Nationalisms: classified and explained.

by John A. Hall

It is not possible to give a single definition to nationalism or what constitutes a nationalistic movement. The foundation of nationalism has been the creation of new and independent states. Nationalistic movements have existed, however, within already established nations that have had cause to re-establish a social, political or economic identity based on challenges facing those nations. The development of new countries in Latin America in the 19th century, Pres Woodrow Wilson’s foreign policy in the early 20th century and decolonization movements in the mid-20th century have provided significant developments in modern nationalism.

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UNDERSTANDING NATIONALISM IS SO OBVIOUSLY an urgent necessity that there is much to be said for the provision of a clearly delineated overview of the state of play among theorists of the subject. What exactly do we know about a force whose impact on this century has been--against the expectations of mainstream social theory--greater than any other?

My overview will be active rather than passive. The use of the plural in the title gives away one central claim: no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible. As the historical record is diverse, so too must be our concepts. This is not, it should be stressed, to suggest a move from universalism to complete particularism, from a general theory to national histories. To the contrary, middle ground can be cultivated by delineating various ideal types of nationalism, the characteristic logic and social underpinning of each of which are highlighted by a name, an exemplar, and, somewhat loosely, a characteristic theorist.(1) But I move beyond classification to explanation: a second claim is that the patterning underlying different types of nationalism is political rather than social.

The analysis that is required is similar to that which now characterizes the study of economic development. It has come to be widely recognized that there are different routes by means of which economic development can be achieved.(2) The initial path may not have been captured by Max Weber, but there is everything to be said for his insistence that it was original--in the sense that it was unconscious and unplanned. In contrast, all other forms of economic development have been imitative, seeking to copy something whose dimensions were broadly known. Such secondary imitation may, as in East Asia, benefit from entirely different qualities than those needed for invention: conformity may now matter more, for example, than rampant individualism.(3) Furthermore, we now also appreciate that late development is far from a unitary affair. The heavy industrialization of late-nineteenth century imitators--turned via Lenin’s admiration for the German war economy into the general model of state socialism--seems to be markedly ineffective once the age of national mercantilism is replaced by an interdependent world economy, genuinely based on an international division of labor. We shall see that nationalism faces historical stages, albeit not to quite the same extent as does economic development. But it is important to stress a further analogy. The character of the stages of economic development is affected by history in an entirely different sense--that is, in terms of idiosyncrasy or accident. More particularly, the modern world political economy has been and continues to be deeply affected by the political style of the United States.(4) Similarly, some types of nationalism have been affected by particular historical combinations of analytic factors, whose conjunction may not recur.

NATIONALISM DEFINED, ITS MODERNITY EMPHASIZED

Just as differences in routes need not entail the absence of a singular sense of economic development, so too the variety of nationalisms does not rule out a unitary definition. Nationalism is considered here very conventionally.(5) It is the belief in the primacy of a particular nation, real or constructed; the logic of this position tends to move nationalism from cultural to political forms, and to entail popular mobilization. This is meant to be an omnibus definition, but it is important to note two further presuppositions which distinctively prejudge key issues.

First, the definition is often linked to the view that there have been three great ages of nationalism: the foundation of new states in Latin America in the early nineteenth century; the enlargement engineered by Woodrow Wilson at Versailles; and the much greater and more genuinely creative expansion of the international order as the result of decolonization.(6) There is indeed much to be said for the view that nationalism flourishes as the result of the collapse of empires, a view which makes us realize that the collapse of the Russian empire means that we are faced now with a fourth great moment in the history of nationalism. Nonetheless, the omnibus definition should not be linked to the idea that nationalism is in any absolute sense linked to separatism. Very much to the contrary, the spirit of nationalism can dominate established states. For
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example, if the contemporary United States becomes mobilized, either as the result of incautious elite manipulation or of sentiment genuinely coming from below, around the conviction that Japan is an economic enemy, then this deserves to be considered as an example of nationalism.

Second, there seems to be everything to be said, despite the works of John Armstrong and Anthony Smith, for the view that nationalism is modern.(7) There have always, of course, been distinctive cultures, and particular upper classes have had some sense of shared ethnic solidarity. But the power of the nationalist idea—that people should share a culture and be ruled only by someone co-cultural with themselves—seems historically novel. The crude logistics of most societies in history—bereft of effective mass communication and cheap transport—meant that most human beings were stuck in highly particularized segments, quite unable to share a sense of destiny with people they had no chance of meeting.(8) In this connection, it is worth noting that the actual sharing of destiny came much later than is often realized, even to the core societies of northwest Europe. The much cited findings of Eugen Weber's Peasants into Frenchmen have recently received stunning support from Susan Cotts Watkins’ demonstration that fertility patterns in Western Europe became national only in the early twentieth century.(9)

The Logic of Industry

The theorist who has realized the modernity of nationalism most fully is Ernest Gellner.(10) His contribution to the study of nationalism has been fundamental, and it is accordingly sensible—not least since my argument departs from his—to consider his basic interpretation of nationalism immediately, even though this goes against the chronology that otherwise characterizes the argument. Nationalism is seen by Gellner in terms of the logic of industry. At the basis of this theory is the insistence that an industrial society depends upon a common culture and language, and certainly upon sharing an extended cultural code. The destruction of local cultures in Algeria meant an attack on people they had no chance of meeting.(8) In this connection, it is worth noting that the actual sharing of destiny came much later than is often realized, even to the core societies of northwest Europe. The much cited findings of Eugen Weber’s Peasants into Frenchmen have recently received stunning support from Susan Cotts Watkins’ demonstration that fertility patterns in Western Europe became national only in the early twentieth century.(9)

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CLASSICAL PATTERNS

The Logic of the Asocial Society

One reason why Gellner’s theory is not a truly universal one is that it fails to explain the very first emergence of nationalism in eighteenth century Britain and France. The nature of the failure is obvious: nationalist sentiments are clearly in place before the emergence of industry. This type of nationalism can be explained in terms of the logic of the asocial society, an expression of Immanuel Kant’s, referring to the multipolarity, unique in civilizational terms to northwest Europe, which led to endless competition between states.(18) The general character of this system has been theorized most powerfully by the German historian Otto Hintze and the sociologist Charles Tilly.(19) Their finding is that wars make states quite as much as states make war. Continual competition between states leads to an arms race requiring ever greater funding. Kings are thereby forced not just to sit on top of the various cultural segments within their territories, but rather to interact with them more closely in order to extract greater funds. One way in which monies were extracted was through the provision of the services of justice. Another was through the increasing territorialization of social life: one example of this was a burgeoning ability to provide order, that is, to successfully claim a monopoly of violence; another was an incipient economic nationalism which increased the customs and excise revenues on which monarchs relied. Over time, those states able to consolidate their territories into a single unit subject to bureaucratic rules fared best in warfare. Such national states often gained strength through cooperating with civil societies that they could not completely control—the absence of great despotic power did a great deal to increase their infrastructural reach.(20)

A characteristically brilliant essay by Michael Mann, the theorist of this type of nationalism, begins by noting that the eighteenth century bred marked increases in the communicative capacities of civil society.(21) These were pioneered from below in England by the creation of a unique preindustrial commercial revolution and from above on the continent by both the military and economic demands of enlightened absolutism. The entry of the people onto the political stage accordingly became possible, rather against the expectations of such leading theorists as Adam Smith and David Hume. One such entry led to the creation of the United States, whose political culture remained overwhelmingly universalistic despite the change from "people" to "nation" in the key founding documents of 1776 and 1789. The French Revolution was also universalistic given that one could choose to become French, but the body to which people were to belong was on this occasion clearly that of a particular nation-state—with some Jacobins proving unwilling to trust those who had not learned French.(22)

This concentration on the nation is best explained by the fact that civil society increased its capacities at the very time in which Europe was torn apart by the War of the Atlantic, that is, the visceral struggle between Britain and France during the long eighteenth century. States were forced to extract historically unprecedented amounts from their societies.(23) One consequence of this was state reform, by the ending of "old corruption" in Britain and by revolution in France. Another consequence was, however, the emergence of nationalism. It is of the crux of the matter that both processes were entwined, that the struggle for representation raised the question of identity.

A very full portrait of the processes, coming both from below and from above, involved for Britain has now been provided by Linda Colley. This was a complex affair. A British nationalism certainly existed first, founded on the notion of a Protestant people under attack from Europe’s Catholic monarchies.(24) But there was also an English nationalism, often directed against the Scots—not least as they did so well out of their connection with Britain.(25) In many ways, John Wilkes is the best exemplar of such nationalism.(26) He was an apologist for the blunt ways of John Bull, for roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, and for the liberties established in 1688. It was entirely characteristic that a typical procession of Wilkite supporters in 1768 assembled at a tavern named after William of Orange before setting out to vote for their hero under banners of the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights; equally many Wilkite songs were sung to the tunes of "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the King."(27) All this was, of course, contrasted to the mannered artificialities of the French aristocracy and, somewhat later, to the geopolitical greed of Napoleon. It is scarcely surprising that the French replied in kind by inventing the image of Perfidious Albion.

Revolution from Above

While there can be no doubt about the impact of the ideals of social mobility represented by Napoleon, we can best approach the next type of nationalism, revolution from above, by noting recent scholarship on the logistics of the French armies.(28) It is not the case, as was once believed, that the French armies spread nationalism by design. To the contrary, the fiscal crisis of the French state meant that its armies plundered huge amounts from territories it was forced to conquer—and continued to do so for years as such territories were made to pay for occupying French troops. French rule was imperial, and it accordingly led to nationalist reactions.
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The concept of a revolution from above is, of course, taken from Barrington Moore’s Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy.(29) It is of use here in highlighting a type of nationalism pioneered by states with previous histories, choosing to change their social structures in order to survive. If this is to say that the logic of state competition is at work here as it was with the previous type, the social base of this type of nationalism is distinctively different. This third type of nationalism has been recognized best by John Breuilly in his treatment of the Meiji reformers reacting to the incursion of Commander Perry and of their Prussian predecessors responding to the possibility that their state might actually disappear after its defeat at Jena and Auerstadt.(30)

I take as the exemplar of such nationalism Carl von Clausewitz, a member of the circle which included Scharnhorst and Gneisenau but better known to us because of his stature as the theorist of war.(31) That theory was necessitated by the appearance in 1793 of a force:

that beggared all imagination. Suddenly war again became the business of the people—a people of thirty millions, all of whom considered themselves to be citizens . . . . The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance.

The resources and efforts now available for use surpassed all conventional limits; nothing now impeded the vigor with which war could be waged . . . .(32)

The diagnosis that the reformers made after their own defeat stressed the need to completely change society if Prussia was to survive. The professional armies of Frederick the Great would never be able to compete against citizens in arms. It was accordingly necessary to abolish feudalism, and to contemplate arming the people so that something similar to the Spanish guerrilla resistance would become possible. Frederick William III disliked this latter proposal, but the curtailment possibly placed on Clausewitz’s career was occasioned by a different matter. In 1812, Prussia briefly made peace with Napoleon. Clausewitz, appalled that a peace had been made against the national enemy, resigned his commission and fought in the Russian army against the French. All of this perhaps reflects the fact that Clausewitz was something of an outsider. It may well be important that Clausewitz’s family was not a member of the grand aristocracy: he himself depended upon state service quite as much as did the lesser samurai of the Meiji Restoration.(33) But if on this occasion the old regime—scared of the popular mobilization that the call to the nation entailed—won, in the long run Germany was created as the result of revolution from above.

Desire and Fear Blessed by Opportunity

The creation of completely new states in Latin America resulted from a very different type of nationalism—a curious compound of desire and fear blessed by opportunity—that is exemplified in Simon Bolivar himself and particularly well understood by John Lynch.(34) The desire for independence had two sources. On the one hand, the ideas of the Enlightenment, gained more from the United States (whose importance as a model cannot be overly stressed) than from Spain, gave an impetus to ideas of freedom, reason, and order. Much more important, on the other hand, was extreme disenchantment with a metropolis, at once corrupt and underdeveloped. One element here was economic. Spain wished its colonies to produce bullion and to absorb its own manufacturing products, and to that end increasingly attacked local economic development, not least since its involvement in European war increased its own fiscal needs. For a long period, trade was monopolized by a Spanish elite who consistently overcharged for imports while underpaying for exports. Another element was social. Attempts to increase control by sending out officials from Europe were particularly humiliating to local Creoles whose standards of education and attainment were habitually far greater: “the lowest, least educated and uncultivated European,” Alexander von Humboldt observed, “believes himself superior to the white born in the New World.”(35) Added to these sentiments was fear. The Creole planters were a small minority sitting atop large Indian and slave populations upon whose continued quiescence their position depended. The revolt of Tupac Amuru showed them the dangers of an assault on their privileges in their own lands, but it was the use made by Toussaint l’Ouverture of the slogans of the French Revolution that really terrified them. Their adherence to Enlightenment ideals did not go so far as to countenance the loss of their land, let alone self-destruction. Hence, their own nationalist revolutions in the early years of the nineteenth century—suddenly made possible by Nelson’s breaking of the link with the Peninsula and by Napoleon’s invasion—were socially exceptionally conservative. While
sheer logistics entailed the creation of separate states, the mobilization of the people, generally characteristic of nationalist politics, was strenuously avoided. This segmentation of social life has continued to characterize Latin America, not least since the relative absence of geopolitical conflict has not made it necessary for states to increase their infrastructural powers.

Risorgimento Nationalism

In contrast, what is striking about risorgimento nationalism—at least, at first sight—is that it comes from below. This type of nationalism is extremely well-known, not least because of Miroslav Hroch’s demonstration in his Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe of the three-stage development from the collectors of folklore, to the ideologists of nationalism, to the final moment at which cultural revival becomes political demand. Two particular forces fueled movement from below. First, there was a notable increase in the number of educated people in nineteenth-century Europe, an increase which often began before states sought to create normative integration within their territories. Second, economic development moved many from the countryside to the city: the destruction of the traditional segmentary cultures of such people made them available for nationalist propaganda.

An important point to be made about this type of nationalism is that it deserves to be classified as liberal, that is, it stressed civic loyalty within a democratic regime rather than ethnicity. Both John Stuart Mill and Mazzini were famously among its numbers, and the conjunction of their names makes it clear that the hope of the age was that the release of oppressed peoples would usher in a reign of peace. There is a blissful innocence about their particular dreams—which came to be exploded once nonhistoric nations, most notably the Irish, insisted on their right to a state.

Hroch’s marvelous phenomenology of nationalism does not say very much as to why there was a transition from cultural to political nationalism. But it is not hard to see what is happening, especially if we consider the career of Frantisek Palacky, the Czech historian who followed Herder in seeing the Czechs as a peaceful people oppressed by both Magyars and Germans. Palacky began working for the Bohemian Museum in the 1830s, and his great history began in German. Increasing anti-German feeling, consequent on the state’s attempt to make German the language of officialdom, led him in the 1840s to start writing in Czech. But it was the events of 1848 which pushed him into politics. The Czechs refused to join the National Assembly in Frankfurt; they felt threatened by plans concocted there that might have led to their cultural demise. They participated instead in a countermeeting in Prague, which firmly stressed that the best hopes for the Slavs, given their geopolitical position between Russia and Germany, remained with the Habsburgs.

Reflection on this episode leads to two analytical points. First, the move from cultural to political nationalism was occasioned by blocked social mobility. This should not, as wise words of Ernest Gellner emphasize, be seen in purely economic terms—as if people became nationalists in order to acquire better jobs, true though that sometimes has been. What matters is the prospect of humiliation and the fear that one’s children’s lives will suffer. In the Habsburg lands, the switch to political nationalism did not, in a sense, come from below. Rather, it was the desire of a modernizing state to conduct official business in a single language that suddenly placed some in the position of facing blocked or perhaps downward mobility. State intervention occasioned popular response.

The second analytical point is much more general, but it can be approached by asking whether the Habsburg enterprise was doomed by nationalism to collapse. General considerations suggest a negative answer, at least for a particular sort of Habsburg enterprise. By that I have in mind the Kremsier reform proposals of 1849, the key clause of which asserted that:

All peoples of the Empire are equal in rights. Each people has an inviolable right to preserve and activate its nationality in general and its language in particular. The equality of rights in the school, administrative and public life of every language in local usage is guaranteed by the state.

Had this been enacted, different nationalities may not have sought to escape the empire. The analytical point is best described with reference to Albert Hirschman’s classic distinction between exit, voice, and loyalty: when it is possible to have voice inside a system, exit loses its attraction. Differently put, the nature of a political regime matters: nationalism has historically involved separation from authoritarian polities. The general point is then hopeful, given the problem of minorities: multinationalism may be possible, as Switzerland indicates, albeit limitations to the linguistic capacities of most human beings suggest that it is scarcely likely to become the norm.

The Habsburgs did not, of course, consistently take this liberal option. The explanation of their failure has
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everything to do with geopolitics. First, defeat by Prussia allowed Hungary to gain its historic rights. The fact that Hungarians felt threatened by perhaps not forming a majority in their own lands led to that policy of forced magyarization which gave impetus to southern Slav nationalism.(48) The creation of Austro-Hungary effectively ruled out federal reform. Such reform was probably unlikely for a second reason. The Habsburgs were not prepared to retrench, to allow some territories to leave and to concentrate on economic development rather than geopolitical prestige. The raison d’etre of the monarchy had been and remained that of being a great power. Still, it is noticeable that after 1867 the empire did not look set to fall apart. Its elements were clearly unable to agree, but geopolitical facts remained, and the Czechs did not look as if they were prepared to risk going it alone. What changed everything was defeat in war.

Integral Nationalism

The last classic type of nationalism is integral nationalism. This has sometimes been seen as a reaction to Versailles, or more generally as a response that had logically to follow given that the drives for social integration of the new nations founded at that time were always likely to disadvantage minorities. There is certainly a change in mood with regard to integral nationalism: it is illiberal. There is no longer room for the belief that human beings, seen as possessing inalienable rights, need the carapace of a nation--but that all nations can develop together in a positive sum game. To the contrary, universalism is held to be a febrile myth: the fact that one should think with one’s blood naturally turned nationalist quarrels into Darwinian zero-sum affairs. Ethnicity has now completely taken over from civic obligation.

The theorist of this type of nationalism is Ernst Nolte.(49) This form of nationalism was well in place before it received its ultimate form in German national socialism, and accordingly cannot be completely explained in terms of a reaction to Versailles. It may well be that integral nationalism is bred more generally by the trauma of defeat: it certainly seems to help explain the life and deeds of the Action Francaise and its leader, Maurras--who invented the name of this type of nationalism and who stands as its best exemplar.(50) But this is too partial an explanation. We can see what has been missed from the explanation of its classical turn of the century form by considering carefully Max Weber’s admonition in his 1895 inaugural address:

We must grasp that the unification of Germany was a youthful spree, indulged in by the nation in its old age; it would have been better if it had never taken place, since it would have been a costly extravagance, if it was the conclusion rather than the starting-point for German power-politics on a global scale.(51) In the context of his time, Weber’s nationalism was, of course, liberal--although Poles familiar with Weber’s wartime views as to how Germans should behave in the East are not likely to accord him that epithet.(52) Nonetheless, it is crucial to stress that the context of that time included the myth of imperialist mercantilism. A newly industrialized country like Germany had risen in part through trade, and its future could have been assured by continued adherence to that trading route: but some voices argued that secure sources of supply and sale necessitated territorial possession. Germans preferred to act as “heroes” rather than as “traders.”(53) The fact that Bethmann-Hollweg listened to such voices was one element in the pattern that led to disaster in 1914.(54)

Something needs to be said about the social base of this integral nationalism. Studies of the popular leagues pressing for expansion to the East and for a Weltpolitik in late Wilhelmine Germany have shown us that these views were attractive to the educated, to those whose careers were associated with a German state of which they were proud--a fact which undermines Hobsbawm’s view that nationalism turns nasty towards the end of the nineteenth century because it comes to be rooted in the lesser bourgeoisie.(55) This respectable but radical-right nationalism played some part in limiting the Wilhelmine state’s room to maneuver in the years immediately prior to 1914, and this helped cause the outbreak of war.(56) The rules of diplomacy depend upon key state actors being part of international society: academic realism rests upon the presence of transnational identity. What radical nationalists at this time were demanding was an end to transnational identity so that national society could be favored--in a world seen, as much by Sidney Webb as by Maurras or Max Weber, largely in Darwinian terms.

This emphasis on the pre-1914 origins of integral nationalism is not meant to detract from its intensification after 1919. It is, of course, true that many of Wilson’s borders are still intact, though this is in part because of the ethnic cleansings unleashed by the two great revolutions of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, one cannot help but note how disastrous was the Versailles settlement in East Central Europe. Regimes were created which were geopolitically unviable, lacking firm guarantees, prone to quarrel among themselves, and composed of minorities whose suppression invited irredentist claims.(57) In a
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sense, this provided Hitler with a set of cards, the playing of which allowed for such viciousness that nationalism thereby gained a reputation from which it has not recovered.

REPRISE: FROM SOCIETY TO STATE AND REGIME

Any specification of the different types of nationalism needs to be fairly close to historical reality if it is to fulfill its purpose, that of helping general thought and the understanding of particular cases. The typology offered to this point is close to reality and I stand by it, and by the claim that nationalism is not one but many. Nonetheless, I wish to look at the two obvious ways in which this typology might be criticized. A measure of disagreement with the second criticism will move my argument beyond phenomenology towards underscoring key theoretical points.

The first type of criticism is obvious, namely, that the typology should be expanded. John Breuilly’s complete treatment of nationalism makes systematic use not just of “revolution from above” but also of the distinction between separatist and unification nationalism, and it does so for social worlds with and without nation-states. The most recent work of Ernest Gellner, critical to understanding nationalism in postcommunist societies, has made much of a brilliant essay by John Plamenatz to note differences within risorgimento nationalism between the German and the Italian cases, definitively possessed of extant high cultures, and of the situation further to the East, where cultures were almost completely invented. Finer analyses would also result from distinguishing more clearly between popular sentiment, the dreams of intellectuals, and the manipulative practices of politicians. The validity and helpfulness of these distinctions do not, however, seem to be such that they could not be included within the typology presented, were greater space available to allow for its full elaboration.

The fact that there are so many types might well encourage exactly the opposite comment, somewhat in the spirit of Pirandello, to the effect that these types need an integrating general theory. This would, I suspect, be the response of Ernest Gellner, and this is accordingly a good moment to return to his theory. It is not, in fact, difficult to see how one can diminish the number of cases. Some mileage can be had by extending the notion of industrialism in the logic of industry to include the capitalist development that provided the human materiel for risorgimento nationalism. Better still, I believe, would be to take the notion of blocked mobility, properly understood in the sense of humiliation, and say that it is an essential part of what is going on within the logic of industry. That link is precisely at the heart of Gellner’s real and best attempt to produce a general theory of nationalism—that is, a second and more general theory which does not fall foul of the functionalism of the industrial society school to which he is somewhat prone. More particularly, that connection is necessary for him, for otherwise the logic of industry could in principle take place within large empires: it has no need to take on the national form. The actors in this category seek to modernize apart from and even against metropolises which had discriminated against their talents. All this is to say that Gellner theorizes his own Czech background as much as he does his North African experiences, and that he has accordingly been unfairly treated on this point by being considered the theorist only of the logic of industry.

The logic of this type of integrating argument is clear, and I can think of additional reasons to avoid dogmatism about my own concepts. First, we can now see that the types represent in part stages, with the logic of asocial society, for example, being unique and thereby unavailable for later use. Second, it may soon be seen that integral nationalism in the contemporary world sometimes loses its bite because its drive for ethnic homogeneity is often not connected to economic mercantilism—not or is it so easily able to cage its politicians that they are forced to ignore the realities of transnational society. Nonetheless, I still think that the logic of asocial society, revolution from above, desire and fear blessed by opportunity, and integral nationalism escape the integrating argument outlined here. I prefer my types of nationalism on phenomenological grounds: my exemplars are very different sorts of people, and they would have been uneasy in each other’s company. But it is neither desirable nor necessary to leave matters at this point. A certain amount of patterning is implicit within the types presented: explanation has rested less on social than on political factors, notably those concerned with state and regime.

We can begin to highlight this by noting that Gellner’s trinitarian view of human history is too simple: he is too much of an economic materialist, almost a Marxist in reverse, in imagining that history is structured simply by evolution from foraging-hunting to agrarian production and then to modern industry—powerful as these forces undoubtedly were. More particularly, there are two notable ways in which modernity has been seen to predate the coming of industry. First, civil society connections expanded in the eighteenth century, most spectacularly in Britain as the result of a commercial revolution which preceded the advent of the Industrial era. Second, multipolar state competition was born in the Agrarian era and flowed into the Industrial era: it was never a merely superstructural affair, being often powerful enough to disrupt the histories of economy and society. States certainly mattered for nationalism. A long process of
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state-building in northwest Europe created national states and territorialized social relations. Still more importantly, it was the fiscal needs of states, ever engaged in war, that led to those fights for representation which encouraged the emergence of national sentiment. The forces of civil society, left to themselves, tend not to breed political action. What mattered was their interaction with the demands of states.

But the nature of the regime has as important an impact as does the state. We know that working classes differed in their levels of militancy at the turn of the century according to the regimes with which they interacted: the presence of a liberal regime meant that class conflict took on an industrial rather than a political character, whereas the political exclusion of autocracy and authoritarianism concentrated attention on the state both because of its arbitrariness and its refusal to allow unions to organize. (67) Early realization of this point lay behind Max Weber's call for limits to Wilhelmine authoritarianism. Neither capitalists nor the state had anything to fear from liberal measures towards the working class: the more that class felt itself to be part of society, the less likely it was to embrace radicalism. (68) The same paradoxical principle—that openness increases cohesion—applies to nationalism. (69) The omnibus definition given at the start carefully noted that cultural nationalism tends to become political. In fact, we have seen that a liberal option was available within the Habsburg domains which, had it been adopted, would probably have satisfied the key nationalities by respecting their historic rights. Nationalism might not have become political. This option was ruled out by the Habsburgs, convinced that federalism would have undermined their geopolitical dreams. My guess is that this perception may have been inaccurate, as most certainly was the case with that of the Wilhelmine politicians who failed to sense that their working class could be best co-opted by reform. Might the empire actually have been strengthened, as Masaryk thought, if it had embraced this liberal option? Obviously, this question can never be answered. But there is much to be said for endorsing the ethic of eighteenth- rather than of nineteenth-century theorists: political arbitrariness creates much more anger than does social inequality. People prefer reform to revolution, the possibility of peaceful change to the dangers of the barricades. Liberalism thus diffuses conflict through society whereas authoritarianism concentrates it.

MODERN VARIATIONS

The first modern variation has already been encountered as the logic of industry, but analysis of the impact of the United States within its sphere of influence in the postwar era can enhance understanding of its character. Decolonizing nationalism owed something to American dislike, for ideological and economic reasons, for European empires. This clearly hastened the end of the Dutch empire, and it was not without influence in the British case. Nonetheless, the logic of the situation favored decolonization. Empire became costly as soon as European troops had to be used, as was the case when faced even with relatively minor rebellions. The British, once deprived of the Indian army, understood this almost immediately, and quickly handed over territories to groups whose claims to represent "nations" they often knew to be farcical. In contrast, the French fought longer and harder, and even dreamed of a greater France within which modernization could take place. One of Raymond Aron's most impressive and influential exercises in logic—demonstrating that this policy would significantly lower the standard of living within France itself—effectively destroyed that illusion. (70) All the same, the subsequent career of these new states was deeply influenced by the terms of the American system. The world polity for most of the postwar period has been extraordinarily conservative. A truly amazing obeisance was given to the norm of sovereignty, with the result being that very few boundaries were changed; if the United States supported this norm, it was, of course, as much in the interests of the postcolonial states themselves. This is not to deny that the American system sometimes coped poorly with the postcolonial world. The rules of the international market upon which it insisted helped advanced countries far more than those seeking to develop. (71) More importantly, the United States was prone to consider nationalism as if it were communism, thereby letting itself get trapped in Vietnam and landing itself with the Ayatollah Khomeini rather than settling for Mossadeq. Still, in historical terms the United States favors trade more than it does heroism, and its empire is now almost completely nonterritorial. By and large, the Third World is less exploited than ignored.

The fact that the United States has been the sole genuine hegemony that capitalist society has ever possessed has had a fundamental impact on the states of the advanced world. (72) Trading has quite generally replaced heroism, economic ambition now mattering more than geopolitical dreams. Some mercantilist tricks are still practiced by Japan and far more by the European Community in this present moment of uncertainty, but these are difficulties facing the world political economy rather than disasters likely to engulf it. The situation remains the exact opposite of that of the interwar years: the fundamental stability of the geopolitical settlement is likely to allow for compromise in the economic arena. If this decline of economic imperialism is likely to curtail any revival of integral nationalism, so too is the undoubted fact that the American system has encouraged the internationalization of key elites—those most distinctively no longer caged by nationalist pressure groups. But concentration on
established states should not be so overdone as to detract attention from a final and essentially novel ideal type of nationalism, that of nationalism by trade. The boldest theorist of this type is Tom Nairn, but Hudson Meadwell's recent arguments point in the same direction. (73) Such nationalism by trade is novel in seeking separation for regions of advanced societies. Nairn stresses that such nationalism is likely to do best when the region in question has a chance for economic prosperity: just as the six counties of Northern Ireland had no desire to be impoverished through connection with poor Catholic peasants, so too Catalans and Spanish Basques, perhaps even northern Italians, wish to protect their economic interests. A representative of this sort of nationalism is the leader of the Parti Quebecois, Jacques Parizeau, whose strategy is that of convincing the Quebecois that they would be richer without the rest of Canada. The likely career of this sort of nationalism is hard to predict. There have been very few exits from liberal systems, and the diminished geopolitical need for centralized and unitary states makes it possible to allow for the introduction of federal and consociational deals capable of appeasing discontent. (74) If this has happened in Spain, it most certainly has not in Scotland--where the absence of a local assembly has meant that the majority has been governed for many years by leaders distinctively not co-cultural with themselves. But economic changes may increase the opportunities for this type of nationalism by diminishing the costs of transition that it would involve. If Adam Smith is right, the limitation of the size of the market decreases affluence: if one can separate and stay within a larger market, as in Europe but not yet in North America, nationalism by trade begins to look promising. But if this happens, it is important to note that it does not have a significant, general impact. Political democracy and an open trading system are unlikely to be impaired by this sort of nationalism.

No survey of nationalism can omit the mention of two unfolding situations--one obvious but the other potentially still more important, with both being hard to conceptualize--which may give rise to novel types of nationalism. The first of these situations is that facing the postcommunist world and the second is that confronting many postcolonial states.

In retrospect, it is obvious that the Bolsheviks continued the work of the Czars, thereby so delaying nation-building that its contemporary incidence is that much sharper and more determined. The postcommunist situation as a whole is complex, but it seems as if it is a curious melange of both old and new factors. There is much to the view, already noted, that nationalism in this part of the world, and particularly in Yugoslavia, was likely to be vicious, given that nations are being constructed ab initio, that is, from a peasant base rather than from an extant high culture. The peoples of the former Soviet Union were always prone to be attracted to nationalism because the imperial system which dominated them was led by Russians--whose depredations were not merely political and economic but also ecological. (75) These two cases are stressed to suggest that an important argument of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, suggesting that the early calling of elections would have held together the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as they did Spain, is overdone. (76) It is certainly true that neither Gorbachev nor Milosevic accepted the need for immediate federal elections, but these authors miss the salience of a backlog of hatred. They are blind to a crucial general difference between liberalization attempts in socialism and in capitalism. Liberalization had far less of a chance in socialist societies because they had so systematically destroyed civil society. (77) The vacuum created by the collapse of the socialist project was always most likely to be filled by nationalism. If that is one novel feature of nationalism in postcommunist societies, another is that of the character of certain leaders. It is very noticeable that former communists unable to make it in the market have been attracted to nationalism for the most self-interested reasons. One has the impression that Vladimir Meciar, the Slovak Premier, at times scarcely believed in the manipulative tricks in which he was engaged.

A very great deal in this world remains open. What is noticeable at present is that nationalism in the territories of the former Soviet Union is, at least in comparison to those of former Yugoslavia, by no means utterly violent. The initial group of successor states are based on the union republics. Of course, it is extremely easy to point to the potentialities for matrioshka nationalism, that is, the process whereby successful new national entities themselves become subject to separatist claims--a process which quite literally might have no ending. (78) That this looks most likely in the North Caucasus may well have something to do with Georgia's decidedly integralist nationalism. (79) In contrast, matrioshka nationalism is somewhat curtailed in Russia by Yeltsin's adherence to democracy: the desire to exit is again held in abeyance by the possibility of voice. This factor too explains the remarkable success of the Ukraine in holding together different religions, languages, and ethnicities within a single state. (80) This theme raises a final consideration. The softer, more federalist, and more democratic route is made possible by the remarkable fact that geopolitical conflict has been controlled and limited in this part of the world since the end of the Cold War. Were Russia again to embrace heroism, the protection of powerful states would become vital. Such states would likely pay little heed to the demands of their own nationalities.
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The considerations raised here bring us to the postcolonial situation. Anthony Smith is surely correct to stress that nation-building and state-building in postcolonial societies have often been very difficult. (81) We need not accept his positive thesis--that European nations depended on a single ethnic core--to endorse the view that the absence of any shared political history and the presence of tribalism presents unique problems. The extraordinary stability that resulted from obedience to the norm of nonintervention--endorsed by the Organization of African States even at the price of accepting Idi Amin--has a sting in its tail at this point. Acceptance of this norm has meant that there have been extraordinarily few interstate wars within the Third World since 1945--which should not for a moment detract from the vast numbers of deaths in civil wars. (82) A consequence of that state of affairs is that states have often been content to rest on top of differential segments rather than to rationalize their societies. In a horrible sense, Third World countries have not had enough war, or, perhaps enough war of the right type. They are quasi-societies, not nation-states. (83) Their states desperately need to be strengthened so that they can provide that basic order which we have come to take for granted.

This consideration suggests a worrying conclusion. It looks as if the ordering of world politics may be about to change. The norms of sovereignty and nonintervention are now at something of a discount, and it may well be that rules for intervention, made possible by a concert of the Great Powers, will now come to the fore. In one way, this is profoundly to be welcomed: it may make liberalism more real. But perhaps in another way, this new development may not be such good news. There are many minorities whose cause could call for intervention: not just Bosnian Serbs nor Palestinians and Kurds, but, according to one recent survey, at least 250 other minorities currently at risk. (84) To give statehood to all such minorities would more than double the number of states in the world. Furthermore, we should remember that there are perhaps eight thousand languages in the world, most of which could be used to put forward nationalist claims. (85) Given that not every language can have a state, one wonders as to the wisdom of interventionist policies which may weaken states which need to be strengthened. We are not, thankfully, completely without intellectual resources at this point: if the breakup of Yugoslavia teaches us one thing, it is that international recognition should be withheld from a state until it puts in place internationally acceptable protection for minority rights. Genscher failed to do this with Croatia. But this is a single point. The dilemma as a whole--between universal liberalism and the building of states, whose creation may still be humanity's best hope--is far too complex, at least for me at this particular moment, to solve.

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ENDNOTES

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