of history. Not surprisingly, this is typically how dominant or majority populations thought of minorities and others subordinated within their dominions. This was another conceptualisation, in effect, of the Springtime of Nations. It was the period when France took on its '*mission*

civilatrix', Germany found its historical destiny and Poles crystallised their Romantic conception of the martyr-nation (see Kohn 1944; Walicki 1982; Skurnowicz 1981; Meinecke 1970). Each nation had a distinct experience and character, something special to offer the world and something special to express for itself. 'Nations are individualities with particular talents and the possibilities for exploiting those talents' (Fichte, quoted in Meinecke 1970 : 89).

It is no accident, thus, that philosophers like Fichte emphasised simultaneously the individuation of the person and of the nation. The two notions remain inextricably linked (see Bloom 1990). This very linkage, however, could create tensions. The great cultural geniuses of a nation's history were widely celebrated in the nineteenth century; the proliferation of individual geniuses was proof, especially for the Romantics, of the greatness of the nation. Although Norway had but recently gained an independent cultural status (and was not yet independent politically), her production of geniuses in the late nineteenth century, from Munch to Grieg to Ibsen, was proof enough of her standing even for the German intellectuals of that period. But being cast as the bearer of national identity was not always entirely comfortable for geniuses (or others) with their own individual identities. Writing to Ibsen on his seventieth birthday in 1898, the Norwegian poet Nils Kjoer tried to recover something of the autonomy of the person from the demand for representation of national character: 'But a people's individuality is manysided, sufficient to explain any peculiarity of the mind and therefore it explains nothing' (quoted in Aaby 1991 : 7). If recognised geniuses could feel a tension with the demand that they serve as icons of the nation, pressures of a much more troubling nature were (and are) brought to bear on cultural deviants and minorities (see Mosse 1985). Although nations are ideologically composed of individuals, they are not generally promoters of individual distinctiveness. In the formative phases of nationalism, heroic individuals – cultural as well as military and political heroes – figure prominently, but often in the established nation, conformity to the common culture becomes a central value. The character of nationalism is changed as it shifts from insurgent movement to dominant ideology, although even insurgents can be sharply intolerant of diversity. It is easier to admire heroes from afar, and easiest to claim them when they are dead.

The state. The key structural change which makes it possible to conceive of the nation as unitary is the rise of the modern state. Previous political forms neither demarcated clear boundaries nor fostered internal integration and homogenisation. Cities dominated hinterlands; sometimes particularly powerful cities dominated networks of others together with their hinterlands. The various kinds of military (and sometimes religious) elites we call 'feudal' controlled substantial territories but with a minimum of centralisation of power and limited ability to remake everyday life. Though empires could call on subject peoples for tribute, and sometimes foster substantial interaction among diverse subjects, they posed few demands for cultural homogenisation. Yet the rise of the modern state involved remarkable administrative

integration of previously quasi-autonomous regions and localities. This was true both for purposes of military contest with other states and for internal economic activity and political rule (see, for example, Giddens 1984; Tilly 1990; Mann 1992). Eventually, state power could be exercised at the farthest point of a realm as effectively as in the capital. Not only could taxes be collected, but roads could be built, schools run and mass communications systems created. Linguistic standardisation is a common measure of national integration and historical research reminds us how recent such standardisation was in most European countries. Most Frenchmen did not speak French before the second half of the nineteenth century (Weber 1976). Even demographic behaviour – fertility rates, for example – which once varied from locality to locality, become strikingly uniform within nineteenth and twentieth-century European nation-states (Watkins 1991).

The capacity of states to administer distant territories with growing intensity was largely due to improvements in transportation and communications infrastructure, on the one hand, and bureaucracy and related information management, on the other. It was part of a general growth in large-scale social relations. More and more of social life took place through forms of mediation – markets, communications technologies, bureaucracies – which removed relationships from the realm of direct, face-to-face interaction. In addition to facilitating state power, this growth in ‘indirect’ and large-scale relationships directly facilitated nationalism. It encouraged, for example, increasing reliance on categorical identities rather than webs of relational identities (see Calhoun 1991a). This transformation was closely related to the growth of capitalism. In the first place, a growing division of labour and intensification of trade relations knit localities and regions together in relations of mutual dependence. Capitalism continually drove its agents out beyond local markets, established competitive pressures around the globe, and demanded coordination of ever-growing supplies of labour and raw materials – even before the generation of increasing consumer demand became an obsession. Capitalism thus both depended on and continually increased the capacity for large-scale and indirect social relations. Because more and more of the activity on which lives and livelihoods depended was taking place at a distance from immediate locales, attempts to conceptualise the commonalities and connections among locales were increasingly important. Beyond this, connections established only through markets and the commodity form were especially prone to reification and representation in categorical terms. The nation became the domestic market, other nations international competitors or clients.¹²

Partly (though not entirely) under pressure of capitalist expansion, the entire world was divided into bounded territories. Every inch of land was declared the province of one state or another. No longer were there hinterlands in which people could follow their ways of life relatively undisturbed by pressures to conform to one or another state’s dominant culture. Attempts to preserve local tradition now required active resistance. Where empires demanded mainly political loyalty, states imposed pressures for multifarious forms of cultural loyalty and participation. The opportunity

for a people to be self-organising was increasingly limited to those who could mount a successful claim to state sovereignty. Whatever the actual form of government claimants anticipated, from the moment that sovereignty came to be a claim from below, by the people, rather than from the rulers above, the modern ideal of the nation-state was born. Even Hobbes, in justifying the absolute sovereignty of kings, required first a body of citizens – a nation – capable of granting the right to rule in an explicit or implicit social contract. And these citizens were, perforce, basically interchangeable as members of the nation.

This is a crucial contrast between the empire and the nation-state, or, as Weintraub has shrewdly noted, between the cosmopolitan city and the *polis*. The creation of a political community called for a new kind of inter-relationships, and something more than a ‘live and let live’ urbanity. In the *cosmopolis* or empire, since ‘heterogeneous multitudes were not called upon to be citizens, they could remain in apolitical coexistence, and each could do as he wished without the occasion to deliberate with his neighbors’ (Weintraub 1990: 16; see also Weintraub and Kumar, forthcoming). In both the *polis* and the modern nation-state, membership in a common polity requires more than tolerance and common subjection to an external sovereign. It requires mutual communication. This poses an impetus for erasure of differences among the citizens. One of the crucial questions of the modern era is whether meaningful, politically efficacious public discourse can be achieved without this erasure.

The claim to be a nation was a claim to be entitled to a state (or at the very least, to special recognition in the constitution of a state). Although the reciprocal claim was not logically entailed, it was common. By the nineteenth century it was thought not only that every nation deserved a state, but that each state should represent one nation. Nationalism, as Ernest Gellner writes, held that nations and states ‘were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy’ (1983 : 6). One of the features of this new way of conceptualising sovereignty was that it treated all nation-states as formally equivalent, whatever their size or power. It was no longer possible to conceive of derogated levels of partial or subordinate sovereignty – kings and dukes below emperors, autonomous cities under the protection of princes, and so on. Either Burgundy was part of France or it was an alien state; if part of France, it was merely part and not nation in itself. In the mid-nineteenth century United States, extreme claims to ‘states’ rights’ in a weak confederacy of strong subsidiary parts were not so much the claims of one or more alternative nationalisms as claims against nationalism itself. The ‘country’ to which Confederate soldiers owed a duty was conceived from the immediate family and local community outward (and largely through a hierarchy of aristocratic connections, not laterally). It was not conceived primarily as a categorical identity, coterminous with a single polity and culture.¹³

Just as the spread of capitalism created a world system in which only capitalist competition could be effective, so the division of the world into states created a continuing pressure for the production of nationalisms. Claims for greater autonomy or greater unity could gain legitimacy primarily as claims to

create a nation-state, that is, to create a new state to match a pre-existing nation. This is why the single term nationalism encompasses both fissiparous or secessionist movements and unificationist or 'pan'-nationalist movements. Croatian or Ukrainian nationalism and pan-Slavic nationalism are dimensions of the same process. Programmes for the unification of Europe draw on new histories which emphasise the commonality of the European experience and identity; the specificity of Europe is counterposed to the rest of the world, rather than the specificity of France being counterposed to Britain or the Netherlands. At the same time, fringe nationalist movements (and claims for regional autonomy) flourish with the European Community. And on Europe's eastern border, Yugoslavia and perhaps other countries seem set to splinter into tiny nation-states. Indeed, nationalist struggles in Eastern Europe reveal the continuing relevance of nationalism in a Western Europe whose publicists had claimed it had moved beyond it. Divergent visions of the European Community and divergent interests have been brought out not just by German unification, but by fighting in Yugoslavia and appeals from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary for Community membership. Not least of all, East-to-West migration both results from nationalist strife (and nationalist protectionism which creates economic strife), and contributes to xenophobic nationalist responses.

Contrary to some over-glib journalism, there is no global reason for nationalism to be more integrating or disintegrating. The same rhetoric can as readily be deployed to claim unity across separate states (all Slavs or all Arabs) as to demand autonomy for a region of one (for example, Slovakia or Ruthenia). But there are global reasons why nationalism remains the central form of identity in which people pose their claims to sovereignty. The most important of these is simply the creation of the world system as a system of states. Although some analysts predict the dissolution of such states in a post-modern welter of local identities and global corporations, the states do not yet seem to have given up the ghost. Nationalism remains important in part because claims to state sovereignty do matter – not least of all because states remain the central organisational frameworks within which democracy can be pursued.

Of course, as state administrative power was growing, and the world was divided into bounded territories, not all potential nationalisms thrived.¹⁴ A variety of factors helped. One was simply the history and development of nationalist discourse itself. As Anderson (1986) points out, nationalist discourse was not simply a product of simultaneous invention around the globe. It was, at least in part, diffused; in his view it originated in certain colonial experiences and was exported to Western Europe and thence re-exported.¹⁵ The nationalist discourse has grown during the last three hundred or so years; more is available as resource to latecomers. Within any putative nation as well, there may be greater or lesser history of nationalist discourse. There may be richer and more evocative discourses on national history and culture to provide particular content to nationalist aspirations. Specific experiences of external challenge or oppression may help to promote national consciousness, providing a clear and significant other for self-identification by

contrast. It may be more or less possible to frame other discontents within the nationalist idiom. And other organising bases, class above all, but also religious organisations, may be either absent, or congruent and supportive rather than competitive.

By the same token, not all nationalisms take the same form. They are shaped in different international contexts and from different domestic experiences. Some grow in response to histories of direct colonialism, others in response to present weakness in the world system without any specific colonial antagonist to shape them.¹⁶ Some are elite, others democratic. Some seem to absorb an entire culture, claiming everything from language and literature through to political practices and agricultural methods as specific to the nation. Others are more narrowly political movements, recognising common participation in a broader culture. And last but not least, nationalist movements are shaped by the periods of their flowering: it was easier to believe in a happy fellowship of nations in the 1840s than it is today.

Nationalism as successor ideology

As recently as the early Gorbachev years of the mid-1980s, the leadership of the Soviet Union was still propounding a modified vision of the happy fellowship of nations. The condition of this fellowship was the elimination of the social antagonisms which set capitalist nations against each other and made nationalist conflicts an attractive distraction from class struggle. As a book in Novosti's series on 'the Soviet Experience' put it:

as social antagonisms disappeared under socialism, so did national strife and racial inequality and oppression in every form. . . . The socialist multinational culture has been enriched through an intensive exchange of cultural and intellectual values. The socialist nations that have emerged in the USSR have formed a new historical community of people – the Soviet people. . . . Today it would be no exaggeration to say that a feeling of being members of one family prevails among Soviet people.

(Nenarokov and Proskurin 1983)

On the one hand, such lines from a work entitled *How the Soviet Union Solved the Nationalities Question* seem laughably divorced from reality. On the other hand, a moment's reflection on the rapid return of nationalist conflict to what was once the Soviet sphere of influence reminds us why for so long Soviet ideology claimed the resolution of 'the nationalities question' as one of the central accomplishments of communism.

Nationalism enters contemporary politics most strikingly in the wake of communist crisis and retreat. As obviously in Ethiopia as in Eastern Europe, this has much to do with conditions which preceded (and sometimes coincided with) communism. Contemporary nationalism is, in part, a direct continuation of old struggles for autonomy from neighbours and stature among nations. This is accentuated in much of Eastern Europe (and Western or Central Asia) by the extent to which communism appeared in the guise of Russian domination. But Russian nationalism is also resurgent, so this cannot be the whole story. Similarly, communism was in many cases imposed on people who had not made a commitment to it through struggles of their own.

This too has probably made nationalism more likely as a successor ideology, but its effects should not be exaggerated, for the countries in which communism had most indigenous strength before becoming a Soviet-supported state ideology do not seem markedly less prone to nationalism than those for which communism was more clearly an external imposition.

Communist regimes were perfectly prepared to try to mobilise nationalist sentiments to bolster their legitimacy. The Romanian state made a massive enterprise of reproducing folklore in ways it could both claim and control (see Kligman 1988; Verdery 1991). The reconstruction of historical buildings was a major part of post-war rebuilding in both Poland and Hungary. Enormous resources and prestige were invested in the production of international athletic successes. At the same time, communist states acted in ways which highlighted national identities in arenas where they officially denied or minimised their significance. Thus, Stalin sought to build 'socialism in one country', and his Chinese counterparts still pursue 'communism with Chinese characteristics'.¹⁷ Russia imposed its language as primary in the Soviet Union and secondary throughout the Warsaw Pact countries. In Yugoslavia, the very stratagem of holding the country together by balancing national groups (and even making sure each nationally defined state contained regions with substantial members of other nationalities) reaffirmed infra-Yugoslavian national identities at the same time that it temporarily held nationalist rivalries in check (Banac 1984; Connor 1984). Not least of all, the Soviet Army's occupation of much of Eastern Europe could hardly fail to stir some nationalist resentment, especially when coupled with political interference.

Indeed, the most basic reasons for nationalism to flourish in the wake of communism have to do with political repression not socialist – or statist – economics. Communist states repressed most forms of subsidiary identities and discourses on alternative political arrangements. Faced with pressures or opportunities for collective action, people were thrown back on pre-existing bases for identification and collective action. This worked in two ways. First, when people chafed under centralised misrule, their national identities were the most readily available ways to understand and respond to abuse. Second, when communism collapsed, nationalism was available to take its place. The latter was true especially where communism collapsed without the development of strong indigenous movements of resistance and counter-culture. In Poland, Solidarity offered an alternative arena of cultural production and discourse – though of course Solidarity had a strong nationalist current of its own. In varying degrees other Eastern European countries had both opportunities for cultural creativity and public discourse, and movements which both challenged the existing order and offered an alternative cultural discourse. In much of the Soviet Union, by contrast, repression was more severe, and insurgency from below less developed. One result was that in many settings – the Transcaucasus, for example, – nationalism could emerge as the primary form of identity and the basic medium through which people expressed their aspirations for a better life.¹⁸

Communist states did not encourage the cultural creativity and free flow of discourse which could have both knit them together and opened a variety of

bases of identity. This had several effects. It meant that in large and heterogeneous countries like the Soviet Union, only state-sponsored cultural productivity could work to unify the country as a whole. When the state lost its credibility, so did much of the cultural basis for unity at the largest level. Behind this suggestion is the general postulate that for populations to achieve some unity as citizenries, they need to be knit together by a common discourse. This does not mean that they are knit together simply by similarity of ideology. On the contrary, mere ideological similarity is a fairly brittle and easily fractured form of cultural unity, particularly when confronted with problems outside its familiar range. A shared discourse of problem-solving provides a stronger foundation for confronting new challenges. More generally, culture is a stronger source of unity when it is open to rich and varied forms of creation and discussion. When discussion and creativity are foreclosed in order to maintain ideological conformity, it becomes difficult to achieve the manifold continuous cultural adjustments which are essential to both legitimization processes and sense of common membership in a political community. So, ironically, the very attempt to maintain complete conformity undermined identification with the whole, left it superficial and easily forgotten.¹⁹

At the same time, the absence of an open cultural sphere or political discourse meant that the development of multiple bases for individual identity was impeded. Outside the range of authoritarian rule and strong nationalism, it is common for people to gain their identities from a range of cross-cutting group affiliations (as Simmel suggested), and from membership in a variety of different salient cultural categories. Thus a woman in the United States may feel a strong sense of identity stemming from her occupation, her gender, her family, her community, her political activity, and her religion as well as, and partially in competition with, her nation. Although national identity may be a source of inspiration or pride, or of a sense of obligation to help others by pursuing the common good of the United States ahead of the general good of humanity, it is unlikely to be an identity which 'trumps' all others. Of course, it is an open question how long this would last if the United States ever came under severe external pressure, or wars were again fought on American soil. Nationalism comes to the fore under a variety of historically specific circumstances – like war – as well as perhaps being comparatively stronger in some cultural traditions than others.²⁰

In the face of such pressure – and its immediate memory, as in Eastern Europe – liberalism may seem a fairly thin ideology. Liberal capitalism is, however, the main ideological option offered by the West today. There is of course the Catholic Church, with its resurgent conservatism, on the one hand (abetted by a Polish Pope), and the remnants of liberation theology, on the other. The left remains relevant mainly by pursuing a variety of ameliorative reforms within the framework of welfare state capitalism, and defending various special interests of subordinated groups. But it is in disarray and no longer seems to offer a very compelling positive vision to complement its critique of liberal capitalism. Indeed, the Western left's failure of vision is directly related to the resurgence of nationalism in eastern Europe, as the left

has not been able to make much significant connection with advocates of a 'third way' or a more robust notion of civil society. Westerners 'on the left', thus, found East Germany's 'New Forum' group appealing but were unable to connect with it in very deep or sustaining ways which would help to provide a viable electoral alternative to the vision of unity promoted by the Christian Democrats (largely because their own social democratic vision had been narrowed to a series of ameliorations of capitalist ills). The weakness of the Western left (not least its defensive posture in the United States) helped to open the way to a discourse in which liberal capitalism and versions of nationalism are the main contenders for succession to communism. These contenders, as the German example reveals, are not as antithetical as has sometimes been thought. Many forms of nationalism can thrive quite happily on a capitalist foundation and put forward their claims in the rhetoric of liberalism. Indeed, liberalism's strengths run to the enunciation and preservation of certain liberties, not to the constitution of strong social or cultural identities. Nationalism can be its complement – rooted in the same individualism – as readily as it can be dissolved by liberalism's advocacy of the individual as the basic unit of analysis.

Nationalism and democracy

Nationalism is not an intrinsically 'bad' ideology. It has been and remains an important source of inspiration. Any account of the political problems attendant on nationalism which does not recognise the achievements of poets, painters and composers who were moved by nationalist sentiments misses an important part of the story.²¹ Any account which imagines that citizens or human beings could be rational actors unmoved by cultural commitments and pre-rational identities loses touch with reality. In the political realm itself, nationalism is not intrinsically pernicious or anti-democratic. In the first place, there needs to be some culturally constructed identity behind the word 'self' in the idea of self-determination. It is worth recalling too that in the 1840s nationalism often appeared as a progressive, liberal ideology in which a domestic push for democratic expression was coupled with a respect for other nations. Even more than respect, Romantics of the early nineteenth century were sufficiently inspired by heroic nationalist struggles to offer their own lives on behalf of alien nations. Yet even this phrase reveals a tension. To the strong Romantic humanist – to Byron, say – there were no alien nations, only many expressions of a common humanity striving for freedom and creative voice. Yet in extremes, Romanticism (like its current post-modernist successors) had as much trouble making sense of difference as Enlightenment rationalism; neither grappled well with the problem of incommensurable practices, with the reasons why differences become hostilities.²² And the exclusivity implied by the word alien is more common in the rhetoric of nationalism. Nationalism is all too often the enemy of democracy rooted in civil society.

In the first place, nationalism in power is very different from nationalist resistance to alien rule. Not unlike authoritarian regimes as I described them above, nationalists too often tend to promote the pseudo-democracy of

sameness instead of the recognition of and respect for difference. Ironically like communism, nationalism often stifles cultural discourse – not in the name of the state or even necessarily by the imposition of state power; it can work by a closure of the mind. Nationalism in power is often a repressive ideology demanding strict adherence to the authority of the official embodiments of national tradition – and is very unlike nationalism in opposition which is generally a strong stimulus to cultural productivity. The problems arise with the assertion that there is only one right way for an individual to be a Pole, or a Russian, an Azeri or an American.

Repression is wielded not just against the diversity of cultural expression but against the variety of alternative bases of personal identity which might compete with the nation. Thus the common antagonism of nationalists to autonomy and equality for women is not just a continuation of sexist traditions. Nationalism encourages this sexism by internal (and I think non-essential) cultural traditions – by, for example, valuing the family as the source of the nation's continuity in time, and seeing men as future martyrs, women as mothers. Beyond this, however, nationalists resist women's movements because accepting the domination of male interests and perceptions merely perpetuates a taken-for-granted, monolithic view of the nation, while encouraging women to identify their distinctive interests and views opens claims that gender has autonomous status as a basis for personal identity which does not pale into insignificance before the commonalities of (male-dominated) nationhood.

In this sense, nationalism has totalitarian potential. It can be treated as a categorical identity more fundamental than other personal identities, even able to override them, and as fixed in both biographical and historical time. This is what I mean by saying that nationalism is used to 'trump' other identities or values.²³ Nationalists often want the sentiment or sense of national identity to go beyond the feeling of being more at home in one place than another, beyond placing a special value on the traditions with which one grew up, beyond focusing one's attention more on one subset of humanity than on the whole. In its extreme forms, nationalism, like religious fundamentalism, often involves claims to monopolise the sources of legitimate identity. As Hannah Arendt wrote, we are apt since Tocqueville to blame conformism on the principle of equality, but 'whether a nation consists of equals or non-equals is of no great importance in this respect, for society always demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest' (1958 : 39).

The decisive question about nationalism, therefore, is whether it can thrive with the nation open to competing conceptualisations, diverse identities and a rich public discourse about controversial issues. These issues were faced in France in the late nineteenth century; in the Dreyfus affair, victory went to the forces of openness and heterogeneous civil society as the basis for democracy. There have been attempts to revoke the victory, notably by Second World War era collaborators, and the contemporary radical right under the leadership of nationalists like Jean-Marie Le Pen. But in Central and Eastern Europe there have been few such signal victories, and as Adam Michnik has suggested, the issue is a very current one:

In both France and Poland the question was whether the nation was to be open and the state tolerant and multicultural, or whether the state was to be based on authoritarian principles and nationalist doctrines. And I think this has been the central question ever since. Whenever the shadow of anti-Semitism arose in Polish public life, it was an unmistakable signal that people with antidemocratic, intolerant views were on the political offensive.

(Michnik 1991 : 11)

It would be good, but not enough to say that tolerance should reign within states. Even multinational, multicultural states require more than simply tolerance among subsidiary peoples. They require public discourse. Citizens from different nationalities, as from different regions, religions or occupations, need to be able and willing to engage each other in discourse about the social arrangements which hold them together and order their lives – in brief, about the common good. Moreover, the same is crucial within nationalities. There is no reason for accepting monolithic conformity within any one nation or people (insurgent or in power). Not only may states be multinational or multicultural, nations themselves must – if they are to be allies of liberty – admit and encourage internal diversity whether they are coterminous with states or exist as subsidiary identities within states. It is necessary, in other words, that the nation be open to democracy and diversity whether or not the close link between nation and state is severed. In power, extreme nationalists do not just repress other peoples, they repress the diversity and creativity of people within the very nation they cherish.

Without diversity, democracy is hardly distinct from a dictatorship of the mass. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how such a monolithic mass could be sustained beyond an ephemeral uprising except by means of centralised totalitarian power. Nationalism is only benign when it does not tend towards this pseudo-democracy of sameness. And this is where civil society comes in. Civil society is the locus of diverse groups and individuals and, more importantly, of their contact with each other. Division of labour and other sources of difference may arise within civil society or be brought into it from the family or other less public realms. But in civil society the exchange not only of goods but of ideas can take place. Advocates of democracy in the late twentieth century are called upon to discover whether the virtues of diversity, sociability and tolerance associated with the ideal of the *cosmopolis* can be combined with the self-governing political community of the *polis*. Can political arguments be considered on their merits, at least partially autonomous from the identities of the arguers?²⁴

The *locus classicus* of such public life lay in European cities of the eighteenth century. It may be that current trends in Europe – especially the integration of the European Community but also perhaps the creation of small states in the East – may actually restore some of the early modern prominence of cities in public life and social organisation. Links among cities and/or regions may partially replace those among states. But major improvements in the nature of modern public discourse cannot come about simply through direct interpersonal relationships in cities. They must happen also through television and newspapers. They must happen on the scale of millions of people in powerful states. Political parties with their patronage, bureaucracies and public

relations staffs will mediate the relations between groups as much as cafes with their intellectual arguments (see Calhoun 1988). These parties must remain open to diversity for they are crucial means of achieving not consensus so much as reasonable compromises where consensus is impossible. If democracy is to flourish, nationalism must not become the enemy of difference.

The events of 1989 showed the power of the mass media to further an internationalisation of culture and politics. I was in Beijing that spring, and watched with amazement. Chinese students deliberately echoed Poland's Solidarity movement, and within days protesting students in Eastern Europe marched with headbands and placards proclaiming their sympathy with the Chinese. The nationalism which figured centrally in these movements is an international phenomenon – just as nationalism was in 1848. Not only is it shared through mass communication, it is driven by global processes that value and privilege nations as categories of identity between the immediately interpersonal and the local. It is often repeated that the twin tendencies of the present era are towards globalisation and localisation. This has an element of truth, but it is an overused mantra. It neglects the importance of states as arenas for democratic struggles and agents for contesting an economic power which has not ceased to be concentrated as it has become global. And it suggests that the division of the world into ever smaller units of putative internal sameness is the only way to achieve happiness in our immediate life-worlds. It is as though someone decided that Durkheim's mechanical solidarity is the only kind that works.

Nationalism encourages the identification of individuals not with locality *per se*, not with the webs of their specific interpersonal relationships, but with an abstract category. This category of nation may be a helpful mediation between the local and the global. Indeed, I think this is one crucial reason why nationalism is unlikely to disappear in the near future. Globalisation, where it occurs, is likely to call forth new and different nationalisms and more generally politics of identity. Far from producing a cosmopolitanism somehow antithetical to nationalism, the massive international migrations currently underway are apt to accentuate in both predictable and unpredictable ways the salience of cultural divides and identities in many people's everyday lives. Simply getting rid of nationalism is thus not a viable response to its disagreeable features.

Contrary to much received wisdom, I have argued that both states, on the one hand, and nationalism and the discourse of national identity, on the other, are likely to remain of central importance in an increasingly globalised world. Much of the question of how this will affect human life turns on the extent to which and manner in which institutions of civil society provide social foundations for democracy. Whether claims to national identity will be used to override other identities, either within or across national boundaries, will be determined not just by the cultural content of nationalist ideologies or the choices of nationalist ideologues. It will be determined also by the presence or absence of cross-cutting social ties and mediating institutions.

Is it possible to build states and even confederations of states in which cohesion and self-rule is established through public discourse across lines of

difference? Can we conceive the growth of a cultural unity with such states or confederations that does not devalue or demand the obliteration of other sources of personal and political identity? Or must we fall back on nationalism alone as our shelter in a world grown too frightening, or as the one immediately satisfying identity with which to confront the globalisation of capital?

Notes

1. This has been one of the themes of postmodernism as well as of more conventional political economy. See the sympathetic but critical survey in Harvey (1990).

2. Of course, the related end to the political-military rivalry between the capitalist world system and communist countries is also significant. It is possible, but remains to be seen, that global integration is sufficient to prevent the emergence of a new state-capitalist military bloc that, like the Axis of fifty years ago, seeks to carve an alternative world system to that built around capital accumulation through multilateral trade.

3. See the contrasting reviews and theorisations in Seligman (1992); Cohen and Arato (1992).

4. This point is also made in a very different way by Cohen and Arato (1992). Cohen and Arato want to get away from a simple opposition of state to all other social organisation (the sort of usage that resulted in a discourse of 'society *versus* the state' in Eastern Europe). They place an important stress on the role of social movements in the democratic process and on 'resources of solidarity' that enable individuals to join together in collective action to limit the power of the state or the economy (see 1992 : Ch. 9, especially 472). Yet, drawing primarily on readings of Hegel and Habermas, they neglect both the Scottish moralists and the French tradition, treating social organisation primarily in terms of notions of system integration developed by Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann. Rather than calling attention to the reified and therefore anti-democratic nature of the description of social life as impersonally steered 'system', they simply accept as given that much social life is so organised. Crucially, they accept without challenge the idea that power is a steering medium in the same sense as money. They also accept the Parsons-Luhmann understanding of economic life as simply a self-regulating functional system steered impersonally by money. They thus either neglect or reject the Marxian notion of the way in which capitalism structures not only the economy but the categories of economic understanding (a) so that money *appears* as the primary element in the economic system, (b) so that the centrality of capital accumulation is obscured, and (c) so that the system appears as necessary rather than transcendable. Such a view is elaborated in Postone (1993). Their sociological theory thus marginalises the role of direct social relations – the kinds of structures studied, for example, under the rubric of social networks, and the bases of the communities' intermediate associations and mediating institutions vital to democratic life – and thereby underestimates the capacities of actors to create and modify social institutions.

5. See Habermas (1989) and the various qualifications, extensions and refinements suggested by the essays in Calhoun (1992).

6. This is a theme associated especially with Alexis de Tocqueville (1840–44) but also important to Durkheim, for example, in the preface to the second edition of *The Division of Labor in Society* (1933) and to a range of other thinkers since Montesquieu. See also Calhoun (1980).

7. Even if one could point to completely self-contained island cultures somewhere in the South Pacific (and my reading of the anthropological evidence is that one cannot), these would not be nations in anything like the modern sense of the term, for that implies the definition of one by contraposition to others (as, indeed, do a variety of other forms of identity from lineage segment to clan to locality). The key to nationalist discourse is its rejection of any notion that identity is essentially fluid and shifting from one situation to another. National identity is commonly claimed to trump all others.

8. Perhaps the greatest single weakness of Habermas (1989) is Habermas' treatment of identity formation as essentially private and prior to participation in the idealised public sphere of rational critical discourse. A 'politics of identity', therefore, could only appear as a degenerate intrusion into the public sphere, due first to growing democratic inclusiveness and second to

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public relations manipulation. One result is that nationalism, a prototypical form of the politics of identity, and one broached crucially in the public sphere, did not figure significantly in Habermas' account.

9. It is common that a bit of each sort of claim is made. In France, histories trace French character back to the Gauls as well as anchoring national identity crucially in the Revolution and the distinctive notion of citizenship it brought forward. In China, national identity (a notion deriving in part from contact with the West) is at once seen as something extraordinarily ancient (and this with better claim than most of the world's other peoples) as something given special purpose by the unification under the Qin dynasty, and as distinctively modern.

10. Smith's (1986) is the most articulate modern voice for the importance of ethnicity to nationalism, but see also the review and critique in Calhoun (1993).

11. National identity, thus, in its main Western ideological form, is precisely the opposite of the reckoning of identity and loyalty outward from the family. Where the segmentary lineage system suggests 'I against my brothers, I and my brothers against my cousins, I, my brothers and my cousins against the world', nationalism suggests that membership in the category of the whole nation is prior to, more basic than, any such web of relationships. This suggests also a different notion of moral commitment from previous modes of understanding existence. The prototypical discourse of nationalism carries the form even into non-Western settings where kinship and communal bonds may figure more prominently or be claimed specifically against Western individualism (see Chatterjee 1993 and forthcoming).

12. A relatively benign though potentially problematic aspect of nationalism in Eastern Europe and the former USSR is the intentional de-integration of markets and division of labour. Rather than enhancing their cross-border relations, most formerly communist countries seem bent on developing their own individual relations with the West, and their own autonomous development plans. Economic integration seems to be experienced as a lack of national freedom, but this both forfeits comparative advantages in economic exchange and makes future conflicts more likely.

13. As Hobsbawm writes, 'we cannot assume that for most people national identification – when it exists – excludes or is always or ever superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which constitute the social being' (1990 : 11). But part of nationalist ideology is precisely the notion that national identity does 'trump' other identities.

14. This point is made with some force by Hobsbawm (1990) and Ernest Gellner (1983). Both authors stress that this is not accidental, for 'a world of nations cannot exist, only a world where some potentially national groups, in claiming this status, exclude others from making similar claims, which, as it happens, not many of them do' (Hobsbawm 1990 : 78).

15. Anderson's notion of 'modular' nationalism may overstate the case to the point of denying creativity and indigenous roots to later nationalist discourses. See Chatterjee (1986).

16. Resentments seem especially central to some nationalisms of Central and Eastern Europe. Some domestic religious traditions, like Russian and other 'Eastern' Orthodoxies, seem to encourage xenophobia beyond any influence of historical wrongs or current international threats. See Greenfeld (1990).

17. Communism has always been linked to nationalism in China, though the label 'nationalism' was appropriated by its competitor the Guomindang. In general, a kind of modernising nationalism has often been part of communism's appeal, and it is no accident that communism has flourished especially in settings where people have felt cheated of their due stature by the capitalist world system (not in the advanced centres of capitalism as Marx predicted). As the case of largely ethnically homogeneous China illustrates, nationalist aspirations are not limited to the constitution of states or the alteration of their boundaries, but include the pursuit of a range of goals including regeneration, liberation, modernisation and power.

18. It was, of course, this same nationalism and this same weakness of other cultural and movement forms which rendered the Transcaucasus unable to sustain its federation after 1917, and unable to mount significant resistance to the Red Army's imposition of Soviet rule.

19. This is congruent with Abercrombie et al.'s (1984) suggestion that dominant ideologies are more effective in establishing cohesion among elites than in enabling elites to 'delude' or persuade the 'masses'.

20. On the connection to war, see Turner (1986).

21. Similarly, it is analytically untenable to try to treat 'nationalism' and 'patriotism' (or other labels amounting to 'good' and 'bad' nationalism) as though they were fundamentally different ideological species. Artistic inspiration, needed identity, will to power, and politics of repression can be and often are bound inseparably together. The differences among nationalisms come as much from the nature of international contexts as from differences in internal form or content.

22. Practices are incommensurable when they are not only different but impossible to combine within the same framework of understanding and action – as for example, one cannot play American football and soccer at the same time. While some differences can be resolved by translation, incommensurabilities cannot. Where they exist in important and competitive practices (like Chinese vs. Western medicine), they remain sources of tension unless overall frameworks of practice are transformed. See Taylor (1985) and Calhoun (1991b).

23. Charles Taylor has argued that identity and moral commitment are intimately intertwined, so that it is almost redundant to say 'identities or values' (see Taylor 1989).

24. This is, of course, a core theme to Habermas' famous work from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) to the present. One may accept the centrality of the question without accepting quite the extreme of abstraction from issues of personal identity which is characteristic of Habermas' work.

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