

The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity

Second Edition: Revised and Updated

James G. Kellas



The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity

Also by James Kellas

The Scottish Political System
Modern Scotland

The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity

Second Edition

James G. Kellas



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Acknowledgements

I first studied nationalism as an undergraduate student of Joseph Frankel at the University of Aberdeen in 1957–8, and later specialised in the study of Scottish politics as a university lecturer. Once more, the subject of nationalism came to the fore, in the form of Scottish nationalism. As a Visiting Professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh in 1985–6, I taught a course on nationalism generally, and had regular discussions on the subject with Richard Cottam (an expert on Middle East nationalism), Dennison Rusinow (an historian with a particular interest in Balkan nationalism) and Christina Paulston (a linguist specialising in language survival). These sessions broadened my perspective considerably.

At the University of Glasgow, I have kept up a continuous discourse on nationalism with colleagues, many of whom are experts on political theory and the study of particular areas of the world. Most of these will perhaps be surprised at the content of this book, and perhaps alarmed. I hope they do not mind my thanking them here, but they are of course not a party to what I have written.

Special thanks are due to Avril Johnstone, who coped with the frequent revisions during the production of the original typescript.

JAMES G. KELLAS

Preface to the Second Edition

Since the first edition was published in 1991, much of the material contained in it has had to be changed and updated. The USSR has disintegrated into its 'national' components, as have Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. In general, the eastern European communist bloc has been replaced by independent nation-states, each showing its own strong nationalism. Meanwhile, in the rest of Europe, nationalism vied with the supranational European Union for the loyalty of governments and peoples. Again, nationalism showed its continuing strength in the face of integration. The old states, such as Britain, France, Spain, Belgium and Canada, continued to be threatened by nationalisms within them, but none broke up entirely. Nationalist and ethnic conflict continued unabated in Africa and Asia.

Apart from updating, there has been some alteration of emphasis. There is more specifically on politics and less on other aspects of nationalism and ethnicity which do not impinge clearly on politics. A somewhat different approach has been adopted for international relations, to take account of the effect that international society has on nationalism in aspiring nation-states, notably those in the former states of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the USSR. This 'top-down' view can be contrasted with the 'bottom-up' perspective, which sees international society as the product of nationalism.

The theory presented has not been altered, but account has been taken of criticisms by some reviewers. It is true that the theory is as much a collection of interlocking and interdependent aspects of nationalism as an hypothesis which can be falsified, unless one rejects entirely one or more of its 'building-blocks'. For example, some would remove the block which links nationalism to aspects of human nature. The problem is: what evidence can be found to verify or falsify this (or any other) part of theory? As the study of human genes progresses rapidly, we shall no

doubt be able in the future to determine if our genes are in any way related to ethnocentric and nationalist behaviour.

As for politics, the period since the first edition has amply demonstrated that nationalism and ethnicity are as relevant at the end of the twentieth century as at any other time in history.

JAMES G. KELLAS

Introduction

Nationalism and ethnicity are central to the subject of politics, whether in the world of action or in the realm of study. Countless wars, revolts and conflicts have been the result of the passions which nation and 'kith and kin' have aroused in human beings. It has been estimated that more than ten million lives were lost between 1945 and 1975 alone as a result of ethnic violence (Horowitz, 1985, p. xi, quoting Isaacs, 1975, p. 3). That total has probably risen by another two million since 1975, and is almost certainly on the increase. Hundreds of thousands died in Rwanda and Zaire in the mid-1990s. The Government of Croatia reported that the country had suffered 13,583 deaths and nearly 40,000 injured in the 'homeland war' of 1991–5, and neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina experienced perhaps 200,000 deaths in the same period. Two thousand died in 1989 alone in ethnic violence in the Punjab, and as many in Sri Lanka. Deaths and injuries because of ethnic violence have also been common in Azerbaijan, Kashmir, Burma in Asia, and in the Basque country and Northern Ireland in Europe, to name only a few examples. Nationalist passions are probably the strongest in the whole political spectrum, and are generally stronger today than those aroused by religion, class, individual or group interest.

These passions are not all negative, however. Nationalism has been considered essential to the establishment of a modern industrial society (Gellner, 1983), and the 'the sole vision and rationale of political solidarity today' (Smith, 1991, p. 176). It gives legitimacy to the state, and inspires its citizens to feel an emotional attachment towards it. It can be a source of creativity in the arts, and enterprise in the economy. Its power to mobilise political activity is unsurpassed, especially in the vital activity of 'nation-building'. It is intimately connected with democracy.

The student of politics is faced with many problems when tackling this subject. Not only are the manifestations of nationalism and ethnicity widespread and complex, but there is also a very large and contradictory literature in this field, with works by

sociologists, philosophers and historians as well as by political scientists. This is understandable, given the universal scope and importance of the subject. But the spread across disciplines has tended to produce not so much a synthesis as several partial views. In the case of political science, it is not clear that there is a distinctive view at all. Certainly, there is no integrated theory of the politics of nationalism which, while taking account of the many theories relating to the subject, focuses especially on the political dimension and produces an integrated theoretical analysis. This is especially needed, as it is politics which gives the most powerful expression to nations and ethnic groups.

While this book attempts to develop such a theory, it also aims to provide an introduction to, and explain, all the major approaches to the subject. Some of these approaches are mutually exclusive, but others can complement each other. For example, while it is difficult to reconcile the view that human nature leads to nationalism with the view that nationalism arose in a specific period in history, it is possible to show that nationalist behaviour has both cultural and economic determinants. This reconciles some linguistic studies of nationalism with certain Marxist and other materialist writers. For political scientists, the focus is on the state and political power. Nationalism and ethnic politics are related to the state and the struggle for control of political resources. Thus the agenda stretches to constitutions, parties, groups, leaders and voters. These interact with the cultural and economic forces and may explain when nationalism is successful and when it is not.

Definitions

A serious problem for students of the subject is the ambiguity in the meaning of the words used. At this stage, the reader will find it useful to consider the following basic terms, which will recur throughout this book. As there is no agreed meaning for them, rather an emerging consensus in the literature, it cannot be claimed that a 'correct' meaning is given here. But a working definition of each is essential for further study (a major glossary of concepts and terms in the study of ethnicity has been prepared by Professor F. W. Riggs of the University of Hawaii, under

the auspices of the International Social Science Council's Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (INTER-COCTA)) (Riggs, 1985).

Nation A nation is a group of people who feel themselves to be a community bound together by ties of history, culture and common ancestry. Nations have 'objective' characteristics which may include a territory, a language, a religion, or common descent (though not all of these are always present), and 'subjective' characteristics, essentially a people's awareness of its nationality and affection for it. In the last resort it is 'the supreme loyalty' for people who are prepared to die for their nation.

The term 'nation' is also commonly applied to states, as in the United Nations, consisting of the 'nations' of the world. While many states share the features of nations, and can be called 'nation-states', there are also nations within states, and such states are correctly called 'multinational states'. For centuries there were multinational empires such as the Austrian, Ottoman and Russian Empires, and today there are states consisting of more than one nation such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was composed of over one hundred 'nationalities', and this term was officially preferred there to 'nations', for political reasons. 'Nations' in communist ideology are linked to nationalism, with the possible break-up of the state, while 'nationalities' are expected to have predominantly cultural aspirations. Nevertheless, the titular nationalities of the fifteen Soviet republics (those that gave their names to the republics) were able to claim that they ought to be 'nation-states', and broke away from the USSR on that basis.

In this work, 'nation' is used independently of 'state' and 'ethnic group', but these terms overlap in some cases. For example, Denmark, Iceland and Japan are states in which nearly all the citizens belong to one nation, meaning a social community. That nation can also be analysed in terms of ethnicity, but as will shortly be explained, 'ethnic group' has special connotations in contemporary politics. In some works, the terms 'ethnonation' and 'ethnonationalism' are used to distinguish an ethnic nation and ethnic nationalism from 'nation' meaning state, and 'nationalism' meaning patriotism. Here, '**ethnic nation**' is used where

a nation consists of one ethnic group, '**social nation**' where several ethnic groups form one nation, and '**official nation**' for the nationalism of the state.

Nationalism Nationalism is both an ideology and a form of behaviour. The ideology of nationalism builds on people's awareness of a nation (national self-consciousness) to give a set of attitudes and a programme of action. These may be cultural, economic or political. Since 'nation' can be defined in 'ethnic', 'social' or 'official' senses, so nationalism can take these forms also.

In all cases, nationalism seeks to defend and promote the interests of the nation. The political aspect of nationalism is seen most clearly in the demand for national self-determination, or 'home rule'. For states, 'official nationalism' means patriotism and the defence of 'national sovereignty' in international relations. All types of nationalism seek a political expression for the nation, most strongly in independent statehood. Nationalists may settle for less, however. They may be content (at least, for a time) for the nation to be a unit in a federal state (e.g. Quebec in Canada) or to have devolution in a unitary state (e.g. Wales in the United Kingdom (UK) and Catalonia in Spain). It must be said, however, that not all federalists or devolutionists would recognise themselves as nationalists, for many would see nationalism as undesirable since it could lead to the disintegration of the state. Lastly, nationalists, especially ethnic nationalists, may engage only in 'pressure group' politics, with no territorial aim regarding home rule. Their aim is rather the protection and advancement of the ethnic group within the state.

As a form of political behaviour, nationalism is closely linked to ethnocentrism (see below) and patriotism. Nationalist behaviour is based on the feeling of belonging to a community which is the nation. Those who do not belong to the nation are seen as different, foreigners or aliens, with loyalties to their own nations. Nationalist behaviour in its strongest form is seen in the 'supreme sacrifice' of death for one's nation. In milder forms, it shows itself in prejudice relating to foreigners, stereotyping of other nations, and solidarity with co-nationals. 'Official nationalism' or patriotism is sometimes given a more noble status than other forms of nationalism, and may conflict with these.

Patriotism focuses loyalty on the state, while 'social' and 'ethnic' nationalism may seek the disintegration of the state.

Ethnic group 'Ethnic group' and 'ethnocentrism' are comparable with 'nation' and 'nationalism'. The difference between them is that 'ethnic group' is more narrowly defined than 'nation', and 'ethnocentrism' is more rooted in social psychology than is 'nationalism', which has explicitly ideological and political dimensions. Ethnic groups are generally differentiated from nations on several dimensions: they are usually smaller; they are more clearly based on a common ancestry; and they are more pervasive in human history, while nations are perhaps specific to time and place. Ethnic groups are essentially **exclusive** or **ascriptive**, meaning that membership in such groups is confined to those who share certain inborn attributes. Nations on the other hand are more *inclusive* and are culturally or politically defined. However, it is often possible to trace the origins of nations and nationalism to ethnic groups and their ethnocentric behaviour (Kohn, 1944; Smith, 1986).

In contemporary political usage, the term 'ethnic group' is frequently used to describe a quasi-national kind of 'minority group' within the state, which has somehow not achieved the status of a nation. Thus, 'ethnic politics' in Britain means the politics of recent non-white immigrants, while 'nationalism' is applied to the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish. The English are often considered in England to be neither 'ethnic' nor 'nationalist', rather 'patriotic'. Other people may see the English as ethnic and nationalist, and the English themselves show themselves to be such in politics, particularly with regard to the other nations of the United Kingdom, or to the black population in England.

'Race relations' is yet another dimension involved here. '**Race**' is distinguished from 'nation' and 'ethnic group' mainly because races are discussed in predominantly biological terms, with particular emphasis on phenotypical distinctions such as skin colour, stature, etc., and presumed genetic distinctions. (Decisions of the Commission for Racial Equality and of Industrial Tribunals in Scotland in 1997 have, however, included Scots and English as equivalent to 'races' in terms of illegal discrimination

(*Glasgow Herald*, 29 August 1997.) 'Racism' matches 'nationalism' as an ideology and type of behaviour, and is related to 'race' rather than to 'nation'. It is even more negatively assessed generally than nationalism, and has led to political action to counteract it (e.g. race relations legislation, civil rights movements, anti-apartheid campaigns, etc.).

Ethnocentrism 'Ethnocentrism' is basically a psychological term, although it is also used generally in the study of society and politics. It can be related to 'nationalism' and 'racism', but its focus is strictly on the individual's relationship with an ethnic group rather than with a 'nation' or a 'race'. Ethnocentrism gives a general and perhaps even universal basis for a type of behaviour which also underlies nationalism and racism. It is essentially concerned with an individual's psychological biases towards his/her ethnic group, and against other ethnic groups. Favourable attitudes are held about the 'ingroup' (here the ethnic group, nation or race), and unfavourable ones about the 'outgroup' (other ethnic groups, nations or races). The intensity of ethnocentric attitudes and behaviour varies from the mild and peaceful to the belligerent and megalomaniac (van der Dennen in Reynolds, *et al.*, 1987, p. 1). The causes of ethnocentrism in general and the explanations for its different forms are complex and have been the subject of various sociobiological, psychological and sociological studies (see for example, LeVine and Campbell, 1972; Adorno, 1950; Forbes, 1985; Reynolds *et al.*, 1987).

Ethnicity Ethnicity is the state of being ethnic, or belonging to an ethnic group. It is a more neutral term than ethnocentrism which, as we have seen, denotes prejudicial attitudes favouring one ethnic group and rejecting others. While some nations may be called 'ethnic nations', there are ethnic groups who do not claim to be nations. The difference may be found in the character of ethnic politics compared with nationalist politics. Nationalism focuses on 'national self-determination', or home rule in a national territory. Ethnic politics in contrast are largely concerned with the protection of rights for members of the group within the existing state, with no claim for a territorial 'homeland'. However, these distinctions are not made by all

scholars. The field of 'ethnic studies' includes nations and nationalism, and many nations have 'ethnic origins' (Smith, 1986).

Argument

The central aim of this book is to provide an **integrated theory of the politics of nationalism and ethnicity**. The theory is constructed from 'building-blocks' which lead in sequence from one to the other. Within each building-block are posited 'necessary' and 'sufficient' conditions. A full treatment of this theory is given in the concluding chapter, and a synopsis of it in tabular form at the end.

Essentially, the theory starts with the hypothesis of a link between certain traits in human nature and ethnicity and ethnocentrism. Nationalism and ethnic politics display characteristics of emotion and intensity which appear to derive from instinctive behaviour, and from a human predisposition to show loyalty to 'ingroups' and hostility to 'outgroups' (ethnocentrism).

Particular ethnic groups and nations become such groups through informal processes of interaction, and from the more sophisticated influence of nationalist ideology and political structures, especially states. 'Nationalism' is an ideology which claims supreme loyalty from individuals for the nation and asserts the right of 'national self-determination' or self-government for the nation. There are other nationalist ideologies which make claims for the nation, such as its inherent superiority to other nations. Their appeal is based on an analogy between nations and 'kin', and they tap instinctive feelings of ethnocentrism.

The context in which nationalism flourishes is determined by a complex interaction of political, economic and cultural developments in history. While the ideology of nationalism has spread throughout the world, the differing contexts of time and place have given nationalism and ethnicity differing political forms.

Central to all aspects of political nationalism, however, are two related patterns:

1. The importance of **national identity**, whether determined (ascribed, irrespective of personal choice) or through **national self-determination**, that is, the ability to freely determine

one's own national identity, culture (including language, education, religion), and form of government. In either case, political nationalism links nations to political power, through parties, elections and political institutions, with a nation-state its ideal expression.

2. The desire to overcome social and political systems of **domination** and **exclusion** in which nations other than one's own wield predominant power. This power can be just a matter of predominant numbers in a democratic system, or non-democratic rule by one nation. Exclusion operates when citizenship is denied to members of particular nations, and/or access to education or the media in a national language (to give only one example of such exclusions) is restricted or denied. Exclusions also operate at a political level, as when the top positions are reserved (or in effect reserved) for the members of one nation.

Such systems are typically empires and multinational states in which one (or occasionally more than one) nation holds a position of **hegemony**. Only a 'consociational democracy' or 'consociationalism' (see below) can overcome such a system of hegemony in a multinational state.

What accounts for hegemony and its accompanying nationalist reaction in a multinational state has interested many writers. A particularly strong explanation is that which relates to perceptions of 'uneven economic development' affecting different nations and ethnic groups, coupled with a 'cultural division of labour'. In this division of labour, particular nations occupy different occupations and life chances in a hierarchy, with one nation exerting hegemony. This leads to a nationalist reaction in the dominated nations. Such a reaction is linked to the development of general political aspirations for democracy, and to cultural changes (e.g. widespread education and a desire for cultural status).

The democratic alternative to nationalist ideology which demands a nation-state is cultural pluralism and consociationalism, based on a multinational or multiethnic 'consensus' state. For such a state to succeed, certain strategies must be adopted. In international relations, supranationalism and 'integration' face similar obstacles, and consociationalism there is

more difficult to achieve. Yet strategies for international integration can also be devised.

Structure of the Book

The chapters of the book are based on the building-blocks of the theory. Chapter 1 discusses **human nature** (biology and psychology) and its connection with ethnicity and ethnocentrism. Chapter 2 describes the emergence of the **idea of the nation and the ideology** of nationalism. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 put these in a **historical context**, with generalisation about **types** of nationalisms and nationalist movements. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 deal with contemporary **case studies** of nationalism and ethnic politics, distinguishing between different parts of the world. Chapter 9 looks at **cultural pluralism, consociational democracy** and other methods of **political accommodation** in a multinational and multiethnic state. Chapter 10 discusses nationalism in **international relations**. Chapter 11 describes the **integrated theory** of the politics of nationalism and ethnicity.

1

Ethnicity and Human Nature

The most difficult and controversial part of the study of nationalism is trying to find a general explanation for its existence. Scholars are divided into those who go back to something called 'human nature', where instinctive behaviour is to be found, and those who look only for historical, cultural and economic explanations ('contexts'). The former have the problem that what is universally true is not much use in explaining particular differences in the world. The latter have great difficulty in explaining why the passions aroused by nationalism are so strong and universal, so that they seem to transcend mere circumstances to tap deep-seated emotions.

In this chapter we look at writings on nationalism and ethnicity which focus on human nature, but we shall also take account of the arguments against such an approach. On balance, this book accepts that human nature (in so far as that can be defined) plays some part in explaining why ethnicity and ethnocentrism (including, at particular times, nationalism) have been so pervasive and powerful in human history. But the evidence is ambiguous, for the balance between 'nature' and 'nurture' in human affairs is not easy to determine. In any case, in the theory presented here, human nature is only a 'necessary condition' for the many manifestations of nationalism and ethnic politics in history. Why particular nations and nationalisms develop is a matter for historical explanation. Thus, for there to be 'sufficient conditions' in any particular case relating to nationalism and ethnicity, explanations which go beyond human nature must be invoked.

Yet the basic question remains: why should people (universally?) distrust and dislike foreigners, and prefer 'their own kind'? Why does ethnocentrism (and its related form, nationalism) lead to

wars and legitimise 'the supreme sacrifice', to die for one's ethnic group/ nation? Is Robert Burns to be believed when he wrote:

'It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.'?

This is rhetoric which invokes the extension of family ties to humanity as a whole. 'The Brotherhood of Man' has inspired 'universalists' in politics, and has led to institutions such as the United Nations, with its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). But in the rhetoric of nationalism 'brotherhood' means something different from sympathy and common interest with one's fellow human beings; it implies a closer blood relationship ('brothers-in-law' are of course not usually close blood relations, but 'brothers' of a kind, nevertheless).

Blood relationships are fundamental to life and to reproduction. Politics is concerned intimately with the impact which such relationships have on human beings. We all understand what 'father' and 'mother' means, as well as 'brother', 'sister' and 'cousin'. Even more distant relations can arouse sympathy and lead to nepotism (favouring one's relations). The 'whole family' is a ready-made structure from our basic experience, which can be translated into politics (the 'British family of nations'). The 'Fatherland', the 'Motherland', 'kith and kin', are ideas which are powerful political resources, appealing to human instincts, and they have endured throughout the ages as objects of supreme emotion and loyalty. Wales is 'the Land of our Fathers'; Jews have traditionally defined themselves as descended from a Jewish mother, and the Law of Return of Israel allows Jews the right to live in the 'National Home of the Jewish People'; Germany does the same for certain members of the 'Volk'; some Afrikaner nationalists formed themselves into a 'Brotherhood'; many British people felt sympathy for their 'kith and kin' in Rhodesia, despite their illegal Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, and for the (British) Falkland Islanders when they were invaded by Argentina in 1982. Citizens are expected to be ready to die for their 'Fatherland'/'Motherland', and it may even be natural to want to do so. One would hardly die willingly for one's job, one's social class, or even one's state, if that is not seen as the 'Fatherland'.

Why is this so? We can see that the rhetoric of nationalism draws heavily on the idea of the nation as a family, but is there any scientific reason why people should respond so strongly to such an appeal? We are born with genetic characteristics and instincts, and we cannot escape from them, although they can be cultivated in several directions. They are certainly the most primordial of human attributes, and apparently the most powerful. It is little wonder that such resources are so easily and prominently tapped in politics. If there is a biological basis to nationalism and ethnocentrism it is easier to make sense of the kind of politics which results. Perhaps no other form of political activity is drawn so clearly from what some maintain are the biological 'givens' of human nature.

But how much politics is determined by biology? Our genes have been studied as never before, and human behaviour, as well as our physical make-up and propensity to illness or health is increasingly attributed by geneticists to particular genes. But most biologists look to social factors to explain at least part of these phenomena. In the relatively new field of 'sociobiology', scientists (natural and social) are engaged in fierce arguments, many of which are directly concerned with our subject (see for example, van den Berghe, 1981; Reynolds, Falger and Vine (eds), 1987; Shaw and Wong, 1989; Kecmanovic, 1996). The theories of 'inclusive fitness' and 'kin selection', most obviously appropriate to animal behaviour, can be brought to bear on human behaviour too. Inclusive fitness is a theory in genetics first propounded by W. D. Hamilton in 1964. It has been summarised as follows:

genes will spread if their carriers act to increase not only their own fitness or reproductive success but also that of other individuals carrying the same genes. A person's inclusive fitness is his or her personal fitness plus the increased fitness of relatives that he or she has in some way caused by his or her actions. (Reynolds *et al.*, 1987, p. xvii)

The way to achieve 'inclusive fitness' is 'kin selection', or mating with relatives, and animal behaviour gives evidence for instinctive propensities to do this. 'Kin selection', however, is not the same as 'group selection', a much-disputed theory in biology.

In 'kin selection' there is no hard-and-fast boundary involved between groups of mating individuals, as might be found between ethnic groups or nations. Rather, 'kin selection' is a consequence of 'gene selection' or 'individual selection', which gives rise to a 'mathematical probability' of mating and 'altruistic behaviour' among those most closely related to each other (Dawkins, 1989, pp. 7, 94). 'Group selection', on the other hand, would appear to relate more directly to ethnicity and nationalism, if ethnic groups and nations are the groups involved.

How much of this is relevant to politics? Potentially, a great deal, but at this stage in scientific theorising it is impossible to know how valid these theories are, even for non-human biology, since they are relatively new, and controversial. Nevertheless, these hypotheses are repeated here since they are part of the academic literature on nationalism and ethnicity. For this author, the balance of evidence seems to support the view that human nature includes instincts which are related to ethnocentrism and nationalist behaviour. For most social scientists, however, such ideas are anathema, since they seem to deny human freedom to escape from nationalist and racist prejudices and behaviour.

Even if the sociobiological approach is accepted, that does not imply any consensus regarding the effects of biology on political behaviour. In the collection of essays entitled *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism* (Reynolds *et al.*, 1987), the editors, after reviewing the biological explanations for ethnocentrism, reject the idea that selfishness and racism are 'genetic imperatives' of human nature (p. xv). Moreover, they state that 'There are no theoretical grounds for supposing that we cannot identify ourselves with humanity as a whole' (p. xix). But they also present biological evidence which points to instinctive behaviour, especially kin selection among animals. In so far as human beings are subject to animal behaviour, sociobiology must be taken seriously. Students of nationalism and ethnicity should be aware of the claims made by sociobiologists, and should test them against the evidence. So far, their theories do not amount to conventional science, especially with reference to human behaviour.

A more orthodox view than that of the sociobiologists is that human behaviour is the result of culture and learning rather than biology. If there is a biological component to ethnocentrism and nationalist behaviour, these writers argue, it is activated by

society and politics, and can be suppressed or sublimated in the same way by these. But the evidence for that is as controversial as for the hypothesis that we are subject to our genes in this regard. Clearly, in human affairs there is an interaction between genes and environment, and neither is independent of the other.

The universal presence of ethnocentrism gives some support to the argument that it is genetically determined, but the form it has taken over the ages has varied considerably. It might even lie dormant politically in certain conditions. For example, the drive to reproduce one's genes through 'kin selection' may have little explanatory power in the conditions of a mobile and ethnically (genetically) mixed modern society. We may have few relations around us to mate with. But 'kin selection' instincts (if they exist) may still provide a necessary condition for nationalist behaviour, xenophobia and ethnic/racial discrimination, even if the sufficient conditions for such behaviour derive from political, social and economic circumstances. The biggest deficiency of sociobiological theories for the study of politics is that they are of little use in explaining why particular ethnic groups exist, and how nations were formed in history. Nor can they explain the *political contexts* in which ethnocentrism and nationalism flourish. So we have to move on to other types of theory if we are to understand fully the *politics* of nationalism and ethnicity.

Language is closely linked to ethnicity and nationalism, and it is also a facet of human nature. One political scientist (Laponce, 1985) has used certain 'neurophysiological and neuropsychological findings' to assert that there are physical reasons why particular languages are spoken by particular nations. He also suggests that unilingualism in a 'mother tongue' is more natural than bilingualism, for neurophysiological and neuropsychological reasons. A dominant language, he says, will drive out a minority language in a bilingual or multilingual state, unless that state is divided into unilingual territories, as in Belgium and Switzerland. His conclusion for Quebec in Canada is that the French language there can only survive in a unilingual Quebec polity, since Canada as a whole is predominantly English-speaking. He thus supports the Quebec Nationalists and Liberals who seek an officially French-only-speaking Quebec.

Laponce is unusual in introducing a neurophysiological element into the discussion of language and nationalism, and as

with the sociobiologists we are left wondering what scientific validity there is to his argument. One thing is clear. Whether the result of human nature or not, language divisions are strongly related to ethnicity and nationalism, and we shall see in Chapter 2 that many nineteenth-century nationalists based their ideology of nationalism on the claims of language communities to national independence.

Yet another way to approach human nature and its relationship with nationalism is through social psychology. Social psychologists have conducted experiments which have thrown light on how humans behave as members of groups. These experiments add to our understanding of the politics of nationalism and ethnicity.

In a well-known study of inter-group conflict and cooperation (Sherif, 1961), boys who were divided into two groups called 'the Rattlers' and 'the Eagles' developed hostility towards the opposite group when put into competitive situations. It seems that humans, when combined together in an ingroup, have a propensity for hostility towards members of an outgroup, especially if that group is clearly defined and there is competition between the ingroup and the outgroup. They will also develop a sense of community with the other members of the ingroup, even where no other common attributes exist. Even so, if group goals require cooperation with other groups, such cooperation is forthcoming.

If this propensity for ingroup/outgroup hostility is given some substance or supporting instinctive behaviour because of the ethnic character of the groups, then the conflict may be more serious, if one accepts the special biological nature of ethnicity and ethnocentrism (but even football rivalries can lead to violence and apparent hatred!). Suppose then that two groups are clearly defined as separate nations such as the English and the Scots, and people are firmly allocated to one or other of these nations. Since the idea of a nation is linked to kinship, even if the 'kin' are mainly distant relations or even 'fictive' kin (no real genetic relationship, but one that is believed to exist), we have in nationalism a combination of biological ethnocentrism, psychological ingroup/outgroup hostile propensities, and cultural and political differences. This makes it a special form of political behaviour and one which can be studied along with related forms of behaviour such as xenophobia, discrimination and racism (as in Reynolds *et al.*, 1987).