

In memory of my mother and father

Nationalism and the State

Second Edition

SHORT LOAN

John Breuilly

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Preface to the first edition

The scope of this book is ambitious. Clearly no one person can understand in detail more than a tiny fraction of so vast a subject. But if there is to be any general understanding of nationalism it is essential to go beyond what one knows in detail. During the process of planning and writing I became sharply aware of an important gap in the literature. What had never been undertaken was a general investigation of nationalism as a form of politics using the method of comparative history. There were general works by sociologists, political scientists and other kinds of social scientists. These had insufficient and often poorly organised information with which to work. Specific historical studies were frequently organised in different ways which made direct comparisons difficult if not impossible. Furthermore they did not need to define general terms such as nationalism particularly carefully because their main concern was not with nationalism as such. There were broad chronological surveys which treated nationalism as but one aspect of modern history. But these failed to make clear the distinct contexts which generated nationalism. Nationalism may be modern but modernity is not nationalism. There were general works with rather clearer analysis but they tended to define nationalism as a set of doctrines, ideas and sentiments. These left obscure the reasons why it frequently became politically significant. Finally there were a few – very few – good comparative historical studies which concentrated on a particular region and period. These partially filled the gap, but by virtue of their specific focus on region and period they could do no more than that. A more general application of this comparative historical approach seemed to me essential.

My intention was to provide a systematic description of nationalism as a form of politics. This took longer than I had originally planned, and the book grew in size. I had to come up with a clear definition and to construct a useful typology. Then I had to do more reading and thinking in order to select, analyse and compare cases within each of the types I had constructed. At this stage I was sceptical of 'theories' of nationalism.

Introduction

1 Basic arguments

This book outlines and applies a general procedure for the study of nationalism. It treats nationalism as a form of politics. It creates a typology of nationalist politics and then uses the method of comparative history to study particular cases. The argument, which is systematically developed on this basis, is that nationalism is best understood as an especially appropriate form of political behaviour in the context of the modern state and the modern state system.

I would make two claims for this book. First, it treats nationalism primarily as a form of politics. Although many studies of individual cases of nationalism do this, general studies and more theoretical works tend to focus on other aspects of nationalism. Nationalism is treated as a state of mind, as the expression of national consciousness, as a political doctrine elaborated by intellectuals. Probably the most commonly-held assumption – shared by these various approaches – is that nationalism arises ultimately from some sort of national identity or that it is the search for such an identity. I hope to show that this is a very misleading idea. The other common approach is to regard nationalism as the expression of something ‘deeper’ such as class interest or an economic or social structure or a cultural formation. However, although *particular* nationalist movements can be illuminated by reference to this or that class, economic development, programme of modernisation or cultural achievement, I do not think such ideas help one understand nationalism *generally*. To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernisation is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is principally about control of the state. The central task is to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using state power. We need to understand why nationalism has played a major role in the pursuit of those objectives. To understand that we need to examine closely how nationalism

operates as politics and what it is about modern politics that makes nationalism so important. Only then should we go on to consider the contributions of culture, ideology, class and much else.

The second distinct contribution of this book resides in the method of analysis. I do not develop a general theory and then apply it to cases: I am sceptical about the use of such a procedure in historical investigation. I do not outline a general argument which uses examples in a very brief, illustrative fashion. Such examples are usually unrepresentative and are removed from their historical context. A general framework of analysis is only acceptable if it permits, and is shown to permit, an effective analysis of particular cases. This requires two procedures. First, it is necessary to develop a typology of nationalism. The internal variations within nationalism are too great to allow of a single method of investigation and so one must begin by identifying various types of nationalism which can be considered separately. After such a consideration one can seek to locate underlying similarities between those types. Second, each type must be investigated by the comparative historical method. Within each type I select a few cases. I analyse these cases using the same methods and concepts, which also enables me to compare and contrast them systematically. Only in this way can one move on to draw general conclusions from the case studies.

In the rest of this chapter I will provide a definition of nationalism which focuses upon its political character, and then develop a typology of nationalism.¹ The chapters in Part One of the book consider the social and ideological aspects of nationalism.² The main sections of the book are Parts Two and Three in which the typology of nationalist politics is developed through the comparative analysis of a range of cases. The arguments of these parts of the book are used to support my conclusion, which is that the modern state and the modern state system offer the key to an understanding of nationalism.

2 Definitions and classifications

The term 'nationalism' is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments.

A nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions:

- (a) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character.
- (b) The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values.
- (c) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.³

This 'core doctrine' differs from that advanced by Smith⁴ mainly in

eliminating all propositions involving *explicit* generalisations beyond the particular nation to which the nationalist appeals. Often nationalists do see their own nation as simply one amongst many. Certainly such a recognition would appear to be implicit in nationalist doctrine. But nationalists do not necessarily behave fairly, and one cannot apply logical standards to political ideologies. For example, Smith is led to deny that German National Socialism is a form of nationalism because its creed of racial inequality is incompatible with the nationalist vision of a plurality of unique and free nations.⁵ The distinction is an important one, both morally and politically, but it is absurd to exclude Nazism as a form of nationalism. It drew upon earlier nationalist ideas and movements, insisted that the supreme values were those of the national community, and couched much of its appeal as well as receiving much of its support in terms which drew upon earlier traditions of German nationalism.

Smith is rightly concerned to distinguish nationalism from ethnocentrism. A vague definition of nationalism which includes any statements about nations or ethnic groups would create an impossibly large subject. That can be avoided by including only statements which make the idea of a peculiar nation explicit; make this assertion the foundation of all political claims; and which are the central ideological statements deployed by a political movement or organisation. One can see how this enables one to exclude many statements with an ethnocentric character from the category of nationalism by considering the debate over the modernity of nationalism.

The debate is often based upon different assumptions and definitions. I do not quarrel with historians who claim that a national consciousness existed in medieval Europe or that there were patriots active in the sixteenth century. I would simply argue that such phenomena should not be labelled as nationalism. To justify such an argument I would cite a couple of examples.

Two of Dante's works are 'On Vernacular Language' and 'On the Monarchy'. In the first of these Dante sought to locate an Italian language. He recognised that there were larger categories such as the East European, Germanic, and Romance language groups and also smaller categories such as the numerous dialects spoken throughout the Italian peninsula. However, he claimed to have discovered an Italian language between these categories. Armed with this discovery (or invention) Dante went on to identify the Italian nation with this language. He urged Italian poets to use Italian, to defend its purity and increase its expressive capacities.

'On the Monarchy' was a plea for a universal emperor. Monarchy, Dante argued, was the only political system that could secure harmony within a society. For universal harmony one required universal monarchy. In that condition of harmony men could devote themselves fully to the duties they owed to God.

What is striking is that the arguments of the two works move in independent spheres. Dante's concern with language and nationality is purely cultural; his concern with universal monarchy is purely political. The monarch has no 'national' task. Even the subordinate authorities which Dante envisages working under universal monarchy are not related to peoples or regions which might be regarded as national.

Furthermore, Dante is quite unselfconscious about this absence of a connection. He does not seek to defend this absence because it did not occur to him, or to his contemporaries, that a connection should or could be made. Dante is clear proof of the existence of some kind of national consciousness and concern with national language and cultural identity in late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Europe. He is equally clear proof of the non-existence of nationalist consciousness.

Again, Shakespeare provides ample proof of such 'national' consciousness. But generally, as in *Henry V*, the 'national' refers to the customs and manners of the common people; it does not shape the values and actions of those who hold power. The Spanish army in the Netherlands was divided into 'nations', each with an associated stereotype. But what matters is that the different nationalities on the eve of Agincourt serve Henry, and that the different nationalities in the Netherlands serve Spain.

One can continue this argument with reference to Marcu's study of 'nationalism' in sixteenth-century Europe. In a chapter on Italy, Marcu considers the 'nationalist' statements made by a number of writers. Most of these writers lament the success of the French invasions of Italy which began in 1495.

Who can find words to describe our shame? The Gallic king has come and oppressed region after region, so that the whole country now lies in tears and pain.⁶

Few of these writers, however, developed any political programme on the basis of this feeling of shame. Calling upon God to avenge Italy's servitude, as Domenichi did, does not amount to such a programme. Two other writers appear more political. Donato Giannotti, writing in 1553 and now preoccupied with the Imperial threat, called upon the Papacy, aid from France or England and co-operation between Italian princes. However, this was envisaged as a way of responding to an immediate threat and not as the basis for reorganising Italy along national lines. Muzio Justinopolitano did try to specify the way in which Italian princes could co-operate with each other, citing the Swiss cantons as a model. In a very strained way this might be regarded as pointing to some idea of an Italian polity, and thus as a form of nationalism.

However, Marcu has selected the strongest evidence for her case. Even then, most of these writers were not nationalist as defined here. They

had little influence over princes and never organised or associated with any political movement which might have tried to put their ideas into action. The most coherent image of 'Italian independence' one can derive from this is one which would include the Spanish king as one of a number of legitimate rulers in Italy. Foreign rule as such was not the object of attack, but rather foreign rule of a particular kind imposed by invasion. The concerns of an Italian patriot are to be found alongside or (more often) subordinate to other values such as the maintenance of legitimacy or order or the interests of particular city-states or territorial princes. Marcu has achieved a great deal in the way of identifying and describing certain sorts of national consciousness in sixteenth-century Europe but this should not be confused with nationalism.

So the definition employed here can avoid the danger of being too vague and all-embracing and, among other things, draws attention to the modernity of nationalism.

The definition also excludes from consideration political movements which demand independence on the basis of universal principles. The term 'nationhood' is often used to describe the achievement of such independence, for example, in the creation of the United States of America. However, the leaders of that independence movement made little reference to a distinct cultural identity to justify their claims. They demanded equality and, failing that, independence, and justified these demands by appealing to universal human rights. Parts of North America were simply the areas in which these rights were being asserted. Admittedly a sense of national identity developed after the achievement of independence but by then nationalism had taken on a rather different character – for example in the conflicting visions of nation that clashed in the Civil War or in the 'melting pot' idea of the relationship between new America and old Europe.

There are problems about excluding such 'universalist' movements from consideration. The conditions which give rise to them are closely connected to those which lead to nationalism. This is considered in chapter 3. Furthermore, one of the roots of nationalism is the idea of the nation as an independent group of citizens, an idea which played a central role in the political language of the American independence movement. I consider this further in chapter 1, where I argue that such ideas only become nationalist when combined with other ideas about a distinctive cultural identity.

It is often difficult to distinguish between universalist and nationalist elements of certain movements. For example, the German National Assembly which met in Frankfurt am Main in 1848–49 to form a nation-state did not claim that all ethnic Germans should live in that state. One could argue that this was not merely a question of pragmatism, affected by the desire both to include other ethnic elements in a united Germany and to

avoid the problem of over-ambitious claims, but proof that the parliament was not committed to the values of ethnic nationalism.⁷ Much of the case for a nation-state was made in terms of human rights which have universal application.

Yet one could not argue that the Frankfurt parliament simply applied the universal principles about human rights and constitutional government to an area which happened to be called Germany. To begin with, this does not suffice to justify the claims of unification nationalism. Separation from a larger state or reform of the existing state can be justified by pointing to discriminatory or unjust treatment, and this can be phrased in terms of universal values. But to justify unification one has to go further and identify some entity which needs to be unified. In this case the entity was the German nation. It is difficult to establish precisely what, in the absence of the ethnic criterion, members of the Frankfurt parliament meant by the German nation. But one can work out what might be called an historical-territorial concept of the nation which was very different from an ethnic conception. Such a conception tends to transfer the criterion of identity from people (the ethnic conception) to places. Many nationalisms do this. The place, the national territory, becomes a shorthand term for a complex network of ideas concerning the nation. What these ideas are can only be worked out by considering the claims that are made in relation to the national territory. Many of these claims will be couched in universal terms.

The same problem of distinguishing between 'universalist' and nationalist movements arises from what might be called the 'voluntarist' or subjective view of nationality. Its most famous expression came in Renan's definition of the nation as a twenty-four-hour-a-day plebiscite. As soon as people ceased to think of themselves as members of the nation, the nation would cease to exist. The implication is that that nation has no 'objective reality' even for nationalists if they take this view. To base national identity upon individual choice would seem to involve abandoning any notion of group identity which distinguishes one group from all others. Such a view of nationalism would, therefore, surrender the idea that the nation was a cultural entity and hence make it impossible to identify any specific nation.

But pushed this far Renan's view ceases to make sense. The constant reiteration of the statement 'I am French' is empty unless linked to some notion of what being French means. In turn, that meaning can become politically significant only if shared by a number of people with effective organisation. It is the shared meanings and their political organisation that constitute a form of nationalism rather than the purely subjective choices of individual Frenchmen. Of course, this does not mean that the national has an objective reality: we are still referring only to the shared views of nationalists. But at least it means that we can refer to a set of common ideas which can be analysed and their origins and purposes explained. Thus one can work out, even for those nationalists who share Renan's

position, a nationalist case which rests upon views about a distinct national identity.

It is also difficult to distinguish universalist from nationalist claims in the language employed by many modern anti-colonialist movements.⁸ On the one hand, claims to independence for territories such as Tanganyika or Nigeria could be grounded upon an appeal to universal human rights and it is difficult to construct a plausible account of some cultural identity one might call the nation in these cases. On the other hand, cultural themes have loomed much larger in the language of anti-colonial movements than they did in American resistance to British or Spanish rule. Modern anti-colonial movements have seen themselves in relation to an allegedly superior Western culture and have sought to counter it by elaborating accounts of their own, non-western cultures. This conception of an indigenous culture is used in part to underpin political claims. Such cultural ideas tend to operate on a fairly sweeping level: Arab, African, Indian, Chinese. But there have also been more specific responses which may or may not be integrated into anti-colonialism. These are what have been variously called 'sub-nationalist' or 'tribalist' movements, which have often made statements referring to ethnic identities. The most effective form of anti-colonial nationalism – that operating at the level of the colonial territory – finds itself in-between these very broad anti-western and very specific ethnic claims. However, although this can lead to conflict, more often such nationalist movements incorporate these cultural claims into their own case, referring to their own society as a rich mix of sub-cultures and themselves as being part of a larger project such as Pan-Africanism or Arab nationalism. These matters are considered in detail in Part Three.

The attempt to construct a cultural or ethnic identity at the level of the colonial territory can have a degree of plausibility if there is some real continuity between the peoples and territories of the pre-colonial and the colonial eras. However, in many cases such a construction looks quite artificial because of the sharp break in continuity introduced by colonial rule. However, even in these cases, apart from the idea of the nation as a body of citizens claiming independence on the basis of universal human rights, one also encounters the idea of the nation as a project, a unity to be fashioned out of the fight for independence and in the new era of freedom. In this respect, as well as the others I have mentioned, universalist themes of human rights and political self-determination are inextricably tied to nationalist themes of cultural identity in modern anti-colonialism. For this reason such movements need consideration whereas I leave aside the independence movements of North and South America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia where such a cultural dimension does not figure so centrally.

I consider *significant* nationalist movements. By this I mean move-

ever, the very assumption of state power tends to mean that a political movement acquires new sorts of power and is subject to new sorts of influence and considerations. Whereas the organisation and ideology of a nationalism movement are central to its activity when in opposition, this becomes less the case once it acquires state power. Consequently I consider governmental nationalism as a distinct subject only when the links to an earlier nationalist opposition phase are especially evident or when the government conflicts with a nationalist opposition claiming to speak for another nation. Aspects of governmental nationalism are considered in chapters 11, 13, 14, and 15.

I do not consider nationalist pressure groups. Although committed to nationalist ideas, such groups do not seek to control the state. Usually this is because they regard the existing state as national and wish merely to influence its policies. It can be because they feel they lack real power, though pressure groups can change into movements seeking control of the state if either they acquire more support or if they become alienated from the state. It is with such movements that this book is concerned, that is, significant political movements, principally of opposition, which seek to gain or exercise state power and justify this objective on nationalist grounds.

Although this narrows the range of relevant subjects, it still covers a great deal. To manage this one needs to subdivide into different classes. Classifications are simply sets of interrelated definitions. Empirically they are not right or wrong; rather they are either helpful or unhelpful.

The focus here is with nationalism as a form of politics, principally opposition politics. The principle of classification will, therefore, be based upon the relationship between the nationalist movement and the state which it either opposes or controls. A nationalist opposition can seek to break away from the present state (separation), to reform it in a nationalist direction (reform), or to unite it with other states (unification).

Furthermore, the state which is opposed may or may not define itself in national terms. If it does, conflict may arise between governmental and oppositional nationalisms. Such conflict is very different from that between nationalist oppositions and states which do not regard themselves as national.

These distinctions yield six classes, which are set out here with relevant examples:

	Opposed to non-nation states*	Opposed to nation-states
Separation	Magyar, Greek, Nigerian ¹⁰	Basque, Ibo
Reform	Turkish, Japanese	Fascism, Nazism
Unification	German, Italian	Arab, Pan-African ¹¹

* A rather clumsy term but I can think of nothing better

ments which posed a serious challenge to the state. Obviously one must consider the origins of such movements, for example the role of founding intellectuals, before they achieved such significance. However, I do not consider nationalist movements which may have developed quite elaborate doctrines but never became significant politically; whereas I do consider other movements with much less elaborate doctrines but which were politically significant.⁹ Political significance tells us something important about the nature of a movement and also alters the role of ideology within such a movement. The use of nationalist ideas are used to identify a movement as nationalist, but it is politics rather than ideology which has the central attention in this book.

Most of this book considers nationalist oppositions to the state. There is also state-led nationalism but defining governmental nationalism is more difficult. The term nationalist in this context often means no more than particularly offensive and aggressive policies pursued by national governments. In this sense Hitler was a nationalist, but not Stresemann. However, this tends to be a moral rather than an analytical distinction, having its place within a tradition which contrasts nationalism as a 'bad thing' with patriotism as a 'good thing'. However, to regard all policies of self-interest undertaken by national governments as nationalist would be to empty the term of any specific meaning.

More usefully one could confine the term 'governmental nationalism' to two specific situations. Externally it could refer to policies aimed at extending the territory of the state into areas which the state claims as belonging to its nation. Thus Hitler's claim to the Sudetenland or to Austria could be regarded as having a nationalist underpinning in a way that would not be true of his claim to *Lebensraum* in the east. Internally, one could describe as nationalist actions taken against specific groups or individuals and justified on the grounds of the anti- or non-national character of these groups or individuals. The official nationality policy of Nicholas I of Russia or the anti-semitism of the Third Reich could be described in these terms.

Nevertheless, I am sceptical as to the value of investigating these situations in a comparative way with the aim of arriving at a general understanding. Foreign policy framed in nationalist terms is usually just part of a larger framework within which such policy is formulated. Particularly if that policy is rather detached from the internal politics of the state, it is more likely that a general understanding will be provided by models of international relations rather than through the concept of nationalism.

Clearly the internal function of governmental nationalism is more closely and obviously related to the position of the government *vis-à-vis* those it claims belongs to the nation, and continues the politics of earlier oppositional movements from which that government originated. How-

These categories provide the basic rationale for the organisation of Parts II and III. Part II deals with nationalist movements in non-national states and Part III with nationalist movements in nation-states. However, some additional distinctions are also required.

First, I have separated the treatment of nationalism in 'western' states (that is, states in Europe and in areas of predominantly European settlement overseas) from non-western states.¹² Although comparisons can be made, the differences between these two types of situation are so great that they need separate treatment. Modern anti-colonialism, in particular, is a very special form of nationalism and receives extended treatment in Part II.

Second, I argue that there was no such thing as reform nationalism in Europe until the creation of nation-states. So there is no chapter on this subject. However, there were what I term 'national' oppositions in European states which had similar purposes to reform nationalist movements. In order to understand something of the background to nationalism proper and of the distinctive situations which transform a national opposition into a nationalist one, it is necessary to consider these precursors of nationalism. This is the subject of chapter 3. Unification nationalism outside Europe is considered in Part III although it has a history which antedates the establishment of nation-states in those areas. Unification nationalism in Europe after 1871 is of little importance and, therefore, is not considered, with the special and partial exception of the role of nationalism in German reunification in 1989-90 considered in chapter 17. In addition to a consideration of nationalist opposition I also look at governmental nationalism in the new nation-states in chapter 13. With these qualifications, the subject matter of the various chapters in Parts II and III is based directly upon the categories outlined above.

There are problems with this system of classification and alternative categories have been advanced.

One problem is deciding where to place a particular case. Any classification based on general principles is bound to encounter this problem. Its utility will, in part, depend upon whether particular placings seem perverse and whether there are too many 'difficult' cases. I deliberately select an especially difficult case: that of 19th century Polish nationalism. A Polish populist nationalist would have wanted to separate Polish territory from the control of the three partitioning powers of Austria, Russia and Prussia; to unify these territories into a single Polish state; and to do so in a reformed version very different from the aristocratic Polish kingdom of the 18th century. Finally, in post-1871 Germany such a nationalist would be opposed to a nation-state, but in the Habsburg and Romanov dynasties would oppose non-national states. So this case could go in all six categories!

Yet the six categories draw attention to important differences within

Polish nationalism. The separatist movements, though each oriented to a future Polish state, took different forms according to the different situations in which they found themselves. This largely defined the nationalist movement because opposition to the respective partitioning powers was the first and most urgent task. The Russian-based Polish nationalism, and therefore the anti-Russian strain within Polish nationalism, predominated up to the 1860s. Furthermore, there were tensions between 'restorationists' and 'reformers' with the former concentrating on gaining international support and the latter on mobilising a popular movement. Both kinds of nationalists could only distance themselves from the particular issues of separation when in exile. Finally, the Polish movement in Prussia changed character when Prussia itself shifted from predominantly dynastic, non-national character to becoming part of the German nation-state. Something similar happened when the Tsarist state shifted to a Russian ethnic nationalist policy. So although Polish nationalism *as a whole* can be placed in all six categories, the categories point to important distinctions within Polish nationalism.¹³ So one can defend this classification even in relation to such a peculiarly difficult case.

A second problem is to decide whether one is dealing with a nation-state. I base this decision upon the case the state itself makes in relation to nationalist opposition. Thus between 1860 and 1870 the Prussian/German state shifted to a German national position against its Polish subjects. The Spanish government has opposed Basque and Catalan nationalisms on nationalist grounds. Although this opposition was more repressive and intolerant of any cultural autonomy under Franco than today, the opposition is still a national one. In Britain there has been a tendency to separate the concept of nationality as citizenship from that of nationality as culture, claiming that it is possible to be British and Scottish, British and Welsh at the same time. However, if the distinction is challenged, as it is by Scottish and Welsh nationalists, defenders of the integrity of the United Kingdom usually resort to an historical, territorial, and civic conception of British nationality which underpins the present state and sets limits to the claims made on behalf of 'merely cultural' nations. Yet this has always been somewhat incoherent and faces a real problem in defining the English/British relationship. In so far as an English nationalism develops in response to Celtic nationalism it could actually undermine the ideological defence of the United Kingdom.¹⁴

I define modern anti-colonial nationalism as separatist. Such movements claim independence for what was already a separately administered territory in a different part of the world from that of the colonial power. Clearly, separation means something different in these cases from those which involve boundary changes such as those demanded by separatist movements in the multinational dynasties of Europe. However, the nationalism of the Muslim League in the Indian subcontinent did involve separatism

atism of the latter kind, and this preceded the formation of an independent state. So this was separatist both in relation to colonial rule and to Indian nationalism.

Another difficulty arises when a nationalist movement in a particular territory seeks a political union with its 'own' nation-state, for example, the German nationalists of Bohemia, later the Sudetenland region in Czechoslovakia. This can be seen from three angles: as part of the drive towards German unification; as an expression of governmental nationalism on the part of the German government; and as separatist nationalism amongst the Bohemian/Sudeten Germans. Actually, as with the Polish case discussed earlier, these are very real distinctions within German nationalism. Given the particular interest of the book in nationalist opposition, my principal focus will be upon the separatist aspect – treating the demand for unification and support from its 'own' nation-state as resources which help shape the character and achievements of such a separatist nationalism.

This classification is wholly political. That is not to say that the socio-economic situation or the ideological character of nationalism is regarded as unimportant. One needs to pay attention to these matters in considering every case. However, a focus on nationalism as political action should define and classify its subject in terms of political action. To add further qualifications, whether in terms of social base or political doctrine, would multiply the categories in a way which would undermine the whole point of classification.

Furthermore, classifications based upon these other principles have severe drawbacks. To define and classify nationalist movements in socio-economic terms confronts the problem that all significant movements bring together different social groups within a particular territory and also deny that they are to be regarded in socially exclusive terms. Clearly some social interests play a greater role than others in nationalist movements, but this is something to take account of in specific analyses, not in the preliminary act of classification.¹⁵

A similar criticism can be applied to classifying nationalism in terms of political doctrine.¹⁶ First, one has to identify the nationalist ideology and decide about its classification. Hayes, for example, sought to align nationalist ideology with more general political values. Thus he identified, amongst others, Jacobin, traditional and liberal nationalist doctrines. Kohn was particularly concerned with the distinction between 'western' and 'eastern' forms of nationalism, contrasting doctrines which emphasise citizenship and individual choice with those which stress cultural identity and group membership.

In practice it is very difficult to apply such distinctions. I have already challenged the attempt to distinguish nationalism from fascism on intellectual grounds. In mid-nineteenth century German nationalism one can identify strands which variously emphasise liberal constitutionalism with-

out ethnic discrimination, language as the bearer of national values, and race. Although one or other of these ideas has more centrality at a particular phase, most broad nationalist movements contain doctrinal mixtures at any one time. What is more, changes in the political situation can bring about rapid shifts in the balance of doctrines and languages employed in a nationalist movement.

It also is not helpful to argue that some doctrinal variants of nationalism are not 'really' nationalist at all. We have already encountered this argument with respect to fascism. It is used also in relation to liberalism which is often regarded as both logically and morally incompatible with nationalism. This incompatibility is adduced as a major reason for the disintegration of movements which sought to combine the two doctrines. Such an argument often concludes that fascism, far from being incompatible with nationalism, is its logical culmination. In arguments of this kind doctrine does not merely define nationalism; it actually shapes its historical development.

However, ideology is not a logical mode of thought and history is not logic. Some Germans, Italians, Hungarians and others in mid-nineteenth century Europe regarded themselves as both liberals and nationalists and were so regarded by their opponents. They combined nationalist and liberal claims in some form or another and constructed political movements which tried to realise those claims. As a consequence liberal nationalism does exist, as does also romantic nationalism, linguistic nationalism, ethnic nationalism, and various other doctrinal positions with a nationalist component, and all their overlapping and interrelated positions. This means both that one must take nationalist doctrine seriously (see chapter 2 below) but one cannot make it the basis for classifying nationalist movements. It may be the case that the 'ultimate' objectives of nationalism and liberalism are incompatible, and this will undoubtedly set limits on possible achievements. But within those limits, and most history operates within such limits, the historian has to respect the way people do subscribe to different mixtures of ideas.

Another danger of this approach is that it can make too much of nationalist doctrine. Nationalist ideology matters, not so much because it directly motivates most supporters of a nationalist movement, but rather because it provides a conceptual map which enables people to relate their particular material and moral interests to a broader terrain of action. Excessive focus on doctrine tends to exaggerate the role of nationalist ideologies and to see the expansion of nationalism in terms of the conversion of people by the ideologues.¹⁷

Another method of classification – combining political with social elements – focuses upon the different types of movements or organisations.¹⁸ One may distinguish between elite and mass nationalism, constitutional and illegal nationalism, peaceful and violent nationalism.

Organisation may take the form of party or secret society; nationalist parties may be closed and undemocratic or open and democratic. There are numerous possible variations in organisation. That, indeed, is a major drawback to such a principle of classification: one is liable to end up with too many categories. What is more, the categories apply equally well to all other political movements and organisations. Finally, as with doctrines, most significant nationalist movements combine different principles of organisation at the same time. The Indian Congress movement, for example, consisted of many different organisations of different kinds by the 1930s. Although such differences were sometimes due to different views of nationalism, sometimes they were no more than a product of temporary tactical disagreements and sometimes of the need to have different organisation for different groups or regions. What is important, however, is that almost all those involved remained loyal to the central nationalist goal of independence and to Congress as the heart of that nationalism. In organisational terms Congress is unclassifiable, but it *was* Indian nationalism. This organisational diversity only makes sense in relation to the political context in which Congress developed and operated and the problems in the way of achieving independence. The key element in that context was the relationship between Congress and the Raj. That takes us back to the type of classification that I have proposed.

3 Conclusion

In the appendix I critically review a range of approaches to nationalism which emphasise some non-political element such as class interest, economic objective, cultural identity, or psychological function. Readers interested in theoretical issues may want to read that before proceeding to chapter 1. The argument of that appendix as well as the approach I have outlined in this introduction all point in one direction.

Nationalism is a form of politics. Before trying to theorise about the 'real' purpose or cause of this form of politics – before trying to go 'behind' nationalism in search of some non-political base which supposedly gives rise to nationalism – one should try to work out precisely what is the form of politics we call nationalism, its political context and its political modes. Most general studies of nationalism neglect this task, preferring varieties of non-political theorising. Historical studies of particular cases put politics at their centre but do not seek to relate this to the central issue, which is the general significance of nationalism in modern times. The *only* starting point for a general understanding of nationalism is to take its form of politics seriously and to study that politics in a way that does justice to the complexity and variety of nationalisms whilst seeking to locate common patterns. The *only* way to do this is by means of comparative historical investigation. The purpose of this introduction has been to

outline the procedures for defining and classifying nationalism, to enable a comparative investigation of this kind to be undertaken.

That investigation is the task of Parts II and III of this book. However, it is important to understand the typical ways in which different social groups can support or oppose nationalism and also to understand why and how nationalist ideology has developed and its typical roles in nationalist politics. This will be considered in chapters 1 and 2. Finally, in the conclusion I will try to draw out the underlying patterns which the arguments of the book point towards, namely that the key to an understanding of nationalism lies in the character of the modern state, which nationalism both opposes and claims as its own.

Notes

- 1 In the first edition of this book the introduction included a section critically reviewing other approaches towards nationalism. I have now moved that, revised, section of the book into an appendix.
- 2 In the first edition of the book these chapters came at the end of the book. This conveyed the impression to some reviewers that I did not regard the social bases and ideological appeals of nationalism as important. I have concluded that it is better to introduce these general themes in advance of the comparative analysis of nationalist politics and so these two chapters now make up Part I of the book.
- 3 Some nationalist movements demand less than this but usually because they recognise that full independence is either unattainable or liable to be dangerously short-lived, because the new independent nation will be exposed in a way that it was not within a larger political structure. The Czech demand for increased autonomy within the Habsburg empire was pragmatic in this way.
- 4 Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, 1971), p. 21.
- 5 Smith elaborated the argument in a later book *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* but only by dint of arguing that fascism was unlike nationalism. However, that argument only worked by excluding the possibility that fascism is one type of nationalism, although different from all other types. Those other types also differ from one another: it is Smith's definition which places fascism in an entirely different category, not the descriptive account of such differences.
- 6 E. D. Marcu, *Sixteenth Century Nationalism* (New York, 1976), p. 34 quoting Geronimo Frascastoro.
- 7 The 'ethnic nationalist' case was put strongly by L. B. Namier in 1848: *the revolution of the intellectuals* (London, 1944). F. Eyck, *The Frankfurt Parliament, 1848-49* (London, 1968) is an important corrective. See now D. Langewiesche, 'Germany and the national question in 1848', in *The State of Germany*, edited by J. Breuilly (London, 1992), pp. 60-79; and also further below, pp. 105-9.
- 8 See Thomas Hodgkin, 'A note on the language of African nationalism', in

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- 9 *St. Anthony's Papers*, no. 10 (London, 1960), pp. 22-40. See, for example, chapter 16 which includes consideration of the culturally elaborate but politically weak Welsh nationalism and culturally less elaborate but politically much stronger Scottish nationalism and Ulster Unionism.
- 10 Modern anti-colonial movements could be said to be opposed to nation-states such as Britain or France. But really they are opposed to these states as imperial powers, not as nation-states. That still leaves complications, as with the way in which French Africa was defined as overseas France or the way in which inhabitants of Portuguese Africa were defined as Portuguese. This is a real issue which had consequences for the way nationalism developed in these colonies.
- 11 These movements existed prior to the establishment of independent African and Arab states but I am particularly concerned with their significance later on.
- 12 This applies even to the Ottoman empire, where I consider its European and Middle Eastern territories separately, although I also make comparisons between them. See below, pp. 154-5.
- 13 For more detail on Polish nationalism see below, pp. 115-20.
- 14 For the emergence of English claims to Scotland and Ireland in the 17th century (Wales never being considered a national problem) see below, pp. 84-8. For Celtic nationalism in the 20th century see below, pp. 320-32.
- 15 The typical roles of major social groups is considered in chapter 1. The problems with approaches to nationalism which focus on its socio-economic character are considered in the appendix.
- 16 For examples of this approach see Carlton J. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Nationalism* (New York, 1931); Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1967); and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1979).
- 17 I pursue this argument of nationalist ideology as a conceptual map in chapter 2. The danger of focusing on the contribution of ideologues or intellectuals in studies of nationalism is considered further in the appendix.
- 18 See, for example, K. Symons-Symoniewicz, *Nationalist Movements: a comparative view* (London, 1970); and, more briefly, *id.*, 'Nationalist movements: an attempt at a comparative typology', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 7 (1964-65), pp. 221-30.

Sources and forms of nationalist ideology

1 Introductory remarks

Ideology must, first and foremost, be understood as an intellectual phenomenon. People may use it as a form of emotional compensation or as a political weapon. However, it cannot be reduced to the level of a cry of pain or a tactic. Ideology relates people's problems to society as a whole: that is why it can serve the emotional and political functions it does. However, ideology has its roots in an intellectual attempt to solve some puzzle about society as a whole. Because such puzzles and related predicaments are shared generally, the answers offered at a fairly sophisticated level by intellectuals can, in a simplified form, be adopted by others as ideology. So one must begin by examining the sorts of puzzles, and the initial non-ideological responses they provoked, which could give rise to nationalist ideology.

Ideological statements often appear to be descriptive statements about the world. In so far as they do involve descriptive statements about matters such as racial differences or events in the history of a nation they can be subjected to tests by disciplines like human biology and history. But the core of a political ideology is its commitment to some ideal and the actions prescribed in order to achieve that ideal. That core can be criticised only in terms of inherent plausibility, internal consistency and a view of its underlying values. One cannot 'disprove' it. However, ideological statements often take on the appearance of normal descriptive statements but with some feature which makes them arbitrary or immune to refutation. Attention should be drawn to these features.

Ideology, derived from disinterested attempts to understand the world, can have a political impact only if presented in simplified forms and embodied in symbols and ceremonials. It is in these forms and embodiments that one can gain some understanding of its role in a political movement. On the basis of that understanding one can in turn work out what features of an ideology account for its use in particular situations and

its appeal to particular groups.

These very general remarks set the pattern for the rest of this chapter. First, I will look at how the notion of the community could be employed in response to some problems of modernity. Then I will examine the typical ways in which this notion of community, particularly in terms of the idea of the nation, could be translated into ideological forms. The next step will be to examine the simplification of these forms and their rendering into symbolic and ceremonial forms. Having tried to estimate its impact within nationalist movements, I will draw some conclusions about the particular features of nationalist ideology which make it so attractive in modern politics.

2 Intellectual sources

A major problem in modern political thought concerns the relationship between state and society. Each seemed on its way to becoming a self-contained sphere. The growth of a free-market economy extending beyond individual states gave rise to ideas about society as a 'private', largely self-regulating set of activities. The growth of bureaucratic absolutism gave rise to the idea of an enlightened state detached from society which it ruled according to rational norms.¹

This is a very different problem from that concerning the relationship between a government and its subjects. Such a relationship is set wholly 'within' the sphere of politics. One conception of the nation – that is, of the nation as the body of citizens – remains inside that wholly political framework, even if some implicit reference to cultural identity is involved.² However, the problem of the relationship between state and society concerns the nature of the connection between politics and non-politics. Obviously state and society are not really separate from one another and they are abstractions employed to make sense of complex human affairs, but they seem unavoidable in the modern world. They have to be given definition and content, and the nature of their relationship with one another has to be established. One way of doing this is to subordinate one of the categories – state or society – to the other. The most influential accounts, liberal and Marxist, tended to subordinate state to society. The nature of the state and of political conflict was derived from society through concepts such as the social contract or the class struggle. Others, such as Hobbes, sought to deny that society had any independent structure without political order or, like Hegel, regarded the state as the realm of universal values far beyond the petty and sectional concerns of civil society. But, except in certain utopian visions, the sense of an enduring distinction between the two spheres of state and society, and of the problem of their relationship, could never be set aside.

All these various approaches to the problem accepted the distinction

and the difficulties it raised, and tried to provide general, rational answers. But from a conservative position the attempt at a general and rational understanding of human affairs itself came under attack. This attack was taken up in a polemical form by Burke in his objections to the pretensions of the French revolutionaries. He believed that their claims to be able to outline an ideal social and political order on the basis of universal reason and then to act politically in order to realise it were based on a false view of what human beings could understand and do. Burke insisted that each society is particular and highly complicated. Human understanding was limited, and, therefore, deliberate interference in the complex web of human affairs which had built up imperceptibly over a long period of time should also be limited. 'The nature of man is intricate; the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity; and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or the quality of his affairs.'³

This set a limit on human reason which went beyond the traditional conservative ideas about man's moral failings. But the advance of 'reason' and the great claims made for rational forces such as the modern state, or the market economy, required an even stronger rebuttal. Burke had simply argued that society was opaque. Far more radical was the argument that each society was unique. From this argument the distinctive features of nationalist ideology were to be derived.

I shall call this idea of uniqueness historicism. A brief review of one German writer, Herder (1744-1803), will supply the principal features of this argument. This is not to suggest that Herder was the first or the only one to advance these ideas, or that he was himself a nationalist. In fact the historicist case had been put earlier and more originally by the Italian writer Vico. Other German thinkers of the late eighteenth century developed historicist ideas. Herder's own political values, such as they were, if anything contradicted his historicist position and cannot be described as nationalist. However, he developed historicist ideas in a particularly striking way and linked them firmly to a particular concept of the nation. Furthermore, his ideas had a direct influence upon those who, during the nineteenth century, began to develop elaborate nationalist ideologies.

Herder grew up in an intellectual environment which was putting increasing emphasis on particularity and variety in human affairs and in which history was developing as a critical discipline. Germany itself was a land of contrasts, with many petty states alongside large and powerful ones. But the ideas, and the states, were under pressure, regarded as embodiments of fragmentation and backwardness. Progress and reason suggested an ever greater uniformity and an end to the myriad of small states. Herder reacted strongly against that which he regarded as both condescending and threatening, and sought a firm ground from which to defend variety in human affairs.

A good place for seeing what form this defence took is his view of language. His starting point is very simple: only language has made men human.⁴ The notion of 'pre-linguistic man' is, for Herder, meaningless. Man is defined by his language capacity. What is more, language can be learnt only in a community. It is synonymous with thought. Every language is different from every other. These points, to which most people today would assent, were not considered beyond debate at the time Herder wrote. Some argued that the origins of human language lay in human invention. Herder rejected this view. But from this position one could go on to make some more far-reaching claims.

If language is thought, and can be learnt only in a community, it follows that each community has its own mode of thought. Furthermore, to go on to argue that languages are unique could lead to the conclusion that each language is not simply a particular way of expressing universal values. Rather, it is the manifestation of unique values and ideas. Understanding of a language comes not by translating it into the terms of 'universal reason' or into another language but by learning it. Language is the property of the community, but it stretches beyond any one generation. It may be modified and adapted according to the needs of the community but it cannot be radically transformed. Moreover, language does not only have continuity through time, but, in its vocabulary, grammar, sounds, etc., has a unity. A language is not an arbitrary collection of utterances. Finally, no language is superior or inferior to any other, as there is no general scale against which all can be measured.

These views are of major significance simply because language is so important in human society. But the arguments can be extended much further if all other human activities are understood as sorts of languages. Dress, architecture, customs, ceremonial, song, law: all these and many other activities can be understood in the same way. Ultimately 'community' is understood as the sum total of these modes of expression. Furthermore, this sum total is itself more than a collection of items and must be grasped as a complex unity. The ambition of the student of any society must be to grasp this unity by learning all the ways of the society in question. Each element in a society only makes sense in terms of the whole, which, in turn, is manifested only through these various elements. Understanding a society is rather like learning a language.

The major form such understanding took was that of history. History has been given a greater or lesser role in the understanding of human affairs from other perspectives, but for historicism history is the only way to understand a society. History is not 'evidence' on which theories could be tested or a charter drawn up from which to justify present decisions. It is not a constraint on the present or a rich profusion of the various forms human nature has assumed. Rather it is the only way to apprehend the spirit of a community; it is the principal way of learning the language of

a particular society.

There were various elements within this historical approach. The study of language itself was regarded as particularly important. So also was the study of ordinary people, who were regarded as the core of a society. A concern with folklore which is more than simply antiquarian is largely derived from historicist concerns. Finally, in more modern times an ahistorical approach has been added to these forms of understanding. Certain types of social anthropology insist on the need to understand the whole community, and in its own terms. However, this understanding has little historical dimension. The notion of wholeness tends to be expressed through the idea of every activity having a function within the community.

It is not an accident that the focus of historicist attention in *modern* societies (which leaves aside much of functionalist anthropology) is upon 'culture'. Modernity involved the separation of state and society. Within the sphere of 'society' writers like Adam Smith had identified a particular sphere of activity – the economy – which could also be analysed in general and rational ways, abstracted from the particularities of power or culture. Indeed, rational analysis required that institutions and activities be understood in terms of single purposes such as maintaining order or maximising profits.

Only in the – in consequence attenuated – sphere of 'culture', therefore, could any sense of particularity and community be found. The idea of culture was difficult to define and use – partly because it was in danger of becoming a residual idea, partly because of the tension between generalising claims and particular description. It was a big jump from the collecting of folk songs to grasping the 'spirit of the nation'. However, modernity helped to solve the problem it had created. Modernisation produced the institutions and practices – such as periodicals and newspapers, schools and 'cultural' societies – one of whose tasks it was to adumbrate that sense of culture. The people who ran these institutions – pastors and journalists and teachers – could see themselves as the vanguard of that culture. Their audiences – the extensive and anonymous readerships of newspapers, the membership of choral societies with similar repertoires, the pupils of schools with similar curricula – seemed to embody the idea of a cultural community. In these ways one should see the rise of historicism not simply as a reaction against the generalising and rational features of modernity, but also, with its specialised concern with culture, as one aspect of that modernity.⁵

There are serious problems about the historicist approach. The rejection of universal standards of reason raises problems about the rationality of the terms of analysis that are employed. The need to apprehend the spirit or the 'wholeness' of a society which is central to the historicist position tends to express itself in the form of intuition. It is not relevant to go into these problems or to deal with the major ways in which

historicism work has developed. Only in so far as these matters are reflected in the ideology derived from historicism will they be considered.

3 Translation into ideology

Strictly speaking it should be impossible for historicism to give rise to political value judgements. At most it could insist that it is wrong to apply one's own judgements to another society. But the intrusion of certain extra ideas into the historicist position could change this.

The most important is what I would call the idea of authenticity. One can see this idea being introduced in Herder's own writings and used to back up his own rather liberal political values. Herder denied that government could be understood as the product of a social contract or divine agency. Neither has any historical basis. Both require one to make a jump from a society without government to one with government. Both are used, in fact, not as an historical claim but as a way of evaluating government by some universal standard, as Kant made explicit in his subscription to the idea of a social contract. Herder, however, insisted that the emergence of government should be seen as a real historical development, even if we cannot provide evidence for the process. He argued that society began as a number of families. In this situation no formal system of government was required. But as families joined together to form more extensive societies it became necessary to develop new forms of leadership which took the form of government. The conquest of one society by another also can introduce a separate system of government.

Thus far Herder seems to work from within the historicist position. It is when he evaluates this development that he moves beyond it. Conquest is regarded as the disruption of the natural development of a particular society.

Nature produces families; the most natural state therefore is one people (Volk) with a natural character. . . . Nothing seems more obviously opposed to the purposes of government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing together of different human species and nations under one sceptre.⁶

Herder particularly objected to large, impersonal 'machine' states such as the Prussia of Frederick the Great, which he saw as the artificial product of war and conquest.

A somewhat similar version of this approach, in more elaborate form, can be found in the work of the Czech historian and nationalist, Palacký. He took over from Herder the idea of the Slavs as a peaceful group of peoples subjected to oppression and exploitation by various robber peoples such as the Magyars and Germans. The Czechs, identified as a language group, began with their free, 'natural' societies; clusters of families with an

informal, democratic system of government. Palacky goes on to describe the various conquests. Resistances to these conquests are focused upon as high points in the national history. The Hussite movement is interpreted in this way. The various activities of the Czechs are seen as manifestations of their national spirit. Palacky hoped that his history would help restore a keen sense of national identity which was, in turn, a necessary condition for a reassertion of Czech rights.

This distinction thus drawn between what was natural and unnatural in history is paralleled in the other major areas of historicist concern. Fichte, for example, in the field of language went much further than an aesthetic concern with purifying language. For him language mirrored the national soul, and to purge the language of alien impurities was to defend the national soul against subversion by foreign values. The Germans, he argued, unlike other Teutonic groups, possessed a continuous and 'living' language. But its life required constant protection. Fichte regarded Latin as a dead language, and for him 'dead' took on a powerful, literal meaning. He argued that to take abstract, lifeless Latin terms into German would have a deadening effect. The German language was more concrete. The importation of Latin words would lead Germans to ascribe some of the alien values associated with them to their German 'equivalents'. Gradually the values for which the German words originally stood would be lost. The defence of the living language was simultaneously a defence of the values of the human group using it.⁷ In a similar way the racist currents of thought developed in the nineteenth century identified a pure racial group and then sought to protect its purity from outside influences. At this point, however, the idea of 'natural' was linked to a view of human 'nature' which went beyond history and culture and grounded its justification in an appeal to the 'science' of biology. In this sense modern racism goes beyond historicism. But it deploys similar notions of purity and impurity and, in the way it uses ideas of nature and science, should be seen as much as an aspect of a reaction against modernity.⁸ In both the language and race arguments, defence of the national culture could take the form of a purge of impure elements in order to return to the pure, 'natural' state of affairs.

In the field of social anthropology similar ends could be reached through the employment of the concept of 'equilibrium'. Changes introduced from outside into a 'tribe' (itself largely a product of historicist intellectual values and colonial practice) could be seen as upsetting the state of equilibrium. Everything in that society could be justified as contributing to the equilibrium. Jomo Kenyatta, having studied in London under the functionalist anthropologist Malinowski, produced an account of the Kikuyu which employed these sorts of ideas.⁹ For example, his defence of female circumcision argued that it was not only arrogant of Europeans to condemn the practice as barbaric, but also mistaken. That condemnation

rested on the attempt to apply some universal standard to all social practices. But the practice only had its meaning, its rationality, in the context of a unique community. Within that community this meaning was associated with the way in which the passage from female adolescence to womanhood was marked, and that passage in turn was a major element of the social and sexual structure of Kikuyu society. It was only from within that frame of reference that judgements could be made.

One could multiply examples of this sort many times. The basic assumption is that one can identify a particular human unit – the Czech people, the German language, the Aryan race, the Kikuyu tribe – and establish what is natural within it and use that unit, in its natural state, as the source of value judgements. Deviations from that natural state are, of course, unnatural, and what is unnatural is bad. In this way the historicist concern with understanding society as a unique totality can be transformed into a way of making value judgements about historical change in terms of the way unnatural developments undermine a natural state of affairs.

However, the units identified are necessarily more or less arbitrary ones. Groups and languages can be categorised in many other ways. It is difficult to understand why war and conquest, such frequent occurrences, should be regarded as unnatural. It is difficult to see how the historicist can be reconciled to not being able to understand the many 'unnatural' societies which exist, and how one understands historical change. Finally, of course, the 'return' to the natural situation can be understood only in a very general and vague way, that is, as a return to the spirit of that past. The Czechs Palacky studied did not and could not have produced Palacky himself or the complex and changing society of Bohemia which gave rise to Czech nationalism. The 'traditional' Kikuyu whom Kenyatta described were heavily Christianised and many of them opposed female circumcision, and Kenyatta could never have arrived at his conclusions if he had remained a 'natural' Kikuyu. These arbitrary judgements, justified by the contrast of natural with unnatural, are an essential ingredient of nationalist ideology.

The notion of a return to the spirit of the past was often accompanied by an historical perspective which read the appropriate trends into events. Figures in the past became instruments of the national destiny or obstacles in its path. Thus Heinrich von Treitschke, the German nationalist historian, could defend the actions of the eighteenth-century Prussian state because it was seen as the vehicle of later unification. On the other hand the Habsburg empire, as a multi-national state, and the smaller German states (particularly the allies of Napoleon) were subjected to a much more critical treatment. Associated with this, von Treitschke came to emphasise the role of Protestantism in the German national spirit and to deny the centrality of the Catholic religion in German society. Again, this is arbitrary and inconsistent with a proper historicist approach. So too is the

identification of figures from the 'national' past in terms of current political disputes. In the disputes between supporters and opponents of the internal settlement in Zimbabwe there were rival claims to be the true heirs of the participants in the disturbances of 1896-97 in Southern Rhodesia. The movement led by Sithole used populist language; that led by Mugabe used class language; but in both cases the ideological use of history was the same.¹⁰

The final, and most important, ideological ingredient is the way in which the historicist concept of community is linked to political demands. The demand for a nation-state with many of the features of other nation-states seems hard to reconcile with the justification that a unique nation needs its own special form of independence. Some consistent cultural nationalists have indeed resisted the demand for national self-determination on the grounds that it is an imitation of the West,¹¹ but this is exceptional. Usually what happens is that nationalist ideology operates with three notions which are mutually incompatible but, if not properly examined, can seem powerfully persuasive.

First, there is the notion of the unique national community, now in a degenerate condition but capable of being restored to its natural, authentic state. Second, there is the idea of the nation as a society which should have its own state. But in this understanding the basic distinction between state and society is accepted in a way that contradicts the historicist view of community as a whole. Finally the nation is thought of as the body of citizens - that is, a wholly political conception - and self-determination is justified in terms of universal political principles. Nationalist ideology never makes a rational connection between the cultural and the political concept of the nation because no such connection is possible. Instead, by a sleight of hand dependent upon using the same term, 'nation', in different ways, it appears to demonstrate the proposition that each nation should have its nation-state. Nationalist ideology can superficially appear to have provided an answer to the problem of the relationship between state and society, both accepting the modern distinction but also claiming to reject or transcend that division.

There are numerous variations upon the basic themes I have outlined. The nation can be defined in a great variety of ways, and this can give rise to conflicting claims about who belongs to which nationality. The values of the nation, its true 'spirit', are matters of even greater dispute in which the various claims made have in common only the fact that they can be subjected to no rational tests. The manner in which the contrast between natural and unnatural is drawn also varies widely. These variations will depend on a combination of intellectual tradition, inherent plausibility and political need. Thus the initial impulse behind the categorising of many African societies as tribes can be located in European intellectual traditions. They were adapted to social reality in various ways but retained an

inherent plausibility because of the small-scale nature of many African societies. They could be sustained both because their advocates had the power virtually to project their own ideas about social identity on to colonial subjects and because it suited elements in indigenous society to manipulate these categories to their own advantage. Such categories, enshrined in various forms of 'indirect rule', hardened and shaped much political action. In their turn they have shaped territorial nationalist movements - both by forming part of their political material and by forcing nationalists to relate cultural diversity to the claim for territorial rather than 'tribal' independence. The ideology is not, therefore, a gloss upon some pre-existent social reality but a constituent of that reality.¹²

Nationalist ideology is neither an expression of national identity (at least, there is no rational way of showing that to be the case) nor the arbitrary invention of nationalists for political purposes. It arises out of the need to make sense of complex social and political arrangements. But that need is itself shaped both by intellectual traditions and the sorts of responses which any intellectual scheme evokes when it is activated in some way or another. At the highest intellectual level anthropologists or scholars of the Orient or political thinkers carefully work through what they regard as the relevant evidence in order to test their ideas. At a practical level administrators, traders, missionaries and others work with particular assumptions about social arrangements and values in order to achieve their own objectives. In so far as they do achieve them they will tend to take these assumptions as true.

The same point can be made about nationalists. They also begin with a fund of intellectual assumptions about what society is and how it is organised. They relate these assumptions to their own political projects. In fact they argue that those projects are determined by their assumptions; that they are the spokesmen for the nation. However, their precise political projects and the manner in which these are carried through are the product of certain political situations rather than the expression of national needs. Nevertheless, the proclamation of such needs as the basis of their politics is an essential ingredient of that politics. Precisely because their assumptions about national identity and need are not purely arbitrary they have a more or less plausible connection with existing social arrangements and needs, with actual beliefs and with often widespread political grievances. Of course the ideology is more than a reflection of those things; rather it incorporates them into a broader vision which transforms their significance. The ideology also provides nationalists with a cause in which not only they themselves but many others genuinely believe, often including opponents who have been brought up with similar intellectual assumptions and values. In so far as nationalist objectives appear relevant to the interests of various political elites and social classes, so far will nationalist ideology be enhanced by the way in which members of these groups can

agree that they are part of the nation. In this way nationalist ideology actually brings into being an imitation of its own ideas. In so far as nationalism is successful it appears to be true. That, of course, is its ultimate form of plausibility.

However, I have only considered the intellectual origins of nationalist ideology and its translation into ideological form at a fairly sophisticated level. To work effectively as a popular political ideology it needs simplification, concreteness and repetition. It is because nationalist ideology is particularly adaptive to these processes that it can have great popular appeal. Simplification involves above all the construction of stereotypes. There are stereotypes of the nation in terms of history or racial characteristics or cultural practices as well as stereotypes of enemies. Repetition through speeches, newspaper articles, rallies, songs, etc., is an essential part of the work of a nationalist party. The turning of these simplified and repeated themes into concrete form is achieved primarily through symbolism and ceremonial. It is upon this aspect of the popularisation of nationalist ideology that I will concentrate because it is here that nationalist ideology has characteristics which distinguish it from other popular political ideologies.

4 Symbols and ceremonies

Nationalist movements, like all mass movements, make use of symbols and ceremonies. These give nationalist ideas a definite shape and force, both by projecting certain images and by enabling people to come together in ways which seem directly to express the solidarity of the nation. Nationalist symbolism is able to do this in particularly effective ways because it has a quality of self-reference which is largely missing from socialist or religious ideology. Nationalists celebrate themselves rather than some transcendent reality, whether this be located in another world or in a future society, although the celebration also involves a concern with transformation of present reality. It is upon this self-reference quality that I will concentrate.

One can see this easily in comparing the way in which leaders are treated in nationalist and socialist movements. Nationalist leaders have been used as a symbol of the movement during the phase of political opposition, whereas the 'cult of personality' in communist movements tends to occur only when the movement is entrenched in power. The cult serves very different purposes in these two situations. Socialism can find the image of what it seeks in rational models of the classless society. Nationalism finds such rational projections of its ideal more difficult to achieve. The focus upon the leader can provide a better way of making this projection, as well as giving it a very concrete form and strengthening the existing political movement. For example, Gandhi, with his asceticism,

non-violence and concern with tradition, embodied the national ideal for which he strove. The leader as symbol is particularly important in the case of badly divided nationalist movements which would find it difficult to produce a more substantial expression of their unity.¹³

Self-reference symbols such as the blond, blue-eyed men and women of Nazi posters are prominent in nationalist propaganda. Signs of the national ideal such as the spinning wheel symbolising a return to the 'authentic' India helped establish Gandhi's vision of independent India. At a more abstract level great attention is paid to the colours of flags or motifs such as the swastika.

One could spend a long time analysing nationalist symbols, propaganda, and ceremonials, and there is a good deal of literature on the subject. Fascist ceremonial in particular presents a rich variety of ways of promoting solidarity around the nationalist cause. I will take rather different examples of nationalist ceremonies, both because they are less well known and also because they can be used to convey a great deal about the appeal of nationalism generally. The examples come from Afrikaner nationalism. They are the Gelofedag (Day of the Covenant) and the Ossa-warrek. Some background information is needed before these ceremonials can be considered.

On 16 December 1838 a battle was fought between some white trekkers and Zulus at Blood River. Before the battle the whites vowed that if God granted them victory they would celebrate that day every year. The battle was won. However, the vow of one particular group of whites in a disorganised migration had little impact in following decades. It was only with the emergence of republican nationalism during resistance to the British annexation of the Transvaal in 1880 that the vow was recalled. In the course of the resistance it was refined into a ceremonial with a special Covenant Oath which declared:

Brothers and fellow countrymen, we stand here before the Holy God of Heaven and Earth to make a vow that, if He will be with us and protect us and give the foe into our hands, we shall ever celebrate the day and date as a Day of Thanksgiving like the Sabbath in His honour. We shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for a remembrance even for our posterity. For the honour of God shall herein be glorified, and to Him shall be given the fame and honour of the victory.¹⁴

When the Union of South Africa was established in 1910 and the major party division went through the Afrikaner community after 1918 the celebrations seemed to lose their point and declined. By some people they were taken to symbolise the rightness of white supremacy. This, with the implication of solidarity between English and Afrikaans-speakers, rather went against the original anti-British message of 1880. It was only in the 1930s when, for a variety of reasons, there was a renewed emphasis on

the identity of the Afrikaans-speaking community that the Blood River celebrations became prominent again. They helped transcend party political divisions between Afrikaans-speakers.

This sense of identity was dramatically reinforced when the Ossawatrek was instituted. The idea began with Heinrich Klopper, a founding member of the secret nationalist association, the Broederbond and leader of a mass Afrikaner cultural organisation among railway workers. The purpose of the Ossawatrek was to commemorate the centenary of the battle of Blood River in a particularly striking way. This would be fulfilled by means of a dramatic re-enactment of the Great Trek. The idea caught on, and in 1938 a number of ox wagons were taken along carefully selected routes. At each town and village people gathered to celebrate. Special ceremonies were held at places of historic importance such as the grave of Cilliers, who had composed the Covenant Oath. The ceremonies culminated in celebrations at the site of the battle and of the newly established Voortrekker museum in Pretoria on 16 December.

Two contrasting points can be made about the impact of these events. The first is that they undeniably awoke a sense of identity in many Afrikaners, even if it was only short-lived. The second is that it did not, in the short term, assist the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. In the election of 1938 the specifically nationalist party gained twenty-seven seats, compared to 111 for the United Party, which embraced both English and Afrikaans-speakers. This was, admittedly, before the peak of the Ossawatrek. But even afterwards, despite nationalist protests against participation in the second world war (which led to breakaways from the United Party), the reorganised nationalist party could gain only forty-three seats. A basic sense of Afrikaner identity was a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition for the rise to significance of Afrikaner nationalism.¹⁵

At this point, however, I wish simply to concentrate on the cultural and ideological aspects of the matter and not the ways they could be turned to political account. These ceremonies contain, in a very powerful form, a number of features which nationalist symbolism generally exhibits.

There is the re-enactment of a moment in national history. History provides identity within the historicist frame of reference; symbolic history provides an intense and summary view of that history. The most favoured events are times of heroic resistance to aliens. In this case it is the resistance to both the British (intruding into the Cape) and the blacks; in Palacky's, to the Hussite movement against the 'German' state; at the premiere of an opera by Verdi in 1849 in the embattled Roman Republic, it was the 'Italian' resistance to Frederick Barbarossa in the twelfth century. In Germany in 1944 Goebbels invested much effort into producing a film of the resistance of the fortress of Kolberg led by Gneisenau to Napoleon's troops in 1806. That Dutch-speaking migrants, Bohemian heretics, the citizens of the city-states of northern Italy, and Prussian soldiers had no political

consciousness of themselves as Afrikaners, Czechs, Germans or Italians does not matter. It is the contemporary effectiveness that is important.

This effectiveness – if the propaganda and ceremony was indeed effective – displays a number of characteristics. First, one must stress the intellectual and organisational effort involved. The Ossawatrek, for example, was well organised. Its imagery was vivid and a solemn sense of occasion was retained throughout. But above all – and this gives nationalist imagery a special power – people were being asked to celebrate *themselves*. Dr Malan, leader of the Afrikaner nationalist party in 1938, caught this meaning in his speech of 16 December:

The Trekkers heard the voice of South Africa. They received their task from God's hand. They gave their answer. They made their sacrifices. There is still a white race. There is a new People. There is a unique language. There is an imperishable drive to freedom. There is an irrecusable ethnic destiny Their task is complete The struggle with weapons has passed Your Blood River is not here. Your Blood River lies in the city.

I scarcely need tell you that Afrikanerdom is on the trek again It is not a trek away from the centres of civilisation, as it was one hundred years ago, but a trek back – back from country to city. In that new Blood River, black and white meet together in much closer contact and a much more binding struggle than when one hundred years ago the circle of white-tented wagons protected the laager, and muzzle-loader clashed with assegai. Today black and white jostle together in the same labour market.¹⁶

The message is clear. The heroes of the past are joined by ties of blood and language to the men of the present. That link is a sort of guarantee that the men of the present can rise to their challenges as their ancestors did. The ceremonial itself manifests this possibility in miniature and holds out the promise that much more can be achieved. This achievement is written in the destiny of the nation.

Allied to specific concerns – for example, the problem of the Afrikaans-speaking immigrants into the cities after 1918 – the sentiment can have a powerful effect. It was, in fact, propagated by elites which felt excluded from positions of power and influence in a liberal state, where English culture was particularly objectionable because it was not buttressed by any formal system of discrimination, and where English figures dominated the economy.

The combination of such elite resentment and potential communal conflict is one we have encountered frequently. But to succeed it was necessary not simply to make appeals to self-interest. It was necessary to bind together a variety of elites and to mobilise poor Afrikaner support in the cities. The self-reference symbolism of the Covenant Oath and the Ossawatrek played a major role in this.

The central message, conveyed through anthems, rallies, speeches,

elaborate ceremonials, is of an embattled people. The aim is to return to the heights of the past, though in a transformed fashion. If the political circumstances are appropriate and the objectives of the movement can be connected to specific interests, this appeal can become a force in its own right without which success is impossible.

Having said that, it is important to bear in mind the limitations of ideology and imagery. People will tend to respond only if they are not merely accessible but if the message has relevance, and that will depend on their prior views of their situation. The Kolberg film, for example, was broadcast at a time when many Germans knew that the war was going to be lost, just as Prussia had lost the war of 1806-07. Given this prior view, the film could actually deepen the sense of pessimism instead of stimulating a sense of defiance. The current sense amongst most Afrikaners that settlement with the black majority cannot be avoided has diminished the relevance of apartheid ideology, which had been an integral part of Afrikaner nationalist ideology, and has even led to the playing-down of white supremacy ideas. People are not, for the most part, deliberately taking up or dropping certain ideological themes, rather their changing situation leads them to highlight or neglect particular themes amongst many.

Furthermore, the ideology/imagery contains many different messages, and it is difficult to know which evokes a chord. Moodie, for example, in evaluating the significance of nationalist ceremonial among Afrikaners, insists on the need to distinguish between '... a sophisticated theological interpretation of God's acts in Afrikaner history with an explicitly republican eschatology; ... [and] ... a far more inchoate sense of generalised feeling of 'Afrikanerness' with emphasis on common language'.¹⁷

The first sort of appreciation plays an important part in the actions of small elites; the second in the sentiments of much of the following. In the same way the supporters of German National Socialism had a range of perceptions, from systematic ideology to a vague sense of the need for strong leadership and an end to disunity within the nation.¹⁸ These vague ideas can, in turn, be linked to what are strictly non-nationalist, even anti-nationalist, ideas such as devotion to a particular church. Without underestimating the role of nationalist ideology, one can see that it can only supply the most general orientations and that the creation of specific objectives, forms of action and bases of support must be understood in terms other than the appeal of the proclaimed values of the nationalist movement.

One can, though, argue that the self-reference quality of nationalist propaganda and the theme of the restoration of a glorious past in a transformed future has a special power which it is difficult for other ideological movements to match.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that the central motif of restoration of a past state in which the nation was most fully itself has an enormous appeal and in part accounts for the impact of nationalist ideology and symbolism. But one needs to go somewhat further than this, and to return to the problem of the relationship of state and society. The nationalist 'solution' to the problem is, on the surface, quite simple. Societies (= nations) are unique. Government by alien societies can only do violence to the unique national spirit. Therefore each nation must have its own government. That government is the nation-state. This is not merely an abstract ideal. History can be understood only in terms of the achievements and frustrations of the nation. The demand for statehood is rooted in the national spirit, even if inarticulate and repressed, and the nationalist simply speaks for that spirit.

However, the identity of the nation is provided in arbitrary ways. The leap from culture to politics is made by portraying the nation at one moment as a cultural community and at another as a political community whilst insisting that in an ideal state the national community will not be 'split' into cultural, economic and political spheres. The nationalist can exploit this perpetual ambiguity. National independence can be portrayed as the freedom of the citizens who make up the (political) nation or as the freedom of the collectivity which make up the (cultural) nation. Nationalist ideology is a pseudo-solution to the problem of the relationship between state and society, but its plausibility derives from its roots in genuine intellectual responses to that problem.

The appeal of this pseudo-solution is that it enables the nationalist to construct from a wide variety of practices and sentiments prevailing among the population of a particular territory the idea of a national community, and to transform this into a political claim. By seeming to abolish the distinctions between culture and politics, society and state, private and public, the nationalist has access to a whole range of sentiments, idioms and practices which hitherto had been regarded as irrelevant to politics but are now turned into the values underlying political action. It would be wrong to see nationalism as the expression of pre-existing national values and practices in political form. That view is tantamount to accepting the self-assessment of nationalists. Nationalist ideology works on existing values and practices in a new way, and it operates on a great variety of levels. Furthermore, it selects from those values and practices in ways designed to enhance their political significance. The general point is that this emphasis on cultural distinctiveness and identity has particular advantages in a situation where it is possible to mobilise mass support or co-ordinate a wide variety of elites in a bid for territorial independence. It is also of value in an international situation where the claim to state power is regarded as legitimate only if it is couched in the form of national

self-determination. Cultural appeals add to that legitimacy and also help provide the basis of support for a nationalist movement which gives its particular claim to state power credibility. The claim to uniqueness is ultimately used to justify the claim to have a state just like any other.

Nationalist ideology has its roots in intellectual responses to the modern problem of the relationship between state and society. This response, above all in the form of historicism, was a serious attempt to deal with the problem and to rebut what it saw as the falsehoods of analysis based on allegedly universal standards of reason. It was turned into ideology by means of notions such as authenticity and teleology. It was also combined in a powerful but illogical way with purely political values, especially those associated with democracy. The net result was to transform certain important ways of understanding human affairs into a type of political ideology which is beyond critical examination. At the same time the historicist concern with history and popular culture was channelled into various symbolic and ceremonial forms. These had a particularly powerful appeal because of their quality of self-reference and the way they took existing sentiments and actions and transmuted them into political ideology. This appeal in turn was grounded upon the claim to link cultural distinctiveness with the demand for political self-determination. Such claims had to be related to specific interests and only worked in particular sorts of political situations. Furthermore, no particular element within this ideology can be automatically regarded as decisive among supporters. But, with these qualifications, ideology can still be regarded as a powerful force which was essential in the work of co-ordination, mobilisation and adding legitimacy to what was carried out by a nationalist movement.

Notes

- 1 I will return to this central feature of modernity as a key to understanding nationalism as a political movement as well as an ideology in the Conclusion.
- 2 As in the English and French cases considered in chapter 3.
- 3 Edmund Burke, *Reflections upon the French Revolution*, edited by Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 152-5.
- 4 For Herder's views on language see J. C. Herder on *Social and Political Culture*, translated, edited and with an introduction by F. M. Barnard (London, 1969), especially 'Introduction', pp. 17-32, and 'Essay on the origin of language', pp. 117-77.
- 5 For the contribution of newspapers and their readerships to the construction of the idea of a national community see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983). For the way in which modernity helps in the construction of a 'standard national' culture, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983).

Sources and forms of nationalist ideology

- 6 J. C. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Bernard Suphan (Berlin, 1887), vol. 13, p. 384.
- 7 See especially the fourth address in Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, translated by R. T. Jones & G. H. Turnbull (Chicago & London, 1922).
- 8 See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford, 1991).
- 9 Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938).
- 10 Terence Ranger, 'Rhodesia - the propaganda war', *New Statesman*, vol. 97, no. 2518, 22 June 1979, p. 922. Since becoming Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Mr Mugabe has played down his earlier emphasis upon class division.
- 11 The Zionist ahad Ha'aman, for example, raised this sort of objection to the aim of achieving an independent state of Israel and stressed instead the need to develop an authentic cultural national identity.
- 12 A similar argument for the way in which the concept of the 'Oriental' has shaped relations between the West and societies of the Middle and Far East has been advanced with great force and subtlety by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (London, 1980).
- 13 See below, chapter 15, in the cases of Hitler and Mussolini.
- 14 Quoted in T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (London, 1975), p. 179.
- 15 On the election results and their significance see Neville Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics and South Africa, 1934-1948* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1974).
- 16 Quoted in Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 18 See below, pp. 310-7.

Concluding remarks to Part I

Nationalism, like all significant modern political movements, must appeal to a variety of social and economic interests. One can identify typical ways in which major social classes and other interests can be brought into support of nationalist movements. However, there is no necessary relationship between nationalism and any particular social or economic interest. Just about every major social interest has supported one or another nationalist movement. The most successful nationalist movements build upon a coalition of such interests. Many of these interests can be found supporting other kinds of politics, often opposed to nationalism. Therefore, although one must always pay attention to the social character of nationalism, to understand nationalism generally one has to look elsewhere than to its sociology.

Nationalist ideology is based on important responses to modernity and, when deployed in symbolic and ceremonial forms, can have a very real power of attraction. In certain ways nationalism is more appealing in the modern age of mass politics than most of its ideological rivals. Nevertheless, nationalist ideology can only work when it appears to be appropriate to the political situation and relevant, in terms of their given situation and concerns, to those who support such ideas. Furthermore, such ideas have to be simplified and made concrete, and then repeatedly projected to their target audience. That requires political commitment and organisation.

This suggests that the key to a general understanding of nationalism is to be found in the sphere of political action and organisation. That is not to say that politics is more important than social interests and ideology in any or indeed all particular cases. It is only to argue that the search for the common features underlying all nationalist movements should focus upon the political context. In Parts II and III of this book, through a series of cases studies, that is where the focus will be directed.

Part II

Varieties of nationalism

(i) In a world without nation-states