THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

THIRD EDITION

UMUT ÖZKIRIMLI

Theories of Nationalism

Also by Umut Özkırımlı

The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi (ed.)

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Theories of Nationalism

A Critical Introduction

Third Edition

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To Luca

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Preface to the Third Edition

The new edition of this book is not prompted solely by the need to stay on top of recent trends or a desire to keep pace with the spirit of the times so far as the study of nationalism is concerned (even though it does quite a lot of both). After all, a little more than five years have elapsed since the publication of the second edition and there have been no major paradigm shifts during this period, no new, 'groundbreaking' theories, save a few notable exceptions which are covered in the following chapters, despite the ever-expanding literature on nationalism which has now become a field unto itself called 'nationalism studies'.

The rationale for the third edition is rather to problematize the widening gap between the theoretical debate and the proverbial 'reality on the ground', the mismatch between the contemporary challenges posed by nationalism and the responses offered by mainstream theoretical approaches. Put differently, the current edition aims, in addition to updating and setting the theories in a proper historical context, to question the terms, structure and content of the debate on nationalism, to open a debate on the 'debate' so to speak.

At first blush, it may appear ironic that the present volume is structured along the lines of a categorization whose underlying logic it seeks to question, but this is inevitable as (1) this is still the most widely accepted classification of existing theories in the field and (2) contributors to the debate themselves continue to engage with this categorization even if they seek to move beyond it. In that sense, it would not be far-fetched to say that the current debate has turned into some kind of hegemonic academic discourse determining the boundaries of the 'speakable', or a norm, much like nationalism itself, conferring legitimacy on discussions of nations and nationalism, the 'giant aquarium' or 'breathing chamber' that Ernest Gellner talks about in his classic *Nations and Nationalism*, specifically tailored to the needs of the species we call 'nationalism scholars' (see Gellner 1983: 49, 51–2).

Having said that, this book will lay special emphasis on attempts to move beyond the bounds of the current debate and try to push this agenda forwards. It will thus follow the late Benedict Anderson's advice and look for a wind, 'as if [it] were a sailing-ship heading out of a harbour onto the vast open sea' (2016: 185). I am fully aware that this spirit of adventure entails certain risks, yet I also believe that it is essential to scholarly progress.

The present volume is an extended, substantially revised and hopefully improved version of the second edition. In a nutshell:

- The discussion of various theories has been updated, taking on board the inexorable expansion of the field of nationalism studies, including the most

recent (in some cases unpublished or forthcoming) works of leading theorists, whose contributions to the debate are covered in the book and some older sources that were not available to me at the time of writing of the previous editions.

- The sections outlining later reformulations of classical theoretical approaches at the end of each main chapter have been extended and made more nuanced to reflect the growing diversity in the field. The works of Aviel Roshwald, Azar Gat, Caspar Hirschi, Bernard Yack, Sinisa Malešević and Andreas Wimmer are reviewed in this context.
- The final section of Chapter 2 on historical debates on nations and nationalism has been rewritten to include the various attempts to move beyond 'methodological nationalism'.
- My suggestions for an alternative analytical framework have been condensed and incorporated into Chapter 6 on 'Contemporary Approaches to Nationalism', which in turn enabled me to address some of the criticisms levelled at constructivism in general. This chapter also discusses Nira Yuval-Davis work on the politics of belonging and Andreas Wimmer's model of ethnic boundary making, probably the two most original approaches to appear since the publication of the second edition.
- The former Chapter 7 has been replaced by a brand new chapter called 'Nationalism: Theory and Practice' where I provide a critique of existing theories in the context of what I refer to as the 'double challenge' of nationalism today. It is here that I will try to expose the limits of current discussions on nationalism, problematizing the steadfast preoccupation with the question of the origins of nations, and issue a call for rescuing nationalism studies from the clutches of the classical theoretical debate on nationalism.
- The Introduction has been rewritten, and subsequent chapters heavily edited, to better reflect the main argument, and the general tenor, of the new edition.

* * *

Len Scales, Andreas Wimmer, *Nations and Nationalism* and Verso Books for sharing electronic copies of already published or forthcoming books with me and to Craig Calhoun and Nira Yuval-Davis for endorsing the book. I am particularly grateful to John Breuilly for alerting me to sources I was unaware of, for reading the final manuscript from beginning to end and offering extensive comments, for endorsing the book and, more generally, for his moral support and generous mentorship. As always, I have to mention my long-term friend and colleague Spyros A. Sofos, whose intellectual imprint can be seen on every sentence I wrote, in particular the analytical framework I develop in Chapter 6. And I would like to thank Sofija Barakat, Corina Lozovan and Reece Waldron, my students from the MA Programme in Middle Eastern Studies at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, for their research assistance at earlier stages of the writing of the book. Last but certainly not the least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, in particular its director, Leif Stenberg, for not only supporting my research in every possible way but also providing me a 'home' – the 'sense of being wedded to a place' in bell hooks' felicitous words.

The writing of this book has been a painfully long and draining journey, with countless setbacks from the moment I sat down in front of my computer nearly three years ago. I found *myself tiptoeing in a deep dark wood that no human being should ever set foot.** I met *the big bad mouse* whom I thought was just a character from a children's book. And unlike my little Gruffalo, I was scared and I was consumed.

But I was not lonely. *When the moon came out, bright and round, when a terrible shadow fell onto the ground*, Marianne, Lars and Gunilla came around and kept me and my fellow traveller Erika strong. My mum, my aunt and my cousins reached out from afar, sometimes just to sing a song. And so we went on, looking for a trail that will eventually take us back home.

The little Gruffalo? He taught us to be brave even when *the snow fell fast and the wind blew wild*. It is to him that this book is dedicated.

* The sentences in italics are taken from Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's award-winning children's book *The Gruffalo's Child* (2004). I would like to thank Macmillan Children's Books and Julia Donaldson for giving me the permission to quote freely from the book.

Introduction

Nations and nationalism

'In our modern age, nationalism is not resurgent; it never died', quipped Isaiah Berlin in an interview he gave back in 1991, at the height of ethnic and nationalist clashes triggered by the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc (Gardels 1991). Curiously enough, this was also the time when several commentators had been predicting an imminent demise of both the nation-state and nationalism under conditions of increasing globalization, in fact 'the end of history' as such, 'the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' (Fukuyama 1989: 4). Hegelian in spirit and reminiscent of the modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s which portrayed the West as the model that the 'rest' would emulate, this talk of the end of history was no more than empty rhetoric for those caught up in the maelstrom of ethnic and nationalist violence in much of the world, including the so-called civilized, liberal democratic West – not to mention the less visible yet equally powerful forms of everyday nationalism which have continued to structure the way we make sense of social and political reality.

In many ways, then, the Herderian was wiser than the Hegelian. Berlin believed, following the footsteps of his favourite philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder, that 'to be human meant to be able to feel at home somewhere, with your kind'. Each group has its own *Volksgeist*, 'a set of customs and life style, a way of perceiving and behaving that is of value solely because it is their own'. This led him to famously liken nationalism to a 'bent twig', 'forced down so severely that when released, it lashed back with fury'. Nationalism, Berlin concludes, 'is created by wounds inflicted by stress' (Gardels 1991).

Leaving aside the question of whether, and if so why, the fury always takes the form of nationalism, it would not be inaccurate to say that time has proven Berlin right. Even a cursory look at the headlines of major news outlets would reveal the resilience of nationalism in the face of purportedly countervailing trends such as various forms of transnationalism or supranationalism and their mirror images, localism, sectarianism and multiculturalism, and competing sources of collective identity, notably religion. Radical right parties running on an unabashedly nationalist, at times outright xenophobic, platform have made significant electoral strides in the last few decades and become a key actor of

the European political landscape, either directly as partners in ruling coalitions or viscerally, framing the mainstream agenda on issues related to immigration, security and economic austerity. Even in Scandinavia, which tops the charts on virtually every global index from economic competitiveness to gender equality and happiness, one can find the likes of Olli Immonen, of The Finns Party, which became part of Finland's ruling coalition in May 2015, who boasts on Facebook that he is 'dreaming of a strong, brave nation that will defeat this nightmare called multiculturalism … We will fight until the end for our homeland and one true Finnish nation. The victory will be ours.' (*Washington Post*, 31 July 2015) or of Jimmy Åkesson, the leader of Sweden Democrats, who declares Islamism as 'the Nazism of our times' – this in a country which has been widely perceived as the bastion of the social democratic welfare state and hailed as 'the next supermodel' by *The Economist* (2 February 2013).

Needless to say, the rise of the radical right is far from being a Nordic phenomenon. The most spectacular result of the European Parliament elections in 2014 was the surge of the nationalist right, from the populist to the neo-Nazi, with Marine Le Pen's Front Nationale in France leading nationwide polls for the first time in its history. Two years later, in May 2016, Norbert Hofer of the Austrian Freedom Party lost the presidential race, hence the prospect of becoming the first far right head of state in post-Nazi Europe, by a mere 30,863 votes (*The New York Times*, 23 May 2016). This was hardly the dream of the founding fathers of the European Union, who had hoped that the creation of supranational institutions and the gradual pooling of sovereignty would lead to the withering away of nationalism, which they perceived as the root cause of Europe's problems. Yet rather than fostering collective solidarity, each crisis has given a new lease of life to the discourse of national interests and resurrected age-old nationalist stereotypes, like the 'lazy Greeks' or 'evil Germans'. Evidently, the fiction of a borderless Europe was just that, a fiction, or a chimera.

In any case, the European Union has long been a nation-state writ large with its own 'others', as reflected in the image of 'fortress Europe', and there has never been an 'inverse relationship between European and national identifications.' On the contrary, European pride was positively correlated with national pride (Déloye 2013: 622–3). More generally, after the initial euphoria of the 1990s subsided, sober and more nuanced analyses of processes of supranational integration and globalization have begun to cast doubt on zero-sum depictions of the relationship between the latter and the nation-state and nationalism. As Saskia Sassen remarks, 'the epochal transformation we call globalization is taking place inside the national to a far larger extent than is usually recognized', and 'the national is still the realm where formalization and institutionalization' have achieved the highest level of development (2006: 1).

It is no wonder then that the knee-jerk response to the insecurities prompted by globalization has often assumed the form of nationalism, or its next of

kin, 'identity politics', as the September 2014 referendum for independence in Scotland or the constant push for a similar referendum in Catalonia (so far denied by the central government in Madrid) show. In the case of Scotland, for example, it has been argued that the driving force behind the calls for independence has been recent developments in the economy which made the country more of an 'economic community of fate' than it was at any other time in its history. According to Tomlinson (2014), this is in fact a sign of 'de-globalization' because the political decisions taken in Edinburgh, in particular with regard to public spending, matter more than the ones taken in London, which are increasingly perceived as constraints imposed on Scotland's thriving economy. These observations can be generalized to other cases where the quest for independence takes economic forms, such as 'trade barriers, asset protection, reaction against foreign direct investment, policies favoring domestic workers and firms, anti-immigration measures', to name a few. In fact, some commentators detect an eerie resemblance between the late 2000s and the 1930s, arguing that just as the Great Depression paved the way for the authoritarian regimes of Europe and Asia, the damage caused by what they call the 'Great Recession' is creating an ideal terrain for economic and political nationalism to take root and flourish (Roubini 2014).

And the story is not simply a European – or Western, however one defines that term – one. Middle East experts had their own brief 'Fukuyama moment' when frustrated millions took to the streets in 2011 hoping for and demanding a better future. Several observers were quick to declare the end of the Sykes-Picot system, the dissolution of the borders created by British and French colonialism in the aftermath of the First World War, and celebrate the birth of a transnational movement superseding the iron cage of the nation-state. The subsequent descent of the region into chaos and civil strife required some recalibration, but overall it seemed to have proven their point, even if in a twisted way. For better or worse, developments such as the dramatic rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or the Islamic State (IS) as it now calls itself, which controls large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria or the experimentation of Syrian Kurds with non-statist forms of self-determination did indeed pose challenges to the nation-state order as it is conventionally understood.

Yet this picture needs to be qualified in several ways. First, as Yezid Sayigh (2014) points out, the challenge is much more limited, and local, than the self-congratulatory accounts of a 'postnational reality' would have us believe. The only border that appears to have been actually erased, Sayigh reminds us, is that between Iraq and Syria. Partition is unlikely given the involvement of several regional and more distant powers in the conflict, and in any case, we do not know how a dismembered Iraq or Syria would look if partition were to take place. Second, even a professedly cross-border movement like ISIL fashions itself as a 'predator state' united by a common identity and belief system and subscribes to some form of what we have elsewhere called 'itinerant territoriality'

(Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008: 111; the term is borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari and refers to non-static definitions of territory by nomadic peoples). Third, the attempts by the Kurds, affiliated with the PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, or The Kurdistan Workers Party), in Turkey and its sister organization, PYD (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, or The Democratic Union Party), in Syria to experiment with non-statist forms of self-determination, drawing on the ideas of the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, who is in turn influenced by the writings of the anarchist political theorist Murray Bookchin, is anything but 'non-national'. As Öcalan himself points out, what he is trying to transcend is the model of the nation-state, not nationalism per se:

> (because of 'Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist' dogma) we weren't able to think of another form of nationalism, for example democratic nationalism. When you said nation, there absolutely had to be a state! If Kurds were a nation, they certainly needed a state! However, as social conditions intensified, as I understood that nations themselves were the most meaningless reality, shaped under the influence of capitalism … I realized that freedom and community were more important concepts. (Danforth 2013)

In this context, it is indicative that the battle for Kobani, where Kurdish forces managed to reclaim one of the three autonomous Kurdish cantons in Northern Syria after a six-month siege by ISIL, has become a defining moment for Kurdish nationalism, indeed an instance of 'constitutive violence' which, 'rather than threatening a pre-existing and self-conscious entity, brings the community it threatens into being through that threat and gives shape and identity to what it threatens through placing it at risk' (Bowman 2003: 320). Fourth, while some autocratic regimes collapsed during the early phases of Arab uprisings, they have been replaced by fiercer forms of authoritarianism with a heavy dose of nationalism. Others, notably the Gulf States, have promoted sectarianism to bolster national identities rather than to supplant them. Hence, as Lynch argues in an insightful essay, the Arab Spring was both national and transnational: 'even during such moments of pan-Arab sentiment, the potency of national identity could be seen in the ostentatious waving of national flags and chanting of national slogans by Egyptian and Jordanian protesters' (Lynch 2015). Nations, Lynch concludes:

> are evolving and adapting under the pressures of the post-Arab uprisings but have hardly faded. The intensity and depth of the challenge to these states drives both intense new manifestations of nationalism and the emergence of intense new forms of subnational and transnational identities … Either way, these new identity projects are refracted through national communities that, after decades of institutionalization, continue to structure politics, anchor networks and shape the political imaginary. (ibid.)

Even this broad-strokes sketch of contemporary trends and a few selected cases attests to the enduring relevance of nationalism: as the fundamental organizing principle of interstate order, as the ultimate source of political legitimacy, as the taken-for-granted context of everyday life and as a readily available cognitive and discursive frame to make sense of the world that surrounds us. As such, it also impinges on our analytical perspectives and shapes academic conventions. This is what some observers have aptly termed 'methodological nationalism', the pervasive tendency to equate the concept of 'society' with that of the 'nation', presupposing that the nation is the natural and necessary form of society in modernity (Wimmer 2006; Wimmer and Schiller 2002; Chernilo 2006, 2007, 2011). This is particularly the case with history as:

> the very tools of analysis by which we pretend to practice scientific history were invented and perfected within a wider climate of nationalism and nationalist preoccupations. Rather than neutral instruments of scholarship, the modern methods of researching and writing history were developed specifically to further nationalist aims. (Geary 2002: 16)

Social scientists and political theorists, too, take the existence of nations for granted, making it a background condition of their analyses and ruminations. This is what leads Canovan to argue that underneath most contemporary political thinking lie 'assumptions about the existence of bounded, unified political communities that seem suspiciously like nation-states' (1996: 27).

Nationalism studies

Given this, it is striking that nations and nationalism have only been a peripheral concern of social and political theory for much of the twentieth century. With the exception of the pioneering works of historians such as Carleton Hayes, Hans Kohn and later E. H. Carr, it is only in the 1960s and 1970s that we find a lively academic debate on nationalism, precipitated by the experience of decolonization and the proliferation of new states in Asia and Africa. Subscribing to some version of the then ascendant nation-building model, most of these studies saw nationalism as a corollary of modernization processes, an outcome or by-product of the transition from 'traditional' to 'modern' society. The debate was taken to a whole new level in the 1980s with the publication of John Armstrong's *Nations before Nationalism* (1982), John Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* (1982), Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) and Anthony D. Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), among others. Nationalism,

which had to wait until 1974 to have its first academic journal, finally had a stimulating, and highly polemical, literature.

It is possible to identify two reasons for the belated development of a full-fledged discussion on nationalism. The first was the general indifference of mainstream academic thinking to nationalism as a topic of investigation in its own right. This attitude was conditioned in part by the rigidity and conservatism of established disciplines, in particular sociology, political science and international relations, which regarded nationalism either as passé or as a lesser, marginal preoccupation, as opposed to 'state', 'democracy', 'justice', 'development' and the like.

The picture was further complicated by the tendency to take nations and nationalism for granted, a point I have alluded to above. This is the main thrust of Billig's argument on nationalism and the sociological common sense in his influential *Banal Nationalism* (1995: Chapter 3). Drawing our attention to the curious absence of nationalism in the subject indexes of standard textbooks, Billig shows how society is construed in the image of a nation-state by mainstream sociology, an assumption that we, the readers, are expected to share. If society, a universal feature of human existence, is treated as a nation-state, then nationalism ceases to be a problem worth exploring and becomes a mundane part of our social life. It returns as a topic of investigation only when a vile form of nationalism threatens the integrity of 'our' society. In that case, Billig argues, the textbooks of sociology are likely to add subsections, even whole chapters on nationalism. But even if/when they do:

> nationalism will still be seen as something surplus, even contingent. It will be a special subject. 'Society', modelled on the image of 'our' nation, will continue to be treated as necessarily universal. In this way, 'our' nationalism need not return textually. (1995: 54)

The second reason that deferred scholarly intrusions into national phenomena was the tendency to reduce nationalism to its extreme manifestations – that is, to separatist movements that threaten the territorial integrity of existing states or to extreme right-wing politics. Rather than treating the latter as a subspecies of the genus, such a view locates nationalism in the periphery, seeing it as the property of others, not of 'us'. In the words of Billig, '"our" nationalism is not presented as nationalism, which is dangerously irrational, surplus and alien'; through a rhetorical sleight of hand, it is repackaged as 'patriotism', which is necessary and beneficial. This enables theorists to ignore their own nationalisms: when nationalism 'as a condition is projected on to "others", "ours" is overlooked, forgotten, even theoretically denied' (ibid.: 5, 17, 55). Yet this commonly accepted view is misleading as it turns a blind eye to the myriad ways in which nationalism is reproduced in established nations, forming a backdrop to public life, embedded in the very fabric of our everyday reality.

It would not be inaccurate to say that the reasons that delayed the development of a vibrant literature on nationalism have gradually disappeared as the twentieth century wore on. Nationalism has proved to be much more than an academic fad, destined to vanish as soon as another pastime is found, and has become one of the most explored topics in social sciences. Today we find ourselves immersed in a flood of publications on nationalism, including – in addition to case studies and theoretical treatises – introductory texts, handbooks and readers, monographs or edited collections devoted to a particular theorist/thinker or approach, even encyclopaedias. Then there are the specialized journals, research centres, Internet networks and academic programmes. The upshot of this has been a name – as mentioned earlier, the field is now widely referred to as 'nationalism studies' – and an immense, highly diversified literature. Time now is ripe for taking stock of the theoretical debate on nationalism and, in the light of this, for contemplating alternative ways of thinking about nationalism in general and nationalism studies in particular, to move beyond a debate which has become increasingly parochial over the years.

Objectives

This book has three main objectives: first, to place the contemporary theoretical debate on nationalism into a wider historical context by considering earlier philosophical and historical discussions, roughly from the late eighteenth to the first half of the twentieth centuries; second, to provide a systematic overview of key theoretical approaches to nationalism and to consider the main criticisms raised against them in a comparative perspective; and finally, to identify the limitations of the theoretical debate as it is currently structured in the light of some of the practical challenges that nationalism continues to pose and to issue a call for an expansion of the horizon of nationalism studies. Before moving on, let me also say a few words on what this book *is not*.

This book is not an excursus into historical or philosophical discourses on nationalism. Its focus is on contemporary theoretical debates, those that have developed and come of age in the second half of the twentieth century. Obviously, these debates have not taken place in a vacuum; most of the issues and problems that preoccupy contemporary theorists have already been identified and debated at length by, first, philosophers and historians, then the pioneering figures of social sciences over the past two centuries. Thus the second chapter of the book will be devoted to earlier discussions on nationalism in order to make better sense of the contemporary theories. Having said that, given the vast amount of ink spilled to understand nationalism, the treatment of various thinkers and their work will necessarily be sketchy and fragmentary.

This book is not a collection of case studies either. In fact, one of the secondary objectives of the book is to call attention to a problem that bedevils,

sometimes even threatens the integrity of, the study of nationalism, namely the casual, one might even say cavalier, use of brief historical examples to sustain an argument or to corroborate a particular theoretical perspective – what Breuilly (2005) ingeniously called the 'scissors-and-paste' type of argument. Lacking detail and context, this type of argumentation obfuscates analysis, leading us to see nationalism everywhere at work. This does not imply that theoretical discussions should steer clear of historical or empirical analyses. On the contrary, theories would not have any value unless tested against actual cases. But the cases should be examined in detail, not just cited for illustrative purposes with reference to a few standard (mostly outdated) texts. This book will not engage with actual cases in detail, mainly for reasons of space and lack of expertise; it will not, however, fall into the trap of a 'scissors-and-paste' approach either and refer to particular cases only when they are mentioned by the theories under review. It will also stress the value of theoretically informed historical analyses and comparative studies throughout, and in fact, it will suggest this as one way out of the analytical stalemate that characterizes current debates (see Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008 for a comparative study of the Greek and Turkish cases and a partial application of the theoretical framework that will be proposed in Chapter 6).

Finally, this book does not claim to be exhaustive. Although the third edition covers more theorists than the first two editions, it can be argued that it still omits a lot, notably contributions in languages other than English. There is no meaningful way to justify the choices made here except admitting that any such selection is bound to be partial. I do, however, believe that my selection reflects the main trends in the field and offers a balanced overview of all major contributions to the theoretical debate on nationalism.

Outline

Reflection on nationalism has a long past, and earlier assumptions and convictions continue to frame contemporary discussions on nationalism. With this in mind, the book begins by situating current debates historically and theoretically.

The following three chapters are devoted to the discussion of the main theoretical positions with regard to nationalism. Each chapter opens with a detailed overview of the various versions of the theoretical approach in question. This is followed by a summary of the main criticisms levelled against these approaches. The chapters conclude with a brief, critical outline of the reformulations of various positions in recent years.

In accordance with the general tendency in the field, I begin with primordialist/perennialist approaches. Hence Chapter 3 examines the different versions of primordialism, namely the nationalist, sociobiological (Pierre van den Berghe),

culturalist (Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz) and perennialist (Adrian Hastings) explanations before turning to attempts to resuscitate perennialism by such scholars as Aviel Roshwald, Azar Gat and Caspar Hirschi, to name but a few.

Chapter 4 focuses on modernism. Taking the vast differences between the theorists that are lumped together under this category into account, I divide them into three groups in terms of the key factors they identified in their analyses. Hence theorists who stress the centrality of economic factors (Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter) are discussed under the heading 'economic transformations'; those who emphasize the role of the state, politics and power struggles between contending elites (John Breuilly, Paul R. Brass and Eric J. Hobsbawm) are considered under the heading 'political transformations'; finally, those who give pride of place to social and cultural factors (Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Miroslav Hroch) are reviewed under the heading 'social/cultural transformations'. The chapter concludes with an overview of the writings of later modernists, such as Michael Mann, David D. Laitin, Sinisa Malešević and Andreas Wimmer, who subscribe to, with the possible exception of Laitin, some form of political modernism.

Chapter 5 explores ethnosymbolism, focusing in particular on the contributions of the two leading figures of this approach, John Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith. This chapter also briefly discusses the contributions of John Hutchinson and Bernard Yack, whose work continues the tradition set forth by earlier ethnosymbolists.

Chapter 6 turns the spotlight on more contemporary theoretical approaches. This chapter first tries to substantiate the claim that we can detect the beginnings of a qualitatively different body of work alongside the more classical interpretations that concentrate on the question of origins of nations and nationalism. It then discusses the works of Michael Billig, Nira Yuval-Davis, Partha Chatterjee, Craig Calhoun, Rogers Brubaker and Andreas Wimmer to illustrate the new generation of research on nationalism. The chapter concludes with the outline, admittedly sketchy and incomplete, of my own approach to nationalism, which is situated within this alternative, broadly critical body of work.

Chapter 7 revisits the theoretical approaches summarized in the previous chapters in the context of what I call the 'double challenge' of nationalism – that is, the gruelling task of making sense of both the emergence of alternative forms of belonging and political organization that supposedly undermine the perceived or real legitimacy of nationalism and its kith and kin, notably the nation and the state, and the resilience of the latter in the face of these countervailing trends. The focus of this chapter is contemporary, not historical, though one of the underlying objectives is to rethink the role of history in the study of nationalism. The chapter, hence the book, will conclude on a lighter note, by offering some reflections on the growing complacency of a once spirited debate.

Further reading

As pointed out above, there are now several introductory texts on nationalism. Among these, Smith (1983) [1971] is still the standard work of reference for the theories of the 1950s and 1960s. The fact that Smith is an active participant in the contemporary debate is more manifest in his later surveys of the field, namely his *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998a) and *Nationalism* (2001a), which are tainted by a heavy dose of scepticism towards modernism. For more balanced overviews which give due weight to recent approaches, see Day and Thompson (2004) and Puri (2004); for the current state of the play in the classical debate, see Ichijo and Uzelac (2005); and for a historiography of the theoretical debate on nationalism, see Lawrence (2005). Among the various readers and handbooks, Eley and Suny (1996b) and Delanty and Kumar (2006b) stand out, the former for the space it allocates to alternative interpretations and the latter for its thematic breadth and the quality of the individual contributions. A new, monumental addition to this body of work is *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, edited by Breuilly (2013), which contains both thematic chapters and theoretically informed comparative case studies. The two-volume *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* (2001) by Motyl, on the other hand, is an exhaustive resource for anyone interested in nationalism, and not just theories of nationalism. The essays by Laitin, Suny, Walker, Kaiser and W. Smith in the first, thematic volume of the encyclopaedia are to be particularly commended. The five-volume *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, edited by Stone et al. (2016), contains several entries on nationalism as well as on other topics which are highly relevant to the study of nationalism.

Apart from these, the reader should also consult the various specialized journals on nationalism *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Nations and Nationalism*, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *National Identities*, *Nationalities Papers*, *Ethnicities*, *Ethnopolitics* and *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*.

Chapter 2

Discourses and Debates on Nationalism

Historical overview

The academic study of nationalism may have taken off in the twentieth century, but nationalism itself, as an ideology and a social and political movement, has been very much in evidence since at least the end of the eighteenth century. Much ink has been spilled since then, first by philosophers and later by historians and the founding fathers of social sciences, trying to come to grips with it as it soon became clear that nationalism was not simply a temporary stage in the historical evolution of human societies. Interest in nationalism throughout much of this period was more ethical and political than analytical, but this was the 'age of nationalism', and no one involved in the intellectual or political debates of the time could remain indifferent to its emotional appeal. Political or not, however, these contemplations bequeathed important theoretical insights to succeeding generations, and it would be myopic to discuss contemporary theoretical debates on nationalism without taking this wider historical context into account.

I will thus begin my overview of the theoretical debates with a discussion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in an attempt to trace the evolution of the idea of nationalism. My selection of thinkers will necessarily be incomplete since there is little agreement in the field on exactly who or which ideas have contributed to the genesis of nationalist thought. In what follows, I will try to focus on the writings of those thinkers whose role in the formation and eventual spread of the idea of nationalism is commonly acknowledged by most, if not all, scholars.

It needs to be pointed out at the outset that the eighteenth century does not figure prominently in other narratives of the historical precursors of the debate on nationalism, and in a way this makes sense as the musings of Enlightenment thinkers and German Romantics can hardly be regarded as *theories* of nations and/or nationalism. Hence Lawrence (2005) starts his overview in 1848, making it quite explicit that his aim is to produce a historiography of theories of nationalism. Day and Thompson (2004) begin with roughly the same period, focusing on the Marxist tradition and its legacy. I will start a century earlier,

with the writings of Kant, Rousseau, Herder and Fichte, among others, as my prime objective in this chapter is to trace the evolution of the idea of nationalism, not that of theories of nationalism. Otherwise, I will largely follow the general tendency in the field, which distinguishes between two stages in the development of the theoretical debate in the twentieth century, 1918–45 and 1945 to the present. I will, however, argue that the period after 1945 should not be treated as a single stage and suggest that some of the studies produced in the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first signal a new phase in the study of nationalism as they question the fundamental premises upon which what we may call the classical debate is based. This classification is also adopted by Day and Thompson, who point to the emergence of a 'post-classical' debate since the early 1990s (2004: 12–17: Chapters 5 and 6). I will thus identify four stages in the reflection on and the study of nationalism:

1. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the idea of nationalism was born. Here, the contributions of thinkers like Kant, Rousseau, Herder, Fichte, Mill, Lord Acton, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Bauer and Stalin; historians like Michelet, von Treitschke and Renan; and early social theorists like Durkheim and Weber will be briefly discussed.
2. 1918–45, when nationalism became a subject of academic inquiry. The works of Carleton Hayes, Hans Kohn and E. H. Carr will be considered in this context.
3. 1945–89, when the theoretical debate on nationalism became richer, more diversified and interdisciplinary. Here, the contributions of modernization theorists, notably Daniel Lerner, Karl W. Deutsch and early modernists like Elie Kedourie will be discussed.
4. From 1989 to the present, when approaches which question the basic premises of the classical debate, characteristic of the third stage, and attempts to move beyond methodological nationalism have come to the fore.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Did nationalism have its own 'grand thinkers'? Anderson's answer to this question is unequivocal: 'unlike most other isms, nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers: no Hobbeses, Tocquevilles, Marxes or Webers' (1991: 5). According to Gellner, the existing thinkers did not make much difference anyway: 'If one of them had fallen, others would have stepped into his place. No one was indispensable.' He concludes that 'we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets', since they all suffered from a pervasive false consciousness (1983: 124–5). Others, notably O'Leary, disagree: 'It is strange not to classify Weber as a nationalist grand thinker, stranger still that Rousseau, Burke, John Stuart Mill and Friedrich List are not seen as nationalist grand thinkers' (1998: 87; cf. Minogue 1996). The problem here is partly terminological: are

we talking about 'thinkers of nationalism' or 'nationalist thinkers'? The difference between the two is hardly trivial. What is more, everyone's thinker of nationalism is different – hence the answer to the question of whether those who have intellectually contributed to the nationalist doctrine are eminent thinkers or not is highly personal, hence inevitably arbitrary. This is made exceedingly clear by the following observation by Yack: 'there are no great theoretical texts outlining and defending nationalism. No Marx, no Mill, no Macchiavelli. Only minor texts by first rate thinkers, like Fichte, or major texts by second rate thinkers, like Mazzini' (cited in Beiner 1999: 2). Of course, Marx and Mill did write on nationalism, as did Herder and Rousseau, and it seems odd to write their contributions off simply because they have not treated the problem in a systematic way or made it the central focus of their analyses. So where does one begin?

Most studies of nationalism trace the origins of the nationalist doctrine back to German Romantic thought, roughly to the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. But the thinkers of this period were heavily influenced by the philosophical foundations laid down by their predecessors, in particular the writings of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, two influential figures of the Enlightenment tradition. In fact, according to Kedourie (1994), one of the earliest theorists of nationalism as we will see later, it all started with Kant.

This might seem odd at first, since Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is commonly regarded as the most illustrious proponent of moral universalism. Perhaps so, Smith argues, but the political consequences of the ethical and epistemological dualism he developed were far-reaching (Smith 1983: 31–2). At the heart of this dualism lies a separation between the external, that is phenomenal, world and man's inner world. For Kant, the source of knowledge was the phenomenal world; our knowledge was based on sensations emanating from things-in-themselves. But the phenomenal world was a world of 'inexplicable contingencies' and 'iron necessities', and if our morality were also derived from this kind of knowledge, 'then we could never be free but always the slave either of contingency or of blind personal laws'. Morality, then, had to be separated from knowledge, or the phenomenal world, the world of appearances: instead, it should be 'the outcome of obedience to a universal law which is to be found within ourselves' (Kedourie 1994: 14).

Kant held that human beings can be free only when they obey the laws of morality, which they find within themselves, and not in the external world. This was, according to Kedourie, a revolutionary definition of freedom. Kant equated 'virtue' with 'free will'. On the other hand, neither freedom nor virtue depended on God's commands. Hence the new formula: 'the good will, which is the free will, is also the autonomous will'. This was revolutionary because the formula made the individual the centre and the sovereign of the universe, 'in a way never envisaged by the French revolutionaries or their intellectual precursors'; 'self-determination thus becomes the supreme political good'. Kedourie

admits that Kant cannot be held responsible for the uses to which his doctrine was put, but his teachings expressed a new attitude to political and social questions and 'a new political temper' which would later become popular among the intellectual classes of Germany (ibid.: 17–23).

Probably no one contributed to the idea of 'self-determination' more than the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), however, whose ideas had a not so inconsiderable influence on Kant. Chief among these was his idea of 'general will'. For Rousseau, the greatest danger man faces when living in society, as opposed to the state of nature, is 'the possible tyranny of will by his fellowmen'. To guard against this danger, men need to exchange their selfish will for the 'general will'. This can be achieved only if they cease to be natural men and become citizens instead. Natural men live for themselves, whereas citizens depend on the community of which they are a part: 'Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole' (Rousseau 2001 [1762]: 75). A political association makes sense, Rousseau believed, only if it can protect men from the capriciousness of others: 'this it can solely bring about if it substitutes law for the individual, if it can generate a public will and arm it with a strength that is beyond the power of any individual will' (Barnard 1984: 246).

Yet Rousseau was fully aware that citizenship, which entailed submission to the general will, could not take place spontaneously. 'In order to achieve this degree of unity, a national *esprit de corps* had to be created in which every citizen saw in citizenship a supreme moral good' (Barnard 1983: 239). This esprit de corps, the consciousness of belonging together, can only be created through patriotism, that 'fine and lively feeling which gives the force of self-love all the beauty of virtue, and lends it an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it the most heroic of all passions' (cited in Barnard 1984: 250). This was indeed what Rousseau had to say to the Polish Convention when he was asked for advice on a constitution for an independent Poland:

> There is one rampart … that will always be readied for its defense, and that no army can breach; and that is the virtue of its citizens, their patriotic zeal, in the distinctive cast that national institutions are capable of impressing upon their souls … Give a different bent to the passions of the Poles; in doing so, you will shape their minds and hearts in a national pattern that will set them apart from other peoples, that will keep them from being absorbed by other peoples. (2001 [1772]: 77)

The most efficient way to instil patriotism, on the other hand, is education:

> it is education that you must count on to shape the souls of the citizens in a national pattern … The newly-born infant, upon first opening his eyes,

must gaze upon the fatherland, and until his dying day should behold nothing else. Your true republican is a man who imbibed love of the fatherland, which is to say love of the laws and of liberty, with his mother's milk. That loves makes up his entire existence … the moment he has no fatherland, he is no more; if not dead, he is worse-off than if he were dead. (ibid.: 79–80)

The link between the Enlightenment and German Romanticism was provided by the German thinker Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). What distinguishes Herder from Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau is his belief in the uniqueness and incommensurability of national cultures. This was particularly the case with language, which 'bears the stamp of the mind and character of a national group':

Has a nationality anything more precious than the language of its fathers? In this language dwell its whole world of tradition, history, religion and principles of life, its whole heart and soul. To rob a nationality of its language or to degrade it, is to deprive it of its most precious possession. (cited in Heater 1998: 68–9)

Language is something internal, expressing man's innermost thoughts and feelings, just like the other cultural bonds which link members of a nation; these bonds are not 'things or artifacts imposed from above but living energies (*Kräfte*) emanating from within' (Barnard 1983: 242–3). Hence, 'nationality is a plant of nature; a nation is as natural a plant as a family, only with more branches; the most natural state is … one nation, an extended family with one national character' (cited in Heater 1998: 79). In that context, Herder objects to the conquest of one nation by another:

Nothing … is more manifestly contrary to the purpose of political government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing of various races and nationalities under one sceptre. Such states are … wholly devoid of inner life, and their component parts are connected through mechanical contrivances instead of bonds of sentiment. (ibid.)

In extolling the virtues of the diversity of cultures, Herder's aim is to repudiate the universalism of the Enlightenment. The political order he envisages is inspired by the example of ancient Hebrews, who were purportedly conscious of themselves as 'one people', despite their institutional and tribal fragmentation. In such a 'quasi-pluralist' order, individuals would be free to pursue their diverse interests and form a variety of autonomous institutions to serve these interests (Barnard 1983: 246–7). Contrary to much received wisdom, then, Herder's vision is one of plurality of cultures and its celebration, not of exclusionary nationalism. He does indeed recognize the benefits of unification for

the Germans; '[t]he separation of Prussians from the rest of Germans is purely artificial … The separation of the Germans from the other European nations is based on nature' (cited in Heater 1998: 79). Yet there is no *Favorit-Volk* in his scheme of things. 'No nationality has been solely designated by God as the chosen people of the earth; above all we must seek the truth and cultivate the garden of the common good' (cited in ibid.: 108).

Unfortunately, it was not his humanism that made the deepest inroads into the nineteenth century and German Romantic thought. To nationalists and romanticists, Barnard remarks, 'it was rather his vibrant defence of native languages as incommensurable treasures or his emotionally charged critique of the European Enlightenment that mattered first and foremost' (2003: 12; see also ibid.: 35, 57–64).

It was one of Kant's disciples, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), who gave these ideas a specifically German colouring. The most explicit statement of Fichte's ideas on nationalism can be found in his famous *Addresses to the German Nation*, delivered between 1807 and 1808, in the wake of Prussia's defeat by France at the Battle of Jena in 1806. Fichte is quite unequivocal regarding the purpose and the audience of the *Addresses*:

> I want to gather … from over the whole of our common soil men of similar sentiments and resolutions, to link them together, so that at this central point a single, continuous, and unceasing flame of patriotic disposition may be kindled, which will spread over the whole soil of the fatherland to its utmost boundaries. (cited in Heater 1998: 111)

For Fichte, 'only the German … really has a people and is entitled to count on one, and that he alone is capable of real and rational love for his nation' (2001 [1808]: 115). In fact, the Germans are the *Urvolk*, the original people, entrusted with a mission towards the rest of humankind – to create the perfect state: 'it is first of all Germans who are called upon to begin the new era as pioneers and models for the rest of mankind … you will see this nation the regenerator and recreator of the world' (cited in Heater 1998: 107). But what makes the Germans so special in the eyes of Fichte? Their high culture, above all their language. 'Wherever the German language was spoken', says Fichte:

> everyone who had first seen the light of day in its domain could consider himself as in a double sense a citizen, on the one hand, of the State where he was born … and, on the other hand, of the whole common fatherland of the German nation. (2001 [1808]: 125–6)

Language matters not only in the case of the Germans. 'Those who speak the same language', Fichte argues, 'are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins':

> It is true beyond doubt that, wherever a separate language is found, there a separate nation exists, which has the right to take independent charge of its affairs and to govern itself … [W]here a people has ceased to govern itself, it is equally bound to give up its language and to coalesce with conquerors. (cited in Heater 1998: 69)

It is not easy to assess the immediate impact of Fichte's *Addresses*. According to Heater, for example, their role in rousing support for German unification should not be exaggerated. The lectures, delivered at the Berlin Academy on Sunday afternoons, were sparsely attended and not reported in Berlin newspapers. The masonic lodges and secret societies which might have diffused his message, on the other hand, had limited memberships (1998: 21, 131). But the long-term impact of Fichte's ideas was profound. Kohn argues that Fichte spoke of an 'ideal' German in his *Addresses*, something which could only be realized after thorough education. This has not prevented him, however, from attributing to actual Germans those qualities which have been reserved to 'true' Germans. It was 'this confusion of historical reality and metaphysical ideal' that made his legacy so controversial and dangerous (1949: 336).

There was hardly any confusion, however, in the writings of other German Romantics, such as the Lutheran theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the literary critic Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), the philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), the publicist Adam Müller (1779–1805), the dramatist Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), the publicist Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860) and the nationalist agitator Friedrich Jahn (1778–1852). Kohn (1949, 1950) observes that Fichte occupied a unique position among the Romantics as he regarded nationality as an historical growth, and not a natural, timeless essence. For the latter, nationality was an organic growth, based on customs and traditions which gave expression to the authentic folk spirit, the *Volkgeist*. Hence, for Schlegel,

> It is much more appropriate to nature that the human race be strictly separated into nations than that several nations should be fused as has happened in recent times … Each state is an independent individual existing for itself, it is unconditionally its own master, has its peculiar character, and governs itself by its peculiar laws, habits and customs. (cited in Kohn 1950: 460)

Not surprisingly, the Germans constitute the quintessential nation, a people with 'a very great character':

> There is not much found anywhere to equal this race of men, and they have several qualities of which we can find no trace in any known people. I see in all the achievements of the Germans … only the germ of an approaching great time. (ibid.: 456)