THE DISCOURSE AND ITS DISCONTENTS:

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THEORIES OF

NATIONALISM

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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Declaration

This Dissertation entitled "**THE DISCOURSE AND ITS DISCONTENTS:**

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THEORIES OF NATIONALISM" submitted for

the Degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, has

not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other

university and is my original work.

Sunalini Kumar

We recommend that this Dissertation be placed before the Examiners for

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INTRODUCTION

This is a critical study of theories on nationalism. We stand poised at the beginning of the twenty first century. If the 'short twentieth century' was one of earth-shattering wars and destruction, many believe that *this century* will be one where earlier sources of conflict will be surpassed. Nationalism, conventionally regarded a violent and retrograde phenomenon is viewed within this epochal consciousness as belonging strictly to the past few centuries; something that stands to be overcome in this new epoch. Of course, certain recent developments have also contributed to this conclusion – prime among these is the phenomenal speed and intensity of the most recent phase of globalisation. "Global financial integration, dense global networks of trade and migration, a global communications infrastructure purveying an incipient global mass culture, the global reach of transnational corporations."[1] have led a range of writers to agree on the growing irrelevance of national boundaries. The formation of the European Union – the shining symbol of transnationalism – on the very land that gave supposedly gave birth to nationalism have reinforced the conviction that the world was moving beyond the nation-state. Much of the literature produced in the recent decade has documented these supra-national developments. By no means has this literature been confined to those in favour of globalisation – even those opposed to transnationalisation have announced the death of the nation-state. It would seem that the nation-state has 'lived its time' in the twentieth century and no longer remains a significant variable to understand contemporary events.

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[1] Rogers Brubaker *Nationalism Reframed* Cambridge, CUP 1996, p.3

To many of these writers, the history of the world looks like one in which nations move inexorably from being 'communities of sentiment' to a brave new world where human societies are organised along rational lines, state institutions are thoroughly secularised and politics is truly a professional vocation. We will further discuss this teleological and we daresay *millennial* judgment about the world that we live in during the course of this study. Let us first note a simultaneous trend in recent scholarship – the dismayed recognition that nationalism is not in decline but is indeed in a process of a spectacular world-wide resurgence. Developments in Eastern Europe including the renewed fighting in the Balkans and the re-configuration of national boundaries in Asia including the most recent case of East Timor and Indonesia have confirmed the fact that nationalism is not waning but in fact alive and kicking.

So we may ask which one of the above sets of arguments is true. Is the heyday of nationalism over or is it a making a hydra-headed, Janus-faced[2] resurgence in the contemporary world? A closer survey of the two trends of thinking on nationalism reveals that they are not contradictory as they first seem, but in fact perfectly congruent. The accounts of nationalism in decline refer invariably to the developed world and the neat reverse applies to the developing world – Asia and Eastern Europe in particular. Such a western-centric viewpoint would hold that nationalism in the West (following Hobsbawm's famous Owl of Minerva[3]) has flown gracefully into the night but like every other ideology, the non-developed, non-West is belatedly saddled with its virulent rise.

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[2] A term popularised by Tom Nairn
[3] Eric Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism since 1789*, Cambridge CUP 1989

A more sophisticated version of the above arguments will concede that the West continues to be influenced by nationalism, but stresses that this nationalism is simply 'patriotism' of the cosmopolitan, reasonable variety that enables multi-cultural, even multi-national states to function smoothly. Of course, the East is condemned to lag behind in this historic journey towards transnationalism or cosmopolitanism *in perpetua*[4]. A parallel argument usually made in terms of explanation of Eastern European or Asian nationalisms is that that identity-centric nationalism, for long repressed by the overtly and aggressively modernising postcolonial and communist states, has come back with doubled force to haunt these states. Accompanied by this 'return of the repressed' argument is a thinly-disguised apprehension that nationalism may 'pick its way back like drugs and terrorism', in the words of Partha Chatterjee, to the developed world.

This study takes as its *initial problematic* the above sets of assumptions within standard scholarship on nationalism and argues that in fact these arguments are untrue. Nationalism today is a ubiquitous phenomenon in the West as much as the East. We will during the course of this study attempt to trace the roots of what we believe is a prejudice within standard scholarship that serves more to obfuscate rather than illuminate the above truth about contemporary nationalism. We will also seek correctives to theoretical biases through newer scholarship that builds on the oversights of the existing literature in order to arrive at an alternative understanding of nationalism. Before we explain the trajectory of this effort further, a short explanation of the *two simultaneous theoretical efforts* undertaken in this study.

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[4] In Partha Chatterjee's evocative phrase, the East always remains a 'belated consumer of modernity'.

A Fable and Some Comparisons

There is a popular Indian fable about four blind men and an elephant. In the story, the men, feeling their way around the proverbial elephant's body make a series of untrue claims. One man holds the trunk and asserts with confidence that the animal is long and serpentine, while another argues that the pillar-like leg is all there is to it. In effect, none of the four men appreciates the true dimensions of the mammoth creature. This study argues that much of the writing on nationalism is comparable to the men in the fable. In other words, much of the conventional scholarship on nationalism has been less than successful in explaining the particular constellation of ideas and ideology that underpins contemporary nationalism. Of course, it can be reasonably argued that a writer may not wish to explain all forms of nationalism, only some specific examples of the phenomenon. However, most studies of nationalism are implicitly informed by a larger theory – these too are constrained by the lack of an adequately inclusive theoretical framework. For instance, some works focus on the role of ethnicity in nationalism, missing almost its entirely its connection with the material conditions of modern states. Other works may concentrate on explaining the relationship between the European state in history and the rise of nationalism, in effect being unable to appreciate the contemporary ubiquitous-ness of the phenomenon. The lack of any agreement on what nationalism is means that many works end up comparing apples with oranges or miss the wood for the trees by stressing one factor to the exclusion of others.

More perniciously, the cumulative effect of adopting a non-inclusive, narrowly based or ahistorical definition of nationalism is theoretical blindness and Euro-centric bias, as has been mentioned above. *This study will attempt to trace the roots of this bias in both conventional and newer scholarship on the subject.*

The *second theoretical effort* takes as its inspiration A.J Motyl's astute observation that the definitions of nationalism reveal more about the definers than about the defined[5]. Most writers on nationalism are theorists who have also worked on other areas. Therefore, although there are questions that constantly recur in the literature, nationalism as a field of study does not have an exclusive area of concerns and a well-developed central problematic. Further, as many writers on the subject have repeatedly observed this field of study is plagued by an utter lack of consensus on definitions. The ambiguity surrounding the words 'nation' 'nationalism' and 'nationality' means that the definition that one arrives at has much to do with who one is and where one starts. In the face of such a conceptual and definitional mire, it is claimed that an understanding of the *origins* of various viewpoints on nationalism becomes not simply interesting but *invaluable. Therefore, the simultaneous effort through this study would be to understand broader trends in scholarship within the social sciences in general* especially in the twentieth century. Hopefully, by the end of the study, we will be closer to a satisfactory definition of nationalism based on the insights from this study. For the time being, as a very loose working **definition**, we may say that nationalism *as action* refers to the sum of nation-oriented practices in the contemporary world. Nationalism *as belief* refers to a doctrine that privileges the nation as the primary focus of loyalty for individuals and groups.

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[5] A.J Motyl "The Modernity of Nationalism" *Journal of International Affairs*, 45, no.2 pp.307-22 (1992)

Let us now turn to an explanation of the trajectory of this study and its central questions. In the face of a hallowed tradition of writing on nationalism[6], this work does not pretend it has a radically original thesis on the topic. Nor does it attempt a comprehensive overview of the major arguments presented during the tenure of nationalism as a subject. Rather, it will focus on nationalism as a *political* phenomenon that nevertheless uses cultural idioms to achieve diverse ends. In the process it will raise and attempt to answer three **central questions**. These are:

First, what is the nature of contemporary nationalism and what is its historical relationship with material variables including the modern state, colonialism and capitalism? *Second*, how do non-material variables especially culture and political ideologies influence the course of nationalism? Another way of posing the first two questions would be to inquire as to nationalism's relationship with subjective and objective factors. *Finally*, are the categories 'Western' and 'Eastern' nationalisms useful to understand the spread of the doctrine and is nationalism especially in the East always a retrograde phenomenon or does it also contain liberatory, emancipatory potential?

Theoretical Confusions and Convictions

The central intuition of this study as stated above is that nationalism is ubiquitous. Thus we will argue that eurocentric accounts of 'the rampant rise of nationalism in the East' as some kind of dark, elemental irrational force is a form of theoretical obfuscation. As Rogers Brubaker has written, "currently faddish pronouncements about the resurgence

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[6] See chapter one

and ubiquity of nationalism, like earlier sweeping declarations of its decline and obsolescence obscure more than they reveal" regarding the nature of nationalism".[7]

The history of nationalism has shown that the doctrine lends itself to appropriation and use by diverse, even competing ideological currents. Conceptual confusion has been compounded by factors intrinsic to the discipline of the social sciences in recent years. As will be argued and will hopefully become clear during the study, the ideological excesses of early theorising on nationalism have, among other reasons of course, *led to a peculiar trajectory being followed by latter scholarship* including the set of writings now collectively referred to as postcolonialism. The above facts combine to produce especially within the third world, a profound ambivalence in the response of intellectuals to Enlightenment values and modernity in general, and to nationalism in particular. As a result of these theoretical and historical conjunctions, answering our research questions becomes a complicated exercise.

This study will argue that it is necessary to never lose sight of certain *central variables* like the modern state, capitalism and in the case of non-European nationalisms, colonialism in understanding nationalism. As against a view of nationalism as a retrograde phenomenon, rearing its unpleasant head every now and then, it is argued that *a far better way of understanding nationalism is to view it as a regular, legitimised, institutionalised means for achieving diverse political ends.*[8] This is the perspective adopted through out this study.

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[7] Brubaker, R. *Nationalism Reframed*, Cambridge CUP 1996
[8] The theorist who makes the above point with most vigour and clarity is John Breuilly. We will use his pioneering work as a guiding framework throughout this work as mentioned earlier. Where there is a significant disagreement with Breuilly's arguments, it will be stated as much.

An understanding of the historic rise of the nation as an all-encompassing, primarily *political* idiom that is inseparable from the development of the modern state provides the necessary corrective to biases within some analyses. It also makes visible what is ignored by most studies of nationalism – the continuing use by the most industrially advanced countries of the West, of nationalism as a potent political weapon to advance diverse ends, from passing restrictive immigration laws to undertaking military offensives against weaker states. Of course, to argue as above could entail the danger of arriving at too loose and comprehensive a definition of nationalism – one that views all state-led or government-led initiatives as nationalistic ones and uses this to understand most events in the first or third worlds. An attempt to avoid this danger will be made in the following chapters by placing theories of nationalism in their historical contexts. [9]

In fact, much of the study will be an argument for the rehabilitation of solid historical and classical sociological analysis in the study of nationalism. This is not to argue that as political scientists one must give oneself over to these disciplines but rather to argue that nationalism as a field of study seems especially prone to ideological and theoretical obfuscations. To find a way out of this mire, one needs an interdisciplinary approach that combined the best insights of history, political theory and sociology and retains a 'grand narrative' emphasis on power and politics in the constitution of most ideologies including nationalism. It is hoped that this study will reveal these convictions.

The first chapter – **narratives** – will contain a review of much of the standard literature on nationalism starting from some classical sociological perspectives, incorporating early

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[9] Of course, the author of this study is not a historian or a sociologist, so this will remain a study within the discipline of political theory. Where insights from other disciplines can be gleaned, they will be included.

examples of the effort within the social sciences to theorise non-western nationalism and ending with some materialist interventions into the debate. The chapter is accordingly divided into three sections dealing respectively with some early realist writing on nationalism, some latter work that relied on a primordialist view of eastern nationalism and combined this with a larger ideological investment in modernisation theory, and finally writers who retained a useful emphasis on historical and material factors but could not move beyond troublesome teleological assumptions in theorising nationalism. The aim throughout this chapter as hinted above will not be to summarise the literature on nationalism but to reveal some of the theoretical and ideological battle lines that emerged in the study of nationalism, especially non-western nationalism.

The second chapter – **counter narratives** – will be an exclusive discussion of two writers who have in our opinion moved beyond much of the early theoretical problems as highlighted in the first chapter. The first half of this chapter will be a detailed examination of John Breuilly's immensely useful and comprehensive typology of nationalisms in relation to the rise of the modern state. The second half will examine in detail Benedict Anderson's influential work *Imagined Communities*, especially his central argument regarding the 'modular nature' of western nationalism that allows its export to diverse non-western cultural contexts.

While the first chapter and most of the second chapter would constitute a discussion of our first two research questions, the discussion on the post-structural critique of the nation will introduce the third question regarding the desirability or otherwise of nationalism as a form of politics in the third world. Chapter three – **anti-narratives and correctives** – then will more strictly concern itself with answering this question.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of Benedict Anderson's avowed interlocutor Partha Chatterjee's critique of the former's putative Eurocentric bias and his alternative to it. The discussion of Partha Chatterjee's work on Indian nationalism will lead us to the work of the subaltern and postcolonial schools, especially the recent post-structuralist emphasis on the 'illegitimacy of nationalism'. During the course of our inquiry we will consider some recent defenses of third world, anti-imperialist nationalism by theorists like Aijaz Ahmad and Neil Lazarus. We will attempt to understand the reasons for this defense from within Marxist theory and decide whether they are compelling. This will lead us to the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, Tom Nairn and Etienne Balibar and their analysis of the formation of nations within the world capitalist system.

The **conclusion** will be not so much a summary of the rest of the study as a listing of the main insights gained from the study. There will be an attempt to arrive at a more satisfactory definition of the theoretical conundrum that is nationalism. For now, it may help to start our discussion with a set of seemingly unrelated set of images from contemporary India – these images and the discussion that follows will hopefully illustrate through the specific example of a context familiar to us, the larger issues and the general theoretical claims that will be made in a more general and abstract way through the study.

A set of images

The background of the **first image** is Gujarat, February 2002. The background to the image is a series of communally driven incidents that began with the burning alive of

militant Hindu pilgrims in a train and culminated in a systematic genocide against Muslims in the state. As thousands of men, women and children are burnt alive in an endless saga of violence, the ruling BJP governments at the central and state levels remain eerily silent, approving spectators. The image is of the Prime Minister at a speech to his party workers soon after the start of the mayhem. At this speech, the Prime Minister implies in his characteristic articulate but obfuscatory prose that Muslims are necessarily anti-national in their affiliation, thus the violence is an outpouring of legitimate (Hindu) nationalist sentiments.

At first glance, this latest round of violence over religion in India seems to follow a trend that is widely documented in contemporary literature – the resurgence of ethnic nationalism as a political force in large parts of Eastern Europe and Asia as mentioned above.[10] Indeed, the term 'nationalism' today has almost come to be associated with this phenomenon. Thus, one may conclude that the Gujarat genocide of 2002 is simply another example of unresolved, long-standing, previously repressed conflicts over ethnicity and identity in the non-Western world. Contemporary Indian nationalism in this sense means religious nationalism or 'Hindu fundamentalism'. However, religious nationalism seems to be only one half of the story of contemporary nationalism in India.

The other half is one that is largely ignored by conventional scholarship on the subject. Considering the **second image** provides a clue to this other half. The setting once again is Gujarat, this time in November 2000.

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[10] For thought-provoking examples of the Indian debate on the rise of Hindu nationalism and rethinking on secularism, see the work of Rajeev Bhargava, Peter van der Veer, Tanika Sarkar, Ashis Nandy, Christophe Jaffrelot, Bhagwan Josh, Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya and David Ludden.

The image is of Mr. L.K Advani, the Home Minister in the BJP government, is at an inauguration ceremony at the site of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the river Narmada. The ceremony is the latest chapter in a story that began roughly two decades ago, with the announcing of an ambitious plan to dam and redirect the waters of the mighty perennial river Narmada in western India. The plan was christened the Sardar Sarovar Project. The long-term effects of the Project would include the forced displacement of over ten million people, exacerbation of regional economic disparities and ecological damage of a colossal and irremediable scale.

As these human and ecological costs started becoming clear to the locals, the NBA or the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Campaign) was born. For over a decade and a half, the state machinery and the 'Project-affected' engaged in a fitful battle, which went largely unnoticed at the level of national politics and public opinion. The state fought to fulfil a grandiose dream, the people fought to keep their homes, their farms and their futures. In October 2000, The Supreme Court of India passed a judgement (incidentally, a split decision, with a dissenting judge passing a lengthy contrary ruling) lifting a previous stay order and thus allowing the Gujarat government to restart work on the Project. Thus the ceremony, which was held to commemorate this newest, post-judgement phase of the Sardar Sarovar Project.

During the speech that Mr. Advani gave on the occasion, he listed with not unexpected pride, his regime's three main achievements. These, he concluded, were the testing of a nuclear bomb that catapulted India into the small international club of nuclear powers, the military confrontation with Pakistan, (the 1999 Kargil War), and the Sardar Sarovar Project. Mr. Advani added for good measure that the NBA was an *anti-national*

movement and its leader, Ms. Medha Patkar, a traitor. The second image thus constitutes a strikingly candid *alternative official view of Indian nationalism*. How far does standard literature on nationalism go in understanding Mr. Advani's statements at the inauguration ceremony? On examination, the first two achievements stressed by Mr. Advani reveal themselves to be classically nationalistic ones, with their obsession with war and military prowess. Such concerns, history tells us, form the roots of most modern nation-states. Thus it was to be expected that the BJP government, with its overtly nationalistic politics, would celebrate them.

The *third* 'achievement', the building of a hydroelectric project, is less easily recognisable as a nationalistic position. Of course, one could argue that Advani's is simply an example of a governmentality-based[11] nationalism, one that claims any significant state-sponsored project as an example of national achievement. However, this argument does not take one very far in illuminating the exact contours of contemporary nationalism, which like any other nationalism must necessarily be a complex blend of history, ideology, commonsense, myth and the use of particular community-based discourses by elites. The job of analysts must be to reveal the composition of this blend.

So where do we place this *hydropower nationalism*? As mentioned earlier, it did not exist when at the start of the modern era (and in the case of a few significant exceptions, earlier), Europe's map was being redrawn along national lines. It didn't exist when the great empires of a bygone era were being dismantled to reshape the colonised world into numerous new nation-states in the twentieth century.

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[11] Michel Foucault's celebrated, oft-quoted term

Yet, as people in living in the developing world know very well, the appeal to national interest in the defense of large development projects (like Sardar Sarovar) has been a widespread political practice all over the third world in the post-independence period. **Philip Hirsch**, in an article on the Sardar Sarovar Project and other big dams in Asia (like the Three Gorges Dam in China and the Batang-Ai Dam in Sarawak, Malaysia) highlights the role of nationalist ideology as a potent weapon in the hands of elites pushing mammoth development projects.[12]

Nationalism in the west, especially as the concept has been employed to describe the reality in the contemporary non-west, is usually taken to mean *cultural* nationalism. As a theorist has defined it, "the articulation of cultural nationalism revolves around first, the beliefs concerning the distinctness, integrity, uniqueness and superiority of one's culture..." [13] This would explain the focus on Hindutva and the simultaneous lack of attention to what we have been describing as hydropower nationalism in standard literature, which has tended to treat nationalism with its rhetoric of difference and cultural uniqueness as entirely separate from attempts by third world governments to push through grandiose development projects. It is argued that in fact hydropower nationalism – seen as a subset of development nationalism– is particularly useful in understanding nationalism in the non-west, posited as much on achieving a thoroughgoing sameness with the western nations as it is on a rhetoric of uniqueness or difference. In this sense, the military nationalism combined with the economic development-centered nationalism that Advani spoke at the inauguration ceremony constitutes the second half of the story of

[12] Philip Hirsch, "Dammed or Damned? Hydropower versus People's Power", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 20, 1988, pp.2-10
[13] G.Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India* Delhi, OUP 1997 p. 131

contemporary Indian nationalism. A view of nationalism as a *political* phenomenon allows one to argue as above.

Indeed, when Mr. Advani defended the Sardar Sarovar Project with hyper-nationalistic pride in our second image, he was only echoing a familiar theme in Indian politics, one that had been present in earlier eras too. Most accounts of the Nehru era of Indian history contain phrases like "nation-building", "laying of the foundations of modern India" and a mention of Nehru's famous description of dams as "the temples of modern India". (The imagery of temples is especially lucid as it highlights Nehru's dream of replacing traditional value systems with John Breuilly's definition of nationalism as "the religion of modernisation").[14] So powerful is this hydropower nationalism that it can summarily submerge along with towns and villages, the crescendo of popular protest by millions of displaced locals. Further, it can achieve popular (urban) support for its actions simply on account of its being in 'the national interest'. Of course, it is also important to remember that if the theme of Mr.Advani's development nationalism was not new, the tone in which he branded Ms. Patkar a traitor was unprecedented in its ferocity. Another contrast between the Nehru era and Advani's virulent development nationalism is their approach to war. Nehru's anguish over repeated wars fought by India with Pakistan and China during his reign have now passed into Indian legend. Advani, as the second image demonstrates, displayed obvious pride in the nuclear tests and the Kargil war.

If we consider the two images together, we get a truer picture of Indian nationalism. *Indeed, it is argued that there is an intimate, reinforcing connection between the two.*

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[14] Breuilly, J. *Nationalism and the State,* Manchester University Press, 1987

If most works on nationalism to make the connections discussed above, narrowly focussing on cultural factors to the exclusion of others, there must be serious theoretical oversights involved as Michael Billig and Rogers Brubaker remind us. We will return to Billig's and Brubaker's insights in the conclusion. In the meanwhile, the following chapters will highlight the ways in which standard scholarship continues to contribute to the hypothesis that the West is reasonably cosmopolitan while the East is regressively nationalistic. We may point here to the manner in which powerful international bodies including MNCs and lending institutions that influence enormous control over the developing world have fueled this hypothesis by regarding the continuing prevalence of minimal trade protection regimes by Third World governments as anachronistic, Luddite nationalist resistance. Moreover, other opinion-building agencies such as governments in the West and the global media echo this assumption[15].

Apart from the Orientalism involved in the above, amazingly widespread view, the fact is that it is simply untrue, as has been argued through our discussion of the two images above, and will be hopefully demonstrated later in this study too. In the Indian context, development-oriented nationalism seeking a sameness with the West has contributed as much to the character of Indian nationalism as have militarism and assertions of a revived Hindu identity. To make this point more emphatically, we may add a **third image** to the ones we have already.

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[15] Consider a recent statement by a White House spokesman regarding the India-Pakistan stand-off in June 2002 – "that region of the world is going to require (our) constant monitoring and assistance." The subtext reads " the East is rampantly strife-torn, and governments there are powerless to control militaristic jingoism". Further, "We, in the developed West, who have surpassed such retrograde forms of nationalism, are forced to provide the East with leadership". It would seem like the white man's burden is no lighter.

It is fitting that the setting yet again is Gujarat, at a press conference in March 2002. At this conference, RSS hooligans, drove home in far more brutal terms the message that Mr.Advani had sent out to Ms.Patkar in November 2000, by physically attacking her and shouting abusive slogans calling her an anti-national agent (among other things). The conference (without coincidence) was on the Gujarat genocide, in which the role of the RSS and other organizations affiliated to the Hindutva brigade has been established almost beyond doubt.

In this way, the third image thus connects the first and the second through an aggressive hyper-nationalism and through the obsession with anti-national agents – the reader is asked to recall the Prime Minister's statements about Muslims. Through this nationalistic prism, an opposition to a grand developmental project is as unacceptable to the powers-that-be as is an accident of birth as a Muslim in India. Thus, the Gujarat genocide of 2002 can be logically connected to Advani's October 2000 speech on military-hydropower-nationalism through the attack on Ms. Patkar. With this hyper-nationalism, the all-encompassing *political idiom* of Hindutva has appropriated the language of nationalism in a way that would have seemed outrageous in earlier times. this relationship provides us clues as to why nationalism continues to dominate the political space in the twentieth century, despite predictions of its collapse by some of its most eloquent analysts. We may now turn to chapter one, which is a study of precisely such analysts as well as some less eloquent ones!

CHAPTER ONE

Narratives

The Birth and Heyday of the Doctrine

Nationalism as a phenomenon became prevalent originally in Western Europe and North America in the latter half of the 18th century, although semantically, the term 'nation' emerged much earlier.[1] According to Hutchinson and Smith, the important dates for the origins of nationalism in the West are 1775 – the first partition of Poland, 1776 – the American Declaration of Independence. 1789 & 1792 – the Commencement and Second phase of the French Revolution and finally 1807 – the date of Fichte's famous Addresses to the German Nation[2]. However, as early as the 14th century political/military events occurred in Europe that may be convincingly connected with the rise of nationalism in the modern era. The earliest of these include according to Hutchinson and Smith, the disentangling of 'France' from 'England' at the end of the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) and the failure to reunite Europe on the model of the Holy Roman Empire. The rise of competing absolutist states or separate ethnically based states in Spain, Switzerland. Holland, Sweden and Poland by the 16th century meant that the territorial and economic bases for national states were prepared as far back as the 15th century.

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[1] As convincingly argued by Guido Zernatto and Liah Greenfeld (among others), in the medieval times, the term 'nation' had a very different meaning from the present one. It was used to refer to a community of scholars of foreign origin studying at one of the great medieval universities of Europe – for instance, Paris. Vienna or Padua.
[2] John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith *Nationalism: A Reader* (Vol. I) Oxford, OUP1994

The rapidly decaying unity of Christendom even before the Wars of Religion and the Counter-Reformation led to the connections between capitalism and the monarchies being crystallised. Former despots were increasingly forced to standardise their populations in terms of religion, education and even language – the hallmarks of the modern nation-state.

It is one of the main claims in this study that an adequate appreciation of the historical *longue durée* in the emergence of nationalism is both crucial and missing in most accounts within political science. However, apart from the very brief sketch undertaken above. this chapter will not concern itself with the actual rise of nation-states in Europe. The reason for this is simply that this chapter is a review of the *academic* debate on nationalism, therefore, it will concentrate on the historical antecedents of nationalism only where necessary for the argument. The history of nationalism is covered in more detail in the next chapter.

A few points of clarification

First. as stated in the introduction, there is a vast and diverse body of writing on nationalism. Further, given the fact that nationalism is widely regarded as originally a European invention, much of the literature on the subject is Europe-centric[3]. However, many writers on nationalism have self-consciously attempted an understanding of

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[3] By this one means the *academic* work on nationalism, not writing by nationalists themselves. There is of course a large and fascinating body of work by nationalists from all over the world. However, that is not the focus of this study, the reason for which is discussed in the following paragraph of this chapter.

nationalism in the non-West[4]. A discussion on these writers will constitute the bulk of this chapter, since we believe that those aspects of standard western literature that lend themselves to useful generalisations are also probably better in explanatory capacity. Thus this chapter is not so much a summary of all the positions and trends that can be broadly identified in the nationalism debate, as one in which we will draw specific conclusions for our research questions identified in the introduction. So for instance, the views of some important writers like Carlton Hayes and Karl Deutsch are not covered and those of Hugh Seton-Watson are mentioned only in passing. However for the same reason an attempt has been made to discuss other writers not usually mentioned in nationalism reviews, but whose views are according to the author especially illuminating or illustrative of a certain viewpoint.

Second, the writing of Marx and Engels are almost never considered a part of the standard literature on nationalism as its is basically assumed that for Marx and for Marxists in general, classes, not nations, were the prime subjects of history[5]. For this belief. a statement from the Communist Manifesto is considered representative of their entire set of convictions –

"The nationality of the worker is neither French, nor English, nor German, its is *labour*...His government is neither French, nor English nor German, it is *capital*. His native air is neither French, nor German nor English, it is *factory air*"[6].

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[4] There are good reasons to believe that nationalism arose first in the Americas, not in Europe. This point, raised most convincingly by Benedict Anderson, will be taken up in the next chapter.
[5] Such views are expressed by Breuilly and Anderson as we will show in the next chapter.
[6] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Moscow Progress Publishers 1963, p.35

However, contrary to this popular belief[7], the communists (including Marx and Engels themselves[8] and later, Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg) have made several creative attempts at coming to grips with the wave of nationalism sweeping Europe in their time. Some of these views will be considered in this study, although not in this chapter. The views of the Marxists on nationalism will be covered in the final chapter dealing with the relationship between radical doctrines (including Marxism) and nationalism in the third world.

Third, many writers have chosen to study nationalism through the works of the vast fund of writing by nationalists themselves. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. There is a fascinating body of work produced in this area, including classical contributions to the subject traced back to thinkers at the beginning of the early modern period in European history. While seventeenth century thinkers like Immanuel Kant[9] and the luminaries of the French and Scottish Enlightenments [10] made their own distinctive contributions to the subject of political community in general, the widely acknowledged *fathers* of nationalism are the thinkers and ideologues associated with the Italian and German cultural awakening in the eighteenth century. Following Hegel who saw the nation-state as the final destination in the grand journey of the Spirit, the key figures in the German cultural unification movement that arose in the wake of the collapse of the

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[7] Including the views of latter day Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm, who with others, believes, that Marxists have failed to give adequate serious attention to the 'national question'.

[8] In fact, a little known fact is the subject of Roman Szporluk's book *Communism and Nationalism* New York, CUP 1989 According to Szporluk, List and Marx engaged in a fascinating and theoretically rich polemic on the historic role of nationalism for much of their academic careers. The List-Marx debate will be discussed in the final chapter.

[9] For an excellent discussion of Kant as an unfamiliar source of nationalist ideology, see Isaiah Berlin, in his collected essays *The Sense of Reality* (ed. Henry Hardy) New York, Noonday Press, 1999

[10] The key figures were Voltaire, Condorcet, Turgot, Hollbach, Diderot and D' Alembert in the French case and Hume, Smith and Ferguson in Scotland.

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Holy Roman Empire – Herder, Lessing and Schiller – signified the *historicist turn* in German thought and described Germany as a nation with its unique past and future. The ideologues of the German Romantic Movement including the poet-philosopher Novalis, Kleist, Schelling, Schlegel, Tieck and von Eischendorff developed a now-familiar understanding of nationalism as a doctrine in its own right, with its peculiar set of concerns including a national language, a literary high culture and a national identity. The great Italian nationalists Mazzini, Garibaldi and Vico played a central role in influencing the course of nationalist thought in their own country.

However, fascinating as the writing of nationalists may be, they are *not* the focus of this study. As scholars of nationalism, it would perhaps be far more fruitful to study those who are committed to a dispassionate analysis of the phenomenon. Of course, the two categories – analysts of nationalism and nationalists themselves – do overlap in certain important instances. [11] Further, any analyst who makes 'primordial' ethnic attachments the *objective* precondition for the existence of nations and seeks to demonstrate why some nations are in this sense 'eternal' or 'natural' has fundamental similarities with the nationalists themselves.

Although such a position – known broadly as primordialism within the nationalism debate – is not taken seriously any more (as Rogers Brubaker reminds us) primordialist *reasoning* is by no means wholly absent from even the most recent analyses of nationalism. However, on the whole, in the interest of a more rigorous understanding, we will focus on those who seek to understand nationalism without subscribing to nationalist

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[11] For instance the German nationalist writer Friedrich List, the Hungarian nationalist Kossuth and the Czech nationalist Franticek Palacky.

ideology themselves. We have thematically divided these into the early realists, those later writers who reveal an Orientalist bias in their analysis of non-western nationalism, and the materialists. The chapter also contains, apart from these three sections, a brief discussion of a few writers who have made an original or thought-provoking contribution to the standard literature in a way that achieves a way out of some existing theoretical tangles.

Three Realist Pioneers

Perhaps the first significant academic contribution on nationalism in our times was by the nineteenth century French thinker **Ernest Renan**. In a famous lecture entitled "What is a Nation?" published in 1882[12], Renan argued that the nation was a daily plebiscite undertaken by the members of the political community. What makes Renan's argument noteworthy is his claim that that contrary to the claims of nationalists and nationalist historiographers, much of nationalism includes not remembering, but *forgetting* the past.

If one recognises the fact that nations were contingent creations that did not always exist but rather, *pushed out* pre-national or alternative forms of political community at some historical juncture, Renan's statement begins to make profound sense. Strategic forgetting may be seen as a way in which nationalism recreates the nation as a special, exclusive form of political community, and builds a fund of nationalist memories. Referring to the *St. Barthelemy* massacre of the sixteenth century in which members of the Huguenot

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[12] Ernest Renan 'Q' `est-ce qu'une nation?' In Homi Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1990

minority were brutally killed by the Valois dynast Charles IX, Renan reminds his readers

that Frenchmen today are *obliged to have already forgotten* the event. This forgetting is

no straightforward process, as Benedict Anderson points out – it involves a simultaneous

remembering of the event through a historiographical campaign deployed by the French

State and then a call to forget the same[13]. Anderson terms this simultaneous remembering

and forgetting of painful events in the past as 'reassuring fratricide' – reassuring because

possessing a fund of violent historical events that citizens are obliged to forget is seen as

normal and necessary for the nation-state to exist. In Renan's view then, getting one's

history wrong is part of being a nation.

The versatile and brilliant German sociologist **Max Weber** made a distinctive early

contribution to the debate by stressing the relationship of nationalism to what he

described as the 'prestige interests' of a particular group of people, the intellectuals, in

advocating *particularistic interests* as a *national mission*. Thus Weber anticipates a key

idea that was developed later by thinkers like Clifford Geertz, Edward Shils and Elie

Kedourie – the idea that intellectuals are vital to the development of nationalist

consciousness. In his words,

"...we shall have to look a little closer into the fact that the idea of the nation stands in
very intimate relation to 'prestige' interests. The earliest and most energetic
manifestations of the idea, in some form, even though it may have been veiled, have
contained the legend of a providential 'mission'. Those to whom the representatives of
the idea zealously turned were expected to shoulder this mission. Another element of the
early idea was the notion that this mission was facilitated solely through the very
cultivation of the peculiarities of the group set off as a Nation" (in conclusion), "It
therefore goes without saying that the intellectuals, as we have in a preliminary fashion
called them, are to a specific degree predestined to propagate the 'national idea'..."[14].

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[13] Benedict Anderson – *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1983, p.201
[14] Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, transl. H.H.Gerth and C.Wright Mills (eds.) London, Routledge &
Kegan Paul, 1963.

United by a Radical Subjectivism...

As we have seen, Renan's emphasis is not on objective factors but on subjective ones in the definition of nationhood. This is shown by his account of the amount of voluntarism involved in the continued existence of the nation. Weber also believed that "insofar as there is at all a common object lying behind the obviously ambiguous term 'nation'' it is to be located in the field of politics". One can justifiably argue that there are obvious problems in being overly subjectivist in the manner of Renan or Weber. Many modern analysts of nationalism when faced with the perplexing strength of what seems to be a loosely-defined set of beliefs with no thinkers of stature within standard western liberal political theory have resorted to radically subjectivist analyses – consider the statement of **Hugh Seton-Watson** in his seminal *Nations and States*[15], "All I can say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one." The statement immediately invites several questions – what is "a significant number of people"? How is "community" defined?

Most importantly, as John Breuilly argues[16], doesn't there need to be a pre-existing notion of what the nation represents? In Renan's ontological set-up, even if being French is a daily plebiscite, making that choice must involve for a Frenchman some idea of what 'being French' means. In other words, a notion of 'Frenchness' – an already existing fund of French nationalist imagery and practices in history and contemporary politics – must be present to affirm or reject through the daily plebiscite. The *St.Barthelemy* massacre may in fact be seen as precisely one of these images. Of course, Frenchmen would also

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[15] Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, Boulder Colorado, Westview Press, 1977
[16] John Breuilly *Nationalism and the State* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982

continuously add to this nationalist fund by their actions, *one* of those actions being a daily affirmation of themselves as a community. Renan' radical subjectivism has the effect of occluding this fact in the absence of a historical account of the formation of the French nation.

However, despite having nothing to say regarding this two-way construction of national identity, Renan's radical subjectivism places him firmly in a tradition that gives analytical primacy to the contemporary, always shifting terrain of politics as an explanation of nationalism. Indeed, by analysing nationalism with a common sense and clarity that is especially striking against the background of the romanticisation of nations that was the order of the day, *both* Renan and Weber set the tone for much sober analysis in the following century. Latter day analysts used this framework to great effect – for instance, Benedict Anderson's recent analysis of the nation as 'imagined community' has echoes of Renan's idea. More importantly for the discussion on this chapter, we shall see how this emphasis on politics may be useful to offset the obfuscation that plagues the primordialist school of writing on nationalism - a search for the objective, always present, primordial but also transcendent essence of national identity. [17]

The Age of Extremes

In the *twentieth century*, the subject of nationalism has really come into its own, with three phenomena contributing to literature. The first among these were the two world

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[17] This contrast between two ways of understanding nationalism took the shape of the debate between the so-called primordialists and the modernists, as will be explored below.

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wars that broke out over questions of nationalism, the nation-state system, territorial sovereignty and colonialism.[18] The second factor was the wave of decolonisation all over Asia and Africa that created numerous new nation-states with radically diverse social, economic and cultural conditions. Finally, as mentioned in the introduction, the phenomenal speed and intensity of the most recent phase of globalisation at the end of the century has led a range of writers to re-assess the role of the nation in the face of a seeming physical and psychological collapse of national boundaries.

The historian **E.H. Carr** was perhaps the first theorist to have given serious thought to nationalism in the twentieth century, although his work is largely ignored in conventional writing on nationalism. It is true that Carr's primary concern was the *international*, rather than national system. But herein lies his distinctive contribution to the subject. Carr defied prevalent prejudices in academic circles to combine the disciplines of political science, philosophy and historiography with his intense and brilliant scrutiny. By viewing the rise of nations against the workings of the international state system around the First World War, Carr was able to bring an analytical and comparative breadth to his perspective that was absent in insular, self-referential writings on the European nation.[19] As Ernest Gellner later wrote of him,

"E.H Carr's mind, visible in his *Nationalism and After*, was not guilty of that near-total insensitivity to the diversity of historical situations and context which otherwise prevailed in the academic world. And yet he was, it seems, a respected academic!" [20]

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[18] Indeed, the Balkan problem that sparked off the first Great War is not yet resolved and continues to inspire writing on nationalism today.
[19] Carr, E.H *Nationalism and After* Penguin, London 1945
[20] Ernest Gellner *Encounters with Nationalism* Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1994 p.21-22

In Carr's view, nationalism may be seen as the emergence of a specific type of particularism that followed from the break-up of Empire as a universal or international order in the previous epoch. This break-up happened intermittently and gradually, to the extent that the earliest nationalists were in fact, modernising monarchs, or in Gellner's words, 'sovereign enlightened despots'. *Only later did nationalism join hands with the rise of the democratic state and liberal politics and that too, in a temporary and contingent manner*. According to Gellner, (in this liberal, democratic period)

"nationalism could be humane and liberal because nations, though they replaced rulers, remained clubs with restricted entry, free trade worked and engendered prosperity, and the links between polity and economy were decently obscured". [21]

For Carr, "the secrecy in which the activities of the City of London were veiled served to mask economic realities from those who thought in traditional political terms."[22] As this secrecy began to wear thin in the nineteenth century, nationalism acquired an aggressive, somewhat reckless air as is demonstrated by the writings of the nationalists of that time. Gellner sums up Carr's argument nicely,

" ...by the latter part of the (nineteenth) century. Herder was joined by Darwin and by the Nietzschean twist to biologism. The community to be re-drawn, revived or re-awakened was seen as not merely cultural but also genetic. This was joined to the view that ruthlessness is both the pre-condition of excellence and the accompaniment of true human fulfillment, as opposed to the anaemic cosmopolitan values of the Enlightenment, which do not truly correspond to the needs of the human psyche. Somewhere in this mix of factors one can find the explanation of the really extreme excesses of nationalism in this period."[23]

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[21] Gellner, ibid, p.24
[22] E.H. Carr, ibid, p.16
[23] Gellner, ibid, p.28

In his illuminating analyses of the different phases of nationalism and the intimate connections between the dominance of Enlightenment values of earlier eras and the rise of Romantic anti-Enlightenment in the form of extreme nationalism, Carr anticipates the arguments of later writers of eminence such as Isaiah Berlin and Elie Kedourie. However, what really sets Carr apart is his insistence that there were numerous and significant variations in the way that nationalism spread globally and that even in its hour of glory, *it remained simply one of the many doctrines that could have become hegemonic*. It was not until 1918, when the African and Asian possessions of the European Empires began their long walk away from their colonial masters, that nationalism acquired a more truly ubiquitous global reality. The significance of this point for our understanding of nationalism will be stressed in the following chapters too.

A brief explanatory detour

Professor Carr's analysis was written in the watershed year of 1945, when the second great war was drawing to a close, most of Asia and Africa had been freshly decolonised, and the world was rapidly being divided into Cold War blocs. 1945 was followed by what the French refer to as *le trentes gloreiuses* – the thirty decades of unprecedented peace and prosperity in the developed West. These developments were to have a profound impact on the discipline of social science as well, as many latter-day analysts have noted. In the field of nationalism, there arose a debate between the so-called primordialists and the modernists, with minute polemics raging between those who viewed nations as expressions of primordial solidarity, and those who viewed them as specifically modern creatures, brought into existence gradually through ideological invention or imagination.

This debate was often futile because as became clear in retrospect, much of the theorising from this period had more in common than was conceded then. Prime among these points of convergence in the two sets of theories was what may be referred to as an underlying faith in the modernisation thesis. Rogers Brubaker has noted for example, that both the primordialists and modernists subscribed to 'developmentalist' analysing as in, they viewed nationalism as something slowly developing from a primitive to a more fully evolved stage. A fuller discussion of this is included towards the end of this chapter.

However, the debates of this period *were* useful in setting up useful polemic for later debates to respond to. The rise of numerous new states following decolonisation, with radically diverse social, cultural and economic circumstances presented to social scientists from all theoretical and ideological persuasions a whole laboratory of situations for analysis. Consequently, previously Europe or Western-centric theory made efforts to systematically understand nationalism in the East, thus contributing to an overall contribution to the subject.

The next three theorists, Hans Kohn, Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz are chosen because they are symptomatic of such efforts. Their theories reflect a similar struggle to understand non-western nationalism, while, it must be stressed, *never fully letting go their suspicions of the same*. They also share with earlier thinkers like Max Weber and later writers like Benedict Anderson, a common emphasis on the role of intellectuals in the formation and spread of nationalist ideology.

Three White Men and a Primordialist Burden

The well-known primordialist Walker Connor when asked what a nation answers that "it is the largest group that can command a person's loyalty because of felt kinship ties; it is, from this perspective, the fully extended family".[24] This statement expresses well the circular logic that is characteristic of those who assume an objective, ancient base for national identity – when asked to explain what a nation is, they would resort to describing the strength of national identity. The early writing of Anthony Smith also follows this primordialist argument[25]. However, this section is not so much a review of the well-known primordialists within nationalism– a very brief discussion of the pitfalls of this position is included at the end of it. Rather, we are rather interested here in those theorists who do not subscribe to a primordialist view of cultural and national identity in the case of the west *but only reserve this perspective for the east*. These theorists reflect a bias against non-western nationalism in their writing that became a reigning feature of writing on nationalism for the major part of the twentieth century. Let us examine their arguments in greater detail.

Hans Kohn, considered by many one of the first serious scholars on nationalism in the twentieth century follows Weber and Renan in establishing a firm connection between the nation-state and nationalism. As he puts it succinctly, "nationalism demands the nation-state; the creation of the nation-state strengthens nationalism[26]"

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[24] Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, Princeton, New Jersey Press, 1994 page nos. unavailable.
[25] See especially Anthony D. Smith *Theories of Nationalism* London 1971
[26] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, Macmillan, New York, 1945

This is a point that has been made in various ways by other theorists too, however, Kohn

brings a clarity to the issue that is remarkable. On the subject of eastern nationalism,

Kohn is less convincing. The problem with his analysis stems from his *a priori*

conviction that it must represent a direct contrast to that which arose in the West. In his

words,

"While Western nationalism was, in its origin, connected with the concepts of individual liberty and vocational cosmopolitanism current in the 18th century, the later nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe and in Asia easily tended towards a contrary development. Dependent upon, and opposed to, influences from without, this new nationalism, not rooted in a political and social reality, lacked self-assurance; its inferiority complex was often compensated by over-emphasis and over-confidence, their own nationalism appearing to nationalists in Germany, Russia, or India as something infinitely deeper than the nationalism of the West." [27]

It should be granted that as a pioneering attempt to understand non-western nationalism.

Kohn's analysis has much to recommend it. The argument about the difference between

western nationalism and eastern forms of it highlights an important fact regarding the

latter – the element of resentment, or more specifically, *ressentiment* (in the Nietzschean

sense) that seems to be a fundamental characteristic of latter nationalisms[28]. However,

Kohn's use of the term 'western nationalism' is misleading. It obscures the fact that the

only nation that can be classified as having undergone 'western nationalism' in the sense

that Kohn deploys the category, as in, the only nationalism that did not display the

features of ressentiment was England. It was only in this country that the relatively

'natural' development of political institutions, unfractured by violent revolution at any

point produced a remarkably liberal, characteristically gradualist and non-violent

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[27] Kohn, ibid. p.36
[28] A point made by Liah Greenfeld among several others, and discussed later.

discourse on political community.[29] This can be clearly seen in the work of a writer like Edmund Burke for instance. By the time not simply German and Russian nationalisms but the French and American versions arrived on the scene, a *difference* from English liberalism became a defining feature of their appeal. For instance, the Jacobin Revolution and the Reign of Terror after the French Revolution were premised on a familiar romantic nationalist theme that would have been anathema to the English nationalists – the idea that violence was noble if used towards the right end[30].

By using a simplistic east-west polemic in a similar manner, Kohn seems to have inaugurated a trend in the scholarship on nationalism that had more to do with ideological obfuscation than solid historical realities. A clearer demonstration of this fact may be achieved through the study of the actual historical situation in early modern Europe. This is undertaken in the next chapter, for the time being it may be noted that a tendency to view all 'eastern nationalisms' as somehow lacking in the healthy values associated with western nationalism (or more accurately, British nationalism) is very common in conventional literature. For example, in the otherwise excellent work of Hugh Seton-Watson, as Anderson points out, Seton-Watson 'bitingly'[31] refers to Eastern European nationalism in the form of Czarist Russification as 'official nationalism' while ignoring analogous policies being followed in London, Madrid, Paris etc.

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[29] Of course, this is not to say that many of the less glorious qualities of nationalism, for instance its emphasis on cultural superiority, its fitful insularity and its racism was never present in English nationalism. As Breuilly has pointed out, William Shakespeare's writing reveals precisely these nationalist sentiments. The exclusion of Catholics from office until 1829 is also a good example of English sectarianism.

[30] Isaiah Berlin makes a similar point in his essay "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will" included in *The Proper Study of Mankind : An Anthology of Essays*, edited by Henry Hardy, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000

[31] Anderson's term, ibid. p.86

The following two analysts covered in this chapter carried this trend to fruition with their potent combination of assuming a primordialist base for the eastern nation and retaining an underlying modernisation theory framework for understanding social change. The specific consequences of this bias are discussed at the end of this section. We may first examine these two writers in some detail.

Edward Shils, in a widely discussed analysis[32] sets the terms of his analysis of eastern nationalism by drawing a clear demarcation between the West and the East. Shils believes that while intellectuals were instrumental in western nationalism too, in the East, their role was especially crucial. This he attributes to three factors. In his words,

"The high degree of political involvement of the intellectual in underdeveloped countries is a complex phenomenon. It has a threefold root. The primary source is the deep preoccupation with authority. Even though he seeks and seems actually seems to break away from the authority of the powerful traditions in which he was brought up, the intellectual of underdeveloped countries, still more than his confrere in more advanced countries, retains the need for incorporation into some self transcending, authoritative entity. Indeed, the greater his struggle for emancipation from the collectivity, the greater his need for incorporation into a new, alternative collectivity. Intense politicisation meets this need. The second source of political involvement is the scarcity of opportunities to acquire an even temporary sense of vocational achievement; there have been few counter-attractions to the appeal of charismatic politics. Finally, there has been *a deficient trend of civility* in the underdeveloped countries which affects the intellectuals as much as it does the non-intellectuals". [33]

On the crucial difference between the civility of western nationalism and the lack of it in eastern nationalism that he mentions above, Shils is convinced that it stems not from the social, economic or political conditions peculiar to colonisation, but from the *traditions* of these states. He states:

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[32] Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States*, World Politics, 1960, pp.329-368
[33] Shils, ibid, p. 334, emphasis mine.

"The incivility of the politicised intellectuals has a history which precedes their birth. Traditional societies, based on kinship and hierarchy, are not civil societies. They do not know the phenomenon of citizenship, since rights and obligations are not functions of membership in a polity determined by territorial boundaries. The primordial qualities of traditional societies − kinship, age, sex, locality, etc. − are not qualities that define the citizen. In the more unitary, traditional society, they suffocate incipient civility"[34].

The almost perverse preoccupation of the intellectuals of underdeveloped countries with authority was the other crucial difference. On this issue, Shils holds that whereas intellectuals everywhere have been concerned with authority,

"In underdeveloped countries, where authorities have tended on the whole to more unitary and where alternative authorities, and the authority of alternative traditions have not yet emerged because of the small size of the primordial community and its relatively low level of internal differentiation, the preoccupation of the intellectual with authority is all the greater. *It is difficult for him to escape from a sense of its presence and a feeling of dependence on it...*The external air of submission hides (on the part of the intellectuals) a deeper and unceasing enmity. Distant authority which has force at its disposal, which is impersonal, as bureaucratic authority must be, and which is not suffused with any immediately apprehensible charisma, provides an easy target for this enmity". [35]

Shils then places the phenomenon of nationalism in the context of this revolt against authority by explaining its rise as a pathological side effect of the lack of an alternative charismatic authority. In fact, Shils' entire description of the prevalent historical traditions in underdeveloped countries is in terms of what was lacking:

"The individual, striving to free himself from his primordial collectivity, must feel himself a part of some other more congenial, alternative collectivity. It must, moreover, be an authoritative one, a charismatically authoritative one. Where, in an underdeveloped society, with its relative churchlessness, its still feeble professional and civil traditions, and in the face of persisting particularities, both subjective and objective, can the modern intellectual find such as authoritative collectivity? It is only the 'nation' which is at hand,

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[34] Shils ibid. p.336.
[35] Shils, ibid. emphasis and words in paragraph mine.

and that organised which represents the 'nation' – namely, the 'party of national independence'".

(In Conclusion):

"The intellectuals have created the political life of underdeveloped countries; they have been its instigators, its leaders and its executants. Until Gandhi's emergence at the end of the end of the First World War, they were its main followers as well, but this changed when the nationalist movement began to arouse the sentiments of the mass of the population."[36]

Shils has been quoted at some length because he is illustrative of an entire school of thought – in short he represented the modernisation agenda in American political science – the thesis that economic development and social change is broadly a function of cultural attributes. This school of thought specialised in theorising of the above kind, full of east-west polemics in a way that epitomised the prejudices so devastatingly brought out by critics of Orientalism. More important for our purposes, Shils' picture, uninfluenced by solid historical research is simply not true, or at best, only semi-true.

The result of this lack of historical depth is several-fold. *First* among these is a blindness regarding the *similarities* between the rise of European and Indian nationalism – for instance, the radical (or 'uncivil' in Shil's terminology) element in nationalism is a characteristic of Western nationalism as much as of eastern nationalism, as argued convincingly by Kedourie, Nairn and Berlin, among others.[37]

Further, as Weber's famous description of bureaucratic authority makes clear, it is impossible to sustain a distinction between charismatic and impersonal authority in

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[36] Shils ibid.p345
[37] Their arguments are outlined below.

modern states, which usually use both at various points. To insist that colonial authority was impersonal since it was a kind of bureaucratic authority, and that this was the reason it didn't appeal to the intellectuals of the colonies, seems to be missing the point regarding the *nature* of that authority. Colonial authority was unpopular not because it was impersonal, or at least not primarily because it was impersonal. It was unpopular *because it was perceived as alien and exploitative.*

Indeed, many historians of the British Raj, even those from the Cambridge school have argued exactly the opposite of Shils – that as jurisdiction expanded from the Company to the Crown, the colonial administration in India found itself struggling with a large and heterogeneous polity. To manage these increasing demands, the authorities resorted to favouritism and differential treatment as shown for instance, in the treatment of Muslims and Hindus at separate periods as part of the much-maligned 'divide and rule' policy. An increasingly militant native population realised that their colonial masters were neither fair nor impersonal but all too human and flawed, even idiosyncratic. The pretensions of the British Empire to be the rule of law and justice were further exposed in the racist arguments deployed in colonial courts of law or in the question of recruitment of Indians to the upper echelons of the civil services. In fact, the key element in nationalist responses was the sense of humiliation that colonial authority repeatedly and painfully engendered in colonised subjects. This humiliation stemmed from the fact that the colonial authority in India was everything that impersonal bureaucratic authority was *not* meant to be. In the face of these facts, for Shils to argue as he does is astonishing.

The *second consequence* of Shils' analysis is the level of generalisation in his argument. For instance, Shils seems to have extrapolated from a standard imperialist (and at a few

places, nationalist account) of Indian colonial history to explain the rise of nationalism in *all* 'underdeveloped' countries. He does not feel the need to support many of these generalisations with hard facts regarding other colonies. One would imagine that the nature of colonial rule, while retaining broad similarities, would also differ widely between cases where the colonial masters were not British but Dutch or Portuguese for example. The nature of colonial rule would vary, the area of jurisdiction would vary and the nationalist responses would vary. However, Shils obviously thinks it is accurate or at least adequate to use the term "intellectuals of the new states" without qualification.

Third (and related to the second), the unproblematic use of terms like 'primordial community/collectivity', 'incivility', 'unitary traditions' 'persisting particularities' or even 'traditional society' may do much for polemical purposes but is hardly useful for describing reality. Even if one grants that some of these categories have a grain of truth in them, for instance, the contrast between traditional political membership and modern citizenship is certainly sustainable; however, the manner in which Shils describes them, characterising the societies of underdeveloped states in terms of a *lack*, smacks of Orientalist prejudices.

Recent historical scholarship especially from the subaltern school has stressed the way in which indigenous intellectuals all over the colonies borrowed from western notions of the nation in ways that built upon indigenous traditions rather than replacing one set of values with another, modern, nationalist one. The colonial encounter was no doubt destructive of previous traditions in a radical way, as has been captured with much anguish and beauty by anti-colonialist writers Frantz Fanon and Aime Cesaire in the African context. However, the manner in which Shils describes the rise of nationalism in

the East leaves one with the feeling that it was a purely imitative wholesale importation, rather than a complex, proactive *adaptation* of European ideas including the idea of the nation. This is a fact asserted not for any sentimental reasons but because history seems to testify to it. As G.Aloysius, who can hardly be considered an apologist for Indian nationalist mythology reiterates, " ...nationalist ideas and forms were appropriated and articulated here, not in imitation but primarily to express local concerns which were in continuity with the history of the subcontinent."[38]

The eminent anthropologist **Clifford Geertz** brings into his work on 'nationalism in the new states' as he calls it. a welcome analysis of the phenomenon not so much in its anti-colonial avatar, but in its *contemporary* forms. Geertz recognises that much of the problem in writing on nationalism arises from the fact that, in his own words, "conceptual ambiguity surrounds the terms 'nation', 'nationality' and 'nationalism'"[39]. He hopes to achieve some theoretical clarity on the thorny question of what exactly third world nationalism is about,

"by the following realisation: the people of the new states are simultaneously animated by two powerful, thoroughly inter-dependent, yet distinct and actually opposed motives — the desire to be recognised as responsible agents whose wishes, acts, hopes and opinions 'matter', a demand that identity be publicly acknowledged as having import...*and* the desire to build an efficient, dynamic modern state.[40]"

[38] G.Aloysius. *Nationalism Without A Nation in India*, Delhi, OUP, 1997
[39] Geertz, 1973, *Primordial and Civic Ties* (quoted in Smith and Hutchinson ibid.) page nos. changed from original.
[40] Geertz 1973 ibid.

According to Geertz, there is a great tension between these two aims that provides *both* the 'driving force' of national evolution and one of the greatest obstacles to such evolution. If we ignore the ambiguity present in his description of identity[41], we may say that Geertz refers in this passage to the tension between primordial nationalism (based on the demand for public recognition of identity) and the civic variety (the desire to build an efficient, dynamic modern state). At first glance, this seems like a compelling argument – the difference between the Nehruvian period of Indian nation building and the recent Hindutva version of the same seems like a contrast between the civic and primordial types of nationalism. This distinction, alternatively referred to as the one between cultural and political nationalism, is widespread in literature on nationalism and citizenship. However, as discussed during the introduction, it is doubtful what this distinction helps in our understanding of nationalism in contemporary India and indeed, *anywhere*. It is particularly dubious when it is used to refer to the distinction between eastern and western nationalism, as Geertz does elsewhere in his study. According to Aloysius,

"theorising on nation, nationality and nationalism in general has proceeded rather exclusively along either the subjective or the objective factors that constitute such phenomena...on the basis of such divergent theoretical orientations, nationalisms have been classified as cultural or political respectively. Most scholars see Western nationalisms as political and the Eastern ones as cultural."[42]

De-constructing this bias is of course one of the main aims of this study, so we may put this civic-primordial distinction our critical gaze later. Where Geertz seems to have made

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[41] Primarily, the ambiguity between the individual and social aspects of identity – this is clarified and critiqued below.
[42] Aloysius, ibid. p.127

an *original* contribution to the debate is the notion of the *tension* between the two. Let us examine this notion a little further. According to Geertz,

"This tension is particularly severe in the new states since...people's sense of self remains especially bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion or tradition...to subordinate these specific and familiar identifications in favour of a generalised commitment to an overarching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person..."[43]

Several questions regarding Geertz's analysis immediately come to mind. For instance, is Geertz's understanding of identity/attachments in non-western contexts adequate? Some of the categories that he uses to describe the nature of attachments in the new states simply do not hold true, prime among these being *race*. It is not as if a vague notion of ethnic descent including some intermittent calls to blood/race has never informed notions of identity in India. But as an enduring category of identity, there is no history of the usage of that category in everyday politics. Indeed, race is arguably a peculiarly western notion. with its own history. Similarly, the notion of religion as a prime motor of individual or group action in India has to be carefully examined especially in the context of pre-Hindutva Hinduism[44]. Further, Shils' distinction between a civil west and an uncivil east seems to have made a comeback in Geertz's analysis. Even if one grants that these are minor problems, there remain *major* inconsistencies.

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[43] Geertz ibid.

[44] See K.Balagangadhar, *The Heathen in his Blindness*, for a provocative and compelling argument regarding the unproblematic assumption by western scholarship about the universality of religion. To simplify a fascinating and complex account, according to Balagangadhar, religion is a western phenomenon and applies only to the Semitic faiths. Early western travelers to the Orient were incredulous that religions did not seem to exist in the East. thus they extrapolated a Semitic notion of religion to describe the reality in the East. Of course. this explanation does not include the latter re-organisation of a diverse set of practices into present-day Hinduism and especially Hindutva.

If, as Geertz says, people's sense of self is especially bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, etc., in the new states, how may one risk loss of definition as an autonomous person through subordination to a civil order? To put it another way, is the concept of an autonomous person not something that arose in an Enlightenment discourse particular to the West? If one assumes for a moment that there does exist such a concept in the East, Geertz must explain the exact manner in which a sense of self remains simultaneously autonomous and 'bound up'. Maybe a description of a dialogic interplay between the construction of 'primordial' group identity and a sense of self would provide the crucial links.[45] Geertz provides the reader with no such explanation. Instead, he remains bound himself to an amazingly simplistic primordialist position in theorising identity. According to him,

"The new states are abnormally susceptible to serious disaffection based on primordial attachments. By 'primordial attachment' is meant one that stems from the 'givens' of social existence – immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly...these congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coreciveness in and of themselves. "[46]

As **Eller and Coughlan**[47] have argued with much subtlety and force in their critique of the primordialist argument represented by Shils and Geertz, "primordialism presents us with a picture of un-derived and socially-unconstructed emotions that are unanalysable and overpowering and coercive yet varying. A more unintelligible and unsociological

[45] See for example, the work of Charles Taylor who retains the notion of 'recognition' used by Geertz while providing precisely such an explanation in the context of the West, especially his article "The Politics of Recognition" in Amy Gutmann (ed). *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* Princeton, New Jersey Press 1994
[46] Geertz, ibid.
[47] Jack David Eller and Reed M.Coughlan, "The Poverty of Primordialism: The Demystification of Ethnic Attachments", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1993, 16, 2, pp.185-201.

concept would be hard to imagine, and furthermore, from a variety of sources, including sociology, anthropology and psychology – material has emerged in recent years that renders the concept theoretically vacuous and empirically indefensible." [48]

Further, Geertz's argument between the two impulses animating the new states – civic and primordial – tends to essentialise both categories and does not adequately account for the fact that identity-formation in any setting, especially in the new states, is a process that *combines* the two impulses. Stated another way, identities are constructed as politically useful axes around which participation in modern states is organised. As a result, the civic and primordial impulses may not diverge but co-operate quite happily for achieving immediate political ends. **Kasfir**[49], in his study of colonial Africa, convincingly argues that primordialism cannot account for the fact that new ethnic groups were suddenly *appearing* under colonial rule, sometimes in rural areas, but more inexplicably, in the towns".

A well-argued corrective to a simplistic distinction between civic and primordial nationalism is provided by **John Hutchinson** in his study of the rise of nationalism in Ireland. Hutchinson retains in his work an emphasis on, what he calls 'cultural nationalism' as a useful category of analysis. Indeed, his focus is on explaining the reasons for the popularity of this form of nationalism at varying periods in Irish history, especially as seen during the Gaelic revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, he maintains through out his study that "cultural and political nationalism represent two competing conceptions of the nation and strategies of nation-

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[48] Eller and Coughlan, ibid. p. 192
[49] Kasfir, 1979, quoted in Eller & Coughlan ibid. p.368

building, *each of which feed off each other.*" [50] Hutchinson then goes on to identify in his

own words, "an alternating cycle in which the communitarian objectives of political

nationalism periodically challenge the state-oriented objectives of political nationalism to

provide a matrix of national development in opposition to the British state." [51] This

explanation may not entirely explain how a cultural nationalist movement like Hindutva

can also seamlessly and simultaneously appropriate political nationalist language.

However, Hutchinson's theoretical formulation does provide clues for this phenomenon

in a manner that in our opinion constitutes an improvement on Shils' or Geertz's analysis.

John Armstrong, in his study of the rise of European nation-states[52], concedes that there

is a serious difficulty in studying national cultures dispersed over wide ranges of time and

space due to what he terms 'phenomenological comparability'. This is apparent in the

early efforts to compare cultures represented by the primordialists and continues to be a

central problematic in social science today[53]. Armstrong warns that although one must

not assume that movements that bear the same names are always similar, one should also

not succumb to the converse danger – of assuming that because movements remote in

time or space from modern Europe *appear* different, they must necessarily be different.

Armstrong achieves a way out of this dilemma by stressing a novel approach to identity

in general. "My approach to the ethnic phenomenon has stressed its boundary properties

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[50] John Hutchinson, Cultural nationalism, elite mobility and nation-building : communitarian politics in modern Ireland", *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1987, XXXVIII, 482-50. Emphasis mine.

[51] Hutchinson, ibid. p. 587. This point is made in a different way by Eric Hobsbawm when he mentions how language was *not* initially a factor in the Irish nationalist movement and became so only after the formation of the Gaelic League in 1893. In this respect, Irish nationalism was not unique but in fact representative of a trend towards historicist rehabilitation of language in contemporary European nationalism. Hobsbawm *Nations and Nationalism since 1789*, Cambridge CUP 1990.

[52] John Armstrong *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press 1982.

[53] The discipline of 'the comparative science of culture' has made some brilliant recent contributions to the field, of which K.Balagangadhar's book mentioned above is an example.

instead of the 'essence' of ethnic identity that some analysts have sought. Identity, in my approach, constitutes an intense affect phenomenon, hence a value in itself rather than a definer of values"[54].

We may extrapolate to argue that in the modern age, identity including national identity is seen as a value in itself. Further, it is assumed unproblematically that every society or community, however defined, has a reified thing called 'culture' that contains, or must contain the kernel of its unique, national identity. An example and a critique of this straightforward essentialist view is given by Philip Schlesinger when he quotes a writer called Anthony Pragnell. According to Pragnell,

"culture is to be seen as the amalgam of elements which distinguish communities (of whatever size) from one another...national values are seen as part of culture and will influence how communities tend to approach (not necessarily with uniform results) moral, ethical and political issues and how they behave".[55]

National identity in this view is seen as 'natural' or having value in itself (as Armstrong argues) and is derived from culture. Further, it is assumed that a well-established idea of 'culture' or a 'national identity' must be a universal fact. A significant criticism of this approach is the tautology involved in deriving national identity from culture as mentioned above in the context of Walker Connor's statement on the nation. A more pernicious effect of this argument is that it allows one to view those cultures not displaying signs of an obvious 'culture' or 'identity' especially 'national identity' in the European sense as not quite legitimate historical subjects.

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[54] John Armstrong, ibid, p291
[55] Anthony Pragnell, 'Television in Europe', 1985, quoted in Philip Schlesinger, "On National Identity" included in Hutchinson and Smith ibid. page nos. changed from the original.

However, as Breuilly argues, "the fact (is) that this concern with cultural identity and ways of establishing that identity – history, folklore, cultural anthropology – are themselves of European derivation..."[56]. This concern with the roots of identity in general is a product of the historicist turn in western thought of which the German Romantics were the prime examples, but which has become a familiar and widespread notion today. This turn, epitomised by the German romantics and partly a reaction to French invasions and the attendant sense of humiliation, was a search for roots or more precisely, for the ancient bases for modern national identity.

In sum, the above correctives remind us of the dangers of accepting western categories like 'race', 'culture' and 'national identity' unthinkingly. Anderson reminds us that until recently, there existed no word in Javanese for the abstraction of 'society'. There has been a similar rethinking on concepts like 'group' or 'class' within social science and theorists have cautioned against using such abstractions (Edward Said calls them 'hothouse formulations'!) unthinkingly. These categories are problematic enough when applied with lack of historical understanding even in western societies; however there are marginally better reasons for doing so in theory *produced* by the West and *describing* the West. Using such categories to describe non-western situations in the manner of the primordialist-orientalist-modernisers has more severe repercussions. The distinction between 'civic and primordial nationalism' or 'eastern and western nationalism' or 'liberal and illiberal nationalism' is part of this problem. The larger point regarding primordialism, as Eller and Coughlan remind us, is that "it may be a subtle form of cultural imperialism, or at the very least ethnocentrism, that has led Western thinkers to

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[56] Breuilly, ibid. p29

apply the notion of primordialism (with its implications of pre-modern and non-rational) to those ethnic movements that lay claim to the loyalty of their followers on grounds other than material interests". [57]

This brings us to one of our two *research questions* stated in the introduction – to undertake a broad study in the history of ideas in twentieth century social sciences through the example of writing on nationalism. Such a study shows difference between the theorisation characteristic of Weber for instance, and the primordialists. Weber's prioritising of the field of politics as the prime mover of nationalism lends itself to generalisation across the entire canvass of nationalist movements even in the third world without falling into any Orientalist traps. The hard realism displayed by the writers discussed in the beginning of the chapter – Renan[58], Weber and Carr – gives way by the middle of the century to the kinds of ahistorical and ideologically loaded theorising epitomised by Shils, Geertz and to a large extent, Kohn. An east-west polemic joins hands with primordialism and modernisation theory to portray eastern nationalism as retrograde, pathological forms of the doctrine. Further, the east is viewed as caught in a time warp where, to use Geertz's provocative phrase, the 'gross actualities' of blood, race, etc.dominate. This theoretical bias is especially surprising and disturbing given the fact that Geertz is otherwise a brilliant anthropologist whose writings on the Islamic world, for instance are largely free of Orientalist bias, as Edward Said has argued.[59]

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[57] Eller and Coughlan, ibid.
[58] As revealed by Edward Said, Renan is no friend of the East, following in the footsteps of Silvetstre de Sacy in consolidating Orientalism – a way of discursively codifying the East in a way that denied the latter any agency in producing knowledge about itself – as a systematic science. However, his arguments on western nationalism are especially illuminating for eastern nationalism, when extrapolated without his other biases. Edward Said *Orientalism* London, Penguin, 1978.
[59] Edward Said *Orientalism* ibid. p.326.

Later writers who made a materialist intervention into the debate sought to consciously correct the primordialist bias epitomised by the above theorists by using new sociological insights and solid historical research. This materialist intervention and a critical assessment of its contribution to the debate can be found at the end of this chapter. For now, let us take a brief detour to discuss a few thinkers that may provide a valuable corrective to the primordialist narrative.

Isaiah Berlin, in his eclectic but lucid ruminations on the history of the idea of nationalism, establishes a firm link between nationalism as a doctrine and what he calls the 'Revolt against Reason' or the rise of the 'Romantic Will' within western thought. Berlin believes that western thought at the end of the seventeenth century was irrevocably split into the values glorified by the Enlightenment, and their exact opposite, values of the Romantic Revolution. According to Berlin, this split has been the defining feature of western thought since then, however, most ordinary people in the west today continue to hold both sets of values with equal, if inconsistent eagerness. In Berlin's words, the Romantic idea was characterised by:

"The view that variety is desirable, whereas uniformity is monotonous, dreary, dull, a fetter upon the freely-ranging human spirit, 'Cimmerian, corpse-like', as Goethe described Holbach's *Systeme de la nature*, stands in sharp contrast with the traditional view that truth is one, error many, a view challenged before – at the earliest – the end of the seventeenth century…the notion of genius as the defiance of rules by the untrammelled will, contemptuous of the restraint of reason at any level – all these are elements in a great mutation of thought and feeling that took place in the eighteenth century…".

(Further, this idea was according to Berlin),

"one of the well-springs of the romantic movement, which in Germany at any rate, celebrated the collective will, untrammelled by rules which men could discover by rational methods, the spiritual life of the people in whose activity – or impersonal will – creative individuals could participate, but which they could not observe or describe. The

conception of the political life of the nation as the expression of this collective will is the essence of political romanticism – that is, nationalism."[60]

Compare Berlin's argument with Carr's analysis of nationalism as a European reaction to the 'anaemic cosmopolitanism' of the Enlightenment. **Elie Kedourie** takes Carr's and Berlin's arguments further in his attempt to answer the apparent puzzle of why western educated anti-colonial intellectuals like B.C. Pal and Jomo Kenyatta choose at some point in their engagement with nationalism to embrace primitive and violent customs. Contrary to the primordialists tendency to view such an adoption as 'a revulsion against Europe' and an example of backwardness, Kedourie reaches this conclusion:

"on second thoughts, it may seem to us that the bloodthirsty appeal to Kali and the *deliberate obscurantism* apparent in a defence of cliterodectomy are likewise an imitation and adoption of another feature of the European intellectual tradition, a feature which has always existed, albeit generally hidden and latent, but which has become more manifest and influential in the last few centuries."[61]

Kedourie concludes his study of militant nationalism in Asia and Africa with the argument that

"the mainspring of nationalism in Asia and Africa is the same secular millennialism which had its rise and development in Europe and in which society is subjected to the will of a handful of visionaries who, to achieve their vision, must destroy all barriers between private and public."[62]

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[60] Berlin, ibid. p.598
[61] Elie Kedourie(ed) *Nationalism and Asia and Africa* New York, The World Publishing Company 1970 p.4
[62] Kedourie ibid. p.4-5

Although Kedourie places emphasis on the role of secular millennialism and Berlin on the role of the revolt against reason, the larger aim of the two thinkers is the same – it is to call attention to the disavowed children of western thought. In Kedourie's analysis it is the currently respectable secular idea of progress that had its roots in a violent and apocalyptic millennial cult in medieval Europe – his point about the deliberate obscurantism inherent in nationalist ideology is especially lucid. In Berlin's case as we have seen, it is those *irrational, violent, spiritual and collective* elements that are the hallmarks of the Romantic Revolution and that become miraculously a feature of the 'East' in Euro-centric accounts. These arguments would immediately render Shils' distinction between civil politics and uncivil politics as following from indigenous cultural traditions as terribly compromised if not altogether false.

A Materialist turn

As discussed in the critique of primordialism, one of the primary problems with the primordialist argument was that it was viewed nationalism as a function of native traditions and the indigenous cultural context of a society. A simplistic polemic reduced complex historical realities to East-West caricatures, and further, non-western culture was always seen in essentialised terms as something that *lacked* the positives associated with western culture. Seen through this ethnocentric lens, third world nationalisms could not have a valid present or past of their own – they must constantly imitate already available (western) forms of nationalism. Indeed, if they were not to be rendered pathological or retrograde, they must always endeavour to rise above the 'persisting particularities'

proscribed by their cultural milieu. The angels of modernisation – at times, intellectuals of the new states and at other times, first world academics – would play a key role in this battle against the forces of darkness.

The primordialist bias in much of earlier writing on nationalism gave way in the seventies and eighties to a range of responses that sought to establish a firmer footing for theory on nationalism. Although Berlin's and Kedourie's emphasis on the history of western thought in all its manifestations and the connections of these diverse threads with nationalism was an invaluable step forward, it still left the question of the *material dissemination* of the ideology unresolved. The question of dissemination can be addressed at two levels – at the level of percolation from the intellectuals to the masses, and from the west to the east.

The following thinkers address precisely these questions. Many of these newer writers[63] made a self-consciously materialist intervention into the debate by understanding nationalism as a peculiarly contemporary phenomenon, with structural connections with modern society and especially the modern capitalist economy. As one may expect, some of these new writers were Marxists, others were simply historians who wished to be faithful to the actual conditions of the rise of different nationalisms. For this reason, some of them jettisoned the east-west polemic in favour of a distinction between bourgeois and anti-colonial nationalism. This new typology allowed one to speak more specifically of the economic and historical context of various nationalisms. Further, in this framework,

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[63] The term 'new writing' is not meant to convey the impression that theory made a steady progress from primordialist to modernist positions. This of course would mean falling for the trap set by modernisation theory itself! Indeed, the primordialist position continues to be present in the literature, albeit in a more sophisticated form. However, in the late seventies and the eighties, many writers made a conscious decision to arrive at more historically and materially grounded analysis. The term 'new writing' refers to them.

culture was not viewed as a given; rather, it was seen as something that influenced and was influenced by material sphere. The emphasis 'in this newer school of writing was always on producing a culturally non-essentialising and historically sophisticated analysis. Let us examine the central arguments of two of the most influential examples of this trend.

Ernest Gellner, in a widely discussed and sophisticated analysis, believes that the ubiquity of nationalism in the contemporary world stems from the fact that it is the only form of political organisation that is appropriate to the social and material conditions of modern society. Gellner takes as his initial inspiration Kedourie's thesis that in the modern age a homogeneity imposed by 'inescapable imperative' eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism. Gellner speaks directly and polemically against the primordialists and myth-makers of nationalism who view nations as sleeping beauties, waiting to be awakened by nationalists. He argues against a social and realist ontology of nations by saying that critics who denounce the political movement of nationalism but tacitly accept the existence of nations do not go far enough. In his words,

"Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality, for better or for worse, and in general an inescapable one."[64]

Thus, much of Gellner's thesis is concerned with demonstrating that nationalism has a structural connection with the needs of modern industrial society. He argues that

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[64] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983 p.49

nationalism demands cultural homogeneity, which is an attribute of industrial society. An epochal shift that replaces pre-industrial, agrarian modes of production with industrial economy demands that nationalism emerge as the hegemonic cultural ideology to underwrite and facilitate that shift. Homogeneity in the cultural realm is achieved through what Gellner terms "exo-socialisation". In Gellner words,

"the social organisation of agrarian society is not at all favourable to the nationalist principle, to the convergence of political and cultural units and to the homogeneity of school-transmitted culture. Exo-socialisation, the production and reproduction of men outside the local intimate unit, is now the norm and must be so. The imperative of exo-socialisation is the main clue as to why state and culture must now be linked, whereas in the past their connection was thin...Now it is unavoidable, that is what nationalism is about, and why we live in an age of nationalism."[65].

Gellner's central argument has the merit of a being a materially-grounded sociological analysis. His emphasis on structural conditions brings back a much-needed variable emphasised by early thinkers like Weber but largely ignored by subsequent scholarship – the state. The absence of an analysis of the state as a determinant in the form and substance of nationalism had plagued many of the primordialists' arguments. Gellner's analysis makes a crucial connection missing especially in primordialist views of culture – its relationship to *power*. Indeed, this delineation of the modern nation's circumscribing culture within power makes Gellner's analysis not simply original but also conducive to useful generalisations. Any scholar of contemporary nationalism in India cannot fail to appreciate the element of power that underpins a nationalist view of culture – hence the relationship of nationalism to majoritarianism and to homogeneity that many writers have

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[65] Ernest Gellner, ibid. p.35

pointed out.[66] Aloysius himself has used this formulation of culture and power very effectively in his analysis of the brahminical bias underpinning nationalism in India[67].

Eric Hobsbawm brings his vast knowledge of European history to his study of nationalism.[68] Hobsbawm, who created the term 'the age of nationalism' to describe 'the short twentieth century' (also his term) follows Gellner in his firm belief that *it is not that nations create nationalism but rather that nationalism creates nations.* An especially useful part of his analysis is the study of the manner in which the previously relaxed nationalism reflected in the writing of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill gave way in the late nineteenth century under the influence of German historicism and Romanticism to the fervent search for a transcendent, lasting national identity – recall here Professor Carr's analysis.

Hobsbawm points out a little-discussed fact – the nationalism of Smith and Mill was as interested as latter nationalism in establishing an objective base for national identity. However, while the early writers on nationalism considered 'viability' in terms of economic and geographical factors as primary and tended to dismiss smaller nations like Luxembourg as an embarrassment, latter nationalists held 'ethnic' factors like language to be the determining factor in nationalism. Accordingly, they reached a principle that is familiar to most nationalists by now – that every set of people that can think of themselves *subjectively* as a nation and can adduce some transcendent identity in their support for nationhood, deserve to be so.

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[66] See the work especially of Ashis Nandy (1995).
[67] Aloysius, ibid.
[68] Eric Hobsbawm, ibid.

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Hobsbawm's earlier writing emphasised specifically that nationalism is a symptom of capitalism at a particular stage of its development – a conventional Marxist position. There was a focus on the way in which nationalism was a 'tidal' historical force' that made turning the clock back to pre-nationalist communities impossible[69]. However, Hobsbawm has changed his position somewhat over the years as is revealed in his fascinating study on the 'invention of tradition' undertaken with Terence Ranger[70] where they argue that the conscious construction of traditions, for instance, the Royal Christmas Broadcast instituted in Britain in 1932 are ways in which the national community is created and periodically remembered.

A Comment and some questions

The above analyses have much to recommend them. The emphasis on the elements of 'invention' and 'imagination' that was perhaps inaugurated in Benedict Anderson's work was thus used to good effect in Hobsbawm's later work. Indeed most new thinking on nationalism has sought to displace previous derogatory connotations of the dreaded concept of 'false consciousness' within Marxist accounts of nationalism and to provide a more creative account of ideology.

What makes these theories especially conducive to broad generalisation is that they are grounded in historical or material contexts. In other words, they denote a shift in the framework of analysis from culture to capitalism, to oversimplify a more complex point.

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[69] Hobsbawm's argument 'impossibility of turning the clock back' signifies the general teleological bent of his analysis, a feature that will be critiqued below.
[70] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Canto, 1983

To the extent that capitalism has been hugely successful in achieving universal dissemination in the modern era, it is a valid tool to understand societies around the world that have come under its sway. (A theory that concentrates narrowly on nationalism as a European invention because of its relationship with the history of western political thought, misses the point that there are structural imperatives within *all* modern states that give rise to one or the other form of nationalism)

The *other* contribution of the above thinkers was to replace an ahistorical and essentialist view of culture that obscures power relations with one in which culture is seen as constantly constructed within the imperatives defined by power. To this extent, their theories are valid and indeed illuminating for non-western nationalism, as stated in the discussion on Gellner above. It can be argued that Hobsbawm and Gellner represent a form of theorising that adopts a secularised view of nationalism. The term 'secularised' is used in a broad sense, in the manner in which Weber used it to describe the secularisation of the Protestant work ethic in the capitalist world. Secularisation in this sense refers to the way in which the original religious significance of work is replaced with a value intrinsic to the activity within a capitalist structure, while retaining the connection with religion in indirect ways. Similarly, nationalism in the modern period has become disassociated with the context of its European birth and has acquired new value as a corollary of industrialisation, or more precisely, industrial modernisation. Indeed, it has acquired a value in itself and for itself in the modern age while *indirectly* performing a valuable function for industrial modernisation. This is arguably the kernel of Gellner's and Hobsbawm's approach to nationalism. What a writer has commented on 'the role of

secular nationalism in the industrial takeoff" holds especially true for the position of these thinkers:

"With the world organised as it is, nationalism is a *sine qua non* of industrialisation, because it provides people with an overriding, easily acquired secular motivation for making painful changes. National strength or prestige becomes the supreme goal, industrialisation the chief means. The costs, inconveniences, sacrifices and loss of traditional values can be justified in terms of this transcending, collective ambition. The new collective identity of the nation-state...controls the passage of persons, goods and news across the borders, it regulates economic and social life in detail. To the degree that the obstacles to industrialisation are strong, nationalism must be strong to overcome them." [71]

Here we have in a nutshell the central idea common to the above theories – the idea that nationalism is the 'religion of modernisation' or the ideological corollary to the material fact of modernisation. *Herein lies also the primary problem with the above theories.* As with most theories that make a connection between structural and 'super-structural' factors (to paraphrase Marx) like nationalism in the form of an overarching theory, the concept of *ideology* is made to do too much work. It is used to explain all of the phenomenon of nationalism in terms of the *function* that it performs for another historical phenomenon – modernisation. As Breuilly has argued, "the idea that ideology itself *mobilises people for particular tasks* is crude"[72]. Of course, the above critique of such a view of ideology applies more strictly to Gellner's thesis, it being representative of functional approaches at large. We will discuss this further in the following chapter.

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[71] K.Davis "Social and Demographic Aspects of Economic Development in India" in Kuznets et. al, *Economic Growth* New York Gerschenkron, p.24.
[72] Breuilly, ibid. p.34

Here we must stress that there are legitimate and serious objections that can be raised *against modernisation theory itself*, at least in its more naïve teleological forms. There is no doubt that nationalism has a structural connection with modernisation as is evinced by its rise as a characteristic of the modern era. *However*, neither modernisation per se, nor its connection with nationalism are straightforward phenomena. Nationalism often works *against* modernisation, as is the case with nationalist economic opposition to international trade agreements, even where it can be demonstrated that the new rules would foster industrial modernisation in the country[73]. Hobsbawm's modernisation bias for his part leads him to the amazingly naïve conclusion that nationalism will cease to be important at the end of the twentieth century,

"Nationalism is no longer a serious vector of social change...It is not implausible to present the history of the Eurocentric nineteenth-century world as that of 'nation-building' as Walter Bagehot did. We will still present the history of the major European states of Europe after 1870 in this manner...Is anyone likely to write the world history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in such terms? It is most unlikely."[74]

Hobsbawm goes on to announce the end of the age of nationalism due to 'the supranational structuring of the globe' – an example of the epochal or even millennial consciousness we mentioned in the introduction. The reappearance of the bogey of modernisation creates a host of especially thorny problems for understanding nationalism in the third world. The 'developmental' (Brubaker's term as mentioned above) bent in these analyses make them less relevant for the third world than one initially assumed. From Gellner's analysis especially, one serious question regarding third world

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[73] This is the case both in the third world and in parts of the first world, as the E.U experience shows.
[74] Hobsbawm, ibid. p.182

nationalism comes to the fore – what is the nature of nationalism in the developing world? Due to his construction of grand categories like 'industrial culture' and binaries like 'traditional / agrarian society' to understand the nature of nationalism by Gellner, it is almost impossible not to wonder whether third world nationalisms are not pathological given the vast differences in history of state-building and the modes of production there. This hardly seems to accord with reality – this point will be made later especially in the third chapter when we will consider the Gramscian distinction between dominance and hegemony as used by some recent writing as a much better way to understand nationalism in mixed agrarian-industrial modes of production. **Tom Nairn** has brilliantly analysed the assumption of even development that underlies most teleological theories of nationalism.

"The idea of an even and progressive development of material civilisation and mass culture was characteristic of the European Enlightenment...It is, after all, close to being the nerve of a Western or 'Eurocentric' world-view – the Weltanschauung which still tends to govern the way we think about history, and so (amongst other things) about nationalism.[75]"

Further, the focus on the *antecedents* of nationalism keeps Hobsbawm and Gellner's analysis chronologically in a previous era and also serves to obscure the nationalism practised in contemporary western states and lead to the unsustainable conclusion that nationalism has receded with the coming of modernity, however that 'modernity' is understood. To put in a nutshell the problem with Gellner's and Hobsbawm's developmentalist theories of nationalism, we may quote from Wallerstein,

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[75] Tom Nairn *The Break-up of Britain* London, New Left Books 1977

"If the fundamental paradigm of modern history is a series of parallel national processes, how do we explain the persistence of nationalism, indeed quite often its primacy, as a political force in the modern world? Developmentalists who are liberals deplore nationalism or explain it away as a transitional 'integrating' phenomenon. Marxists who are developmentalists are even more embarrassed."[76]

Concluding Remarks

The challenge highlighted by the discussion on nationalism in this chapter is not simply one of avoiding Euro-centric or Orientalist biases in writing on nationalism but also one of accounting for the global spread of nationalism without succumbing to an overtly structuralist or teleological view of both significant variables – time and space. For this, an interrogation of the east-west polemic is required, as has been undertaken above. An interrogation of the pre-modernity – modernity distinction is also called for if we are to grasp the hydra-headed phenomenon that nationalism is and remain alert to the myriad manifestations it can assume. A *developmental theory of nationalism* may be best abandoned in favour of an alternative one that provides us clues regarding the contemporary nature of the phenomenon. The next chapter contains a discussion of such efforts that have arisen within the discipline of history mainly. Attention to the specific historical detail of nationalism in diverse contexts has brought many incredible facts to light, and this has changed the direction of the debate and the nature of its concerns. Let us now turn to the second chapter where we cover a newer and more exciting phase in the debate on nationalism.

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[76] Immanuel Wallerstein *The Capitalist World Economy* Cambridge, CUP 1979. An example of a liberal account of nationalism that subscribes to the same conflations between modernity and the contemporary West is Liah Greenfeld *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.

CHAPTER TWO

Post-Narratives

Through the theoretical mire that the study of nationalism has proven to be, the *one* feature almost every writer on nationalism that we have considered so far believed was central to the doctrine was *the role of intellectuals*. This is striking in light of the otherwise serious disagreements that are the norm in this field of study. If we conclude that intellectuals are indeed central to nationalism we are led immediately to a problematic that is the starting point for the discussion in this chapter: Given the fact that intellectuals constitute a narrow social class in any society, should we reach the further conclusion that nationalism is a limited doctrine with a circumscribed circle of adherents and influence? Clearly one of most obvious facts about nationalism as we have been arguing is that as an ideology it is a ubiquitous one today. Further, if this is true of the European context, it is certainly as true, if not more true of diverse non-European situations. How are we to understand this phenomenal spread of a doctrine that began with the writings of a few disgruntled German academics and the efforts of some patriotic Italians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? To understand the full dimensions of the phenomenon that is nationalism today, we need to go beyond the role of intellectuals and examine the process of *dissemination* over time and space.

To recall the two major questions regarding dissemination of nationalism as ideology that arose from our discussion in chapter one, they were as follows: **One,** how does nationalism become popular, as in how does the ideology of a few intellectuals defending

their narrow 'prestige interests' (to use Weber's phrase) become a mass phenomenon? Two, how does nationalism leave its European birthplace and assume a worldwide significance by the end of the twentieth century? What forms does it assume in this journey? Which political, cultural and economic contexts lend themselves to its spread? In chapter one, we did discuss some early and later attempts to answer these questions but concluded that most of these efforts (despite their obvious contribution to furthering the debate), remained open to charges of Eurocentrism / Orientalism, crude functionalism or naïve teleologism, if such a word may be coined. In this sense, chapter one was more strictly concerned with answering the question of what nationalism in Europe and elsewhere is *not*, rather than what it is. In this chapter we will consider two writers that have moved beyond some of these definitional, analytical and phenomenological comparability problems outlined above and attempted to answer our two questions in particularly creative and/or rigorous ways.

John Breuilly – "*Oh When the State, Goes Marching In...*"

The historian John Breuilly in his pioneering study on nationalism and the state starts his work with a recognition of precisely the problems we have been discussing. Before we discuss Breuilly's thesis, a note on the methodology adopted in this study that is largely responsible for its important contribution to the scholarship: Breuilly states, "As an historian. I am suspicious of abstract theory and of brief references to particular examples which can wrench features of those cases out of context" [1].

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[1] John Breuilly *Nationalism and the State* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982. pg. 2

The reader may recall that this 'wrenching features out of context' was arguably the problem with the theories discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, instead of starting with an abstract theory of nationalism and then seeing if particular 'cases' fit into it, Breuilly begins by conceding what seem to be two fundamental facts about nationalism around the world – one, the fundamentally *political* nature of the phenomenon and two, the *diversity* of historical and geo-cultural situations that nationalism can arise in.

The accent on **politics** that forms the underlying intuition of Breuilly's analysis is reminiscent of Weber's and Renan's prioritising of the political field in their analyses of nationalism. However, there remain significant differences – Breuilly disagrees with Renan in what he believes is the unsustainable *subjectivism* entailed in the latter's view of the nation as a 'daily plebiscite' especially when that subjectivism is not accompanied by any historical details. We referred to this critique in the discussion on Renan in the first chapter. What is interesting is that Breuilly does not counter the problems inherent in subjectivist views of nationalism by prioritising *objective* variables instead. In fact, Breuilly states clearly that his reasons for choosing politics as the primary analytical category are at the simplest level, the reasons he chooses *not* to adopt alternative variables like class, religion, race, 'ethnic' identity, etc as explanations for nationalism. The rejection of 'primordial' categories like race, language or religion as *causes* of nationalism follows from Breuilly's belief that viewing nationalism as following from national identity (that in turn follows from culture or other identities) constitutes at best, a tautology and at its worst, an acceptance of the greatest myths of nationalism itself.

The accent on the **diversity** of historical situations commits Breuilly to solid empirical analysis of nationalisms over time and space. Breuilly believes this approach –

comparative history – is also the best way to avoid the kinds of Eurocentric traps we identified in the previous chapter including the assumption that some nationalisms are more 'natural' than others because of their liberality or prior-ness in historical time or any other arbitrary criterion. He believes that this also involves the adoption of a typology consistent with one's methodological beliefs. The typology used by Breuilly and his case studies are described later. Here we must mention that Breuilly's commitment to comparative history makes it necessary for us to deal with Breuilly's account of the history of nationalisms in some detail as will be undertaken in this chapter. We will see how attention to historical detail clarifies some of the thorniest questions raised in the previous chapter. A brief discussion on ideology first:

A Note on Ideology

Breuilly recognises that an alternative to conventional objectivist theories and equally to subjectivist theories of nationalism are those that prioritise not the primordial identity itself but what they describe as the 'need for identity' in explaining nationalism in the modern age. These are typically theories that view nationalism as the 'religion of modernisation' as we discussed in the previous chapter. Breuilly however, argues that the 'need for identity' is a non-rational variable that is also assumed to be universal by such theories. Thus, in the interest of rational, empirically grounded theory, Breuilly rejects such a variable as insufficient in explanatory capacity. In the words of Anthony Smith, in doing so he "provides a welcome corrective to so many sociological accounts which would "reduce" nationalism to economic, cultural or even socio-psychological levels of

analysis."[2] Breuilly argues that an overdue focus on this 'need for identity thesis' is a feature that unites both 'economic' and 'socio-psychological levels of analysis', as he believes is the case with Hobsbawm's modernist thesis and of the functionalist aspect in sociological accounts such as Gellner's[3].

This 'need for identity' thesis has a strong affinity with theories that stress the role of *ideology*. Within Marxist analyses especially, an over-emphasis on the 'need for identity' as expressed within ideology constitutes a central flaw according to Breuilly. Ideology, whether it is expressed in terms of religion or nationalism becomes especially salient in providing the crucial link between the impersonal imperatives of the economic base and the amalgam of cultural beliefs and institutions that forms the superstructure especially during times of change. Breuilly believes that Marxist or 'modernist' explanations of seemingly non-rational or primordial phenomena such as nationalism betray a deep discomfort with dealing with these phenomena. Such explanations tend to dismiss nationalism (or any instance of 'communal' or 'ethnic' strife) as the consequence of a strong hold of ideology or a 'need for identity' among the masses. In this way, ideology performs an all-important legitimating function for modernisation and an all-important analytical function for certain theories of nationalism. The point is not so much that ideology as a category is invalid, rather that it is insufficiently understood and makes unsustainable conclusions about why 'the masses' respond to nationalism or any other doctrine. The concept of ideology becomes richer if one uses it in connection with other concepts or supports it with more specific research.

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[2] Anthony D. Smith, *Political Geography Quarterly*, quoted in Breuilly, ibid. (back cover)
[3] Breuilly does see many valuable insights in Gellner's theory including his analysis of the role of urban competition for jobs as a cause in nationalism, but maintains that it suffers from lack of historical detail.

Breuilly's favoured method is as mentioned earlier, to focus on the role of politics within the larger discipline of comparative history[4]. Breuilly believes that this method is the one most suited to clarifying the precise relationship between nationalism and ideology. The consequences of this methodological commitments are that ideology is viewed not as a free-standing determinant of individual or groups actions, nor as something that 'brings about' change. but as something that is expressed in a complex interaction with other political forces *already present in the state*. Nationalism then can be seen as ideology in the sense that it performs three functions – co-ordination, mobilisation and legitimisation – in order to push forward a *nationalist way* of looking at existing political issues.

The above abstract arguments will hopefully become clearer below in our study of nationalism in specific cases. Let us mention here that Breuilly concedes that Marxist analyses *do* maintain a legitimate emphasis on the relationship between any ideology and power. In fact. he shares a central intuition with Marxist analyses – the importance of studying power and the *state* as the primary category of analysis, hence the title of his study. The privileging of the study of politics in nationalism in Breuilly's work thus becomes the way that the relationship of nationalism with power and with the state is understood. The aspect of power that underwrites nationalist ideology and especially its relation to power is what made Gellner's analysis compelling, as discussed previously. The state similarly is the greatest locus for politics in the modern era and the lack of this variable has robbed many theories of nationalism of their realism as has been mentioned earlier.

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[4] Breuilly's critique of the modernist notion of nationalism as 'ideology' is similar to Ashis Nandy's critique – discussed in the conclusion.

To sum up our preceding discussions in Breuilly's words,

"To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernisation is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics, and that politics is about power. Power in the modern world, is primarily about the control of the state."[5]

This general truism would remain just that if it were not supported by a rigorous typology of nationalisms and with solid historical detail and as we have been arguing, Breuilly supplies us with both. His **typology** is elaborated as follows:

"The concern here is with nationalism as a form of politics, primarily opposition politics. This suggests that the principle of classification should be based on the relationship between the nationalist movement and the existing state. Very broadly, a nationalist opposition can stand in one of three relationships to the existing state. It can seek to break away from it, take over and reform it, or to unite it with other states. I call these objectives separation, reform and unification."[6].

Breuilly is careful to point out that there are several factors that complicate this simple schema: the first among these is the nature of the state itself. Thus for instance, in cases where nationalist opposition is against an already existing 'nation-state' in the popular *de facto* sense of the term, the nature of this nationalism will be different from cases where the state does not define itself as a nation. This is of course more true of an earlier era where it was possible to imagine a separation in the hyphenated term nation-state, for instance, the old multi-national states that dotted Europe during the time of Empire.

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[5] Breuilly, ibid. p.2
[6] Breuilly, ibid. pg. 11

The second major complication (and one relevant for the concerns we raised in chapter one) is that between Western and non-Western nationalisms. This distinction is made by Breuilly in a vastly different way from the manner in which Hans Kohn or Edward Shils use the term. Breuilly's methodological commitments lead him to consciously jettison problematic classifications like eastern-western, liberal-illiberal, ethnic-cosmopolitan in favour of specific, more empirically defensible categories like governmental and anti-colonial nationalisms. Further, non-Western nationalisms are not seen as *outside* his central typology of nationalisms, but accommodated largely *within* it, unless the specific case calls for a separate category. So for instance, when Breuilly speaks of unification nationalism, he mentions both European and non-European case studies.

The discussion of governmental and anti-colonial nationalisms brings us to a distinctive feature of Breuilly's theory – in his view, nationalism is seen as *opposition* politics. More specifically, nationalism is understood as a phenomenon that arises in opposition to the state. This means that governmental forms of nationalism are not considered in Breuilly's study, or where they are considered, they are used as exceptions to his general scheme. Breuilly concedes that governmental nationalism is of special relevance to states pursuing nation-building policies as is the case with new nation-states but he maintains that the *nationalist* element proper in any organisation becomes less salient once it assumes power. This assumption leads him to consider only those forms of governmental nationalism that maintain close links with nationalist opposition and thus it imposes limitations in Breuilly's otherwise brilliant analysis on explaining nationalism in developing states. This point will be made in a more detailed way below.

For now, let us examine further Breuilly's basic understanding of (especially European) nationalism through his schema as outlined above. The *special cases* of the earliest nations – England and France – will be taken up first. Following this, the first category of nationalism in Breuilly's typology – 'unification nationalism' in nineteenth century Europe – will be considered in detail since we believe that its incisive treatment of the antecedents of modern nationalism provides historically grounded and creative answers to the questions we have been raising especially towards the end of the last chapter and beginning of this one. Breuilly's treatment of 'reform nationalism' will be discussed briefly in comparison to unification nationalism, and the last category – 'separatist nationalism' – will be discussed with a focus on anti-colonial nationalism that according to Breuilly, is an example of this type of nationalism.

According to Breuilly, **England and France** are the clearest examples of the rise of nationalism as opposition to the expanding power of the state. However, they were also exceptional in the sense that in these early cases the imperatives of unification reform or separation that characterised latter nationalisms were present somewhat differently, or not at all. The idea of 'the nation' in its contemporary sense was initially anathema to the monarchy and was never used to justify state policies since it implied that the state was an expression of the society it governed. However, in the context of early modern Europe where the monarchy was everywhere seeking to limit the power of the church, nationalist ideas (not in the modern sense exactly, but more in terms of an anti-foreigner sentiment) were often used by monarchs to curtail the influence of Rome. Of course, by no means was there a straightforward growth of the nationalist principle with the decline of the church. Breuilly points out that especially after the Reformation, when doctrinal and

institutional challenges converged to create a serious threat to the Catholic church, a monarch claiming to be the head of the church could brand religious disputes as rebellion. Thus royal, religious and national loyalties could either be in conflict or co-operate opportunistically in the early modern period in France and England.

In this ambivalent situation, it is the *changing character of the state* in both these cases that provided the impetus for a nationalist movement proper to grow. The salient changes in this regard were – *first*, the centralisation of state power that in turn directed people's loyalties towards the central rather than feudal authorities. *Second*, the requirement of collaborators and an extensive network of administrators to man this new state that in turn created at times unmanageable competition between factions. *Third*, the changing image of the state that now seemed to acquire a life of its own, as Breuilly puts it. The monarchy as expressed in the absolutist state now more than ever before, stood grandiosely *over and above* society. It is true that centralisation is related to the national principle in a way that a feudal decentralised system can never be. Breuilly puts it succinctly,

"The apparent separation of the state from society then raised the problem of how they were connected to one another. In trying to answer that problem the *idea of the nation* acquired a particular importance...(it) offered a general framework within which a variety of interests could be accommodated. It could be used to suggest that the purpose of the 'public' state was to express and defend the identity and interests of the 'nation'. In these ways society ceased to be regarded as a fragmented cluster of private interests unified only by the state above it but was seen rather as a unity whose essence was expressed in the concept of the nation and which could then shape the state"[7].

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[7] Breuilly, ibid. p.52-3

In the case of England, the Parliament provided an institutional locus for resolving these conflicts and defining the English nation through initially halting but increasingly bolder political opposition to the monarchy. However, this also meant that membership of the nation was restricted to those landed classes that were represented in the Parliament. The radicalising effect of the civil war as expressed in the famous Putney debates on property did change this, but on the whole, the failure of radical movements meant that *gradualism was the norm in England*. It should be mentioned here that the popular picture of a liberal English nation with 'the gift for compromise' is complicated (as hinted in the previous chapter) by the rigidly racist policies it followed in the rest of the British Isles.

In France there was no such central institution as the English Parliament, so the elections to the Estates General and the Revolution of 1789 played a central role in defining the French nation as an embodiment of liberty in opposition to the privileges of despotism[8]. As Hobsbawm and Keith Baker[9] among others have recently stressed, the *popular* element in the French Revolution at this time was nowhere as widespread as is generally assumed; the more *radical* element here in comparison to England was provided by the depth of the social crisis that exploded in 1789. By invoking natural rights, the leaders of the Revolution could eliminate the need to justify the new French nation in terms of older historical institutions. Subsequently, these leaders were concerned as much to *manage* as to arouse mass participation in politics, Breuilly dryly notes.

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[8] Benedict Anderson has noted that the replacement of the *ancien regime* with the new French nation was fraught with ambiguity. Even after Charles Stuart was beheaded by the Revolution, Anne Stuart was being called upon to administer cures by 'the laying on of royal hands' – a hugely popular medieval practice.
[9] Keith Baker *Inventing the French Revolution* Cambridge CUP 1990. Please note how Baker uses the term 'invention' following the historiographical trend mentioned at the end of the previous chapter.

Breuilly's views above are noteworthy in light of the fact that the French Revolution is widely regarded as the grandfather of all nationalist revolutions. The *fourth* feature conducive to the growth of nationalism at this time was international rivalry in a world economy dominated by a mad scramble not simply for Africa but for colonies, markets and profits in that order. Breuilly mentions this factor but curiously does not elaborate, so one can only guess as to its exact importance in the scheme of things. For various reasons, it is our contention that international circumstances were indeed an acutely important factor in the growth of nationalism at this stage, the reasons for which will be mentioned towards the end of this chapter and elaborated in the next. *To sum up this section*, let us recapitulate the main point for Breuilly in both the English and French cases, "...national ideology was of crucial importance in promoting and justifying co-operation among a variety of interests *already involved in politics*."[10]

In his study of **unification nationalism** in nineteenth century Europe, Breuilly covers the German, Italian and Polish cases that according to him displayed thoroughly the primary imperative of territorial unification and homogenisation that nationalism demands. The first contention by Breuilly in this context is that contrary to popular belief, the German and Italian cases were *not* representative of the development of nationalism in Europe in the way that the Polish case was. This argument is striking in light of the fact that most standard accounts of nationalism assume that the German Romantics invented nationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the Italians followed suit. Hans Kohn (1947) and Elie Kedourie (1966) share this assumption and indeed, most accounts that emphasise the nature of nationalism as doctrine and the role of intellectuals

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[10] Breuilly, ibid. p.63, emphasis mine. Please recall our discussion on ideology at the start of this section.

as central, do the same. Breuilly's argument is that the ideas that the German and Italians expressed had more to do with establishing a tradition of Romantic writing on nationalism than they did with any practical political significance for nationalism in their time.

In the case of **Germany**, Breuilly states, "to begin with, the romantic and ethnic nationalist ideas that were elaborated between 1800 and 1815 remained on the margins of practical politics."[11] Far more significant for the actual development of nationalism were factors such as the prior process of unification of Germany that had been set in motion due to the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire and the limited constitutional reforms undertaken not by ethnic nationalists but "small collections of liberal officials, some liberal nobles and businessmen, and some professional people, with opportunities to express themselves."[12] Breuilly astutely observes that ultimately, the German Confederation was just a more effective political institution for the time than the old crumbling Holy Roman Empire. Where radical and romantic nationalist ideas did gain support was *after* 1815, when this already-established Confederation was used by the Austrian empire to deny even limited constitutional reforms to the new German states. In sum, the presence of a still-powerful Austria hostile to German nationalism both promoted and severely restricted radical romantic nationalism in the state.

The situation was even less conducive in **Italy**, where even French domination under Napoleon and Austrian domination under the Habsburgs did not produce nationalist resistance – this was in no small measure due to the already existing widespread

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[11] Breuilly, ibid. p.67
[12] Breuilly ibid.p.68

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sympathy within Italy for the political reorganisation of the country. About the great nationalist Mazzini, Breuilly says that apart from attracting a small, devoted band of followers that worked tirelessly for change, his influence upon Italian politics should not be exaggerated. Where he had such influence, it was due to fortuitous circumstances.

"Mazzini never formulated any practical economic programme prior to 1848 which might have attracted middle-class support or any programme of social reforms which might have made his cause attractive at a popular level. Indeed, his strong anti-socialist views and his constant emphasis upon obligations rather than rights were criticised at the time by radicals...Precisely because his pure nationalism had no diplomatic, dynastic, liberal or popular appeal it could not become the central element within a significant political movement. But in situations of uncertainty or despair, as in Milan in March-April 1848 or in Rome from November 1848 to June 1849, his influence could become much more important. "[13]

Similarly, of the later Italian nationalist Garibaldi Breuilly believes that his amazing success in uniting Italy by invading and annexing Sicily was due not so much to his nationalist enterprise as to the weakness of the reigning Bourbons.

A Comment

The reason that Breuilly makes his arguments with such force holds the key to answering the question we raised at the start of this chapter – how did nationalism change its nature from the ideas of a few German and Italian intellectuals to a ubiquitous reality? Breuilly's argument is both the cause and the effect of his emphasis on nationalism as *politics rather than doctrine.*

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[13] Breuilly ibid. pgs.70-71

As he says in a footnote, the difference between viewing nationalism as politics and viewing it as doctrine is also the difference between his views and the views of those who focus on the role of intellectuals. This latter category would include most of the analysts we studied in the previous chapter. An emphasis on politics would mean recognising the myriad influences that act upon the formation of a nationalist movement at any given point and a move away from creating historical heroes like Mazzini. As we saw in the previous chapter, Shils' excessive emphasis on the role of intellectuals in the colonial context obliterated the structural factors involved there. Providing an alternative to the distortions of imperialist *and nationalist* historiography has been the approach of the Cambridge school in the Indian context but has been largely lacking in analyses of nationalism in the West. Breuilly provides the necessary corrective.

To answer our first question regarding dissemination then, with Breuilly we may assume that nationalism was neither limited to intellectuals nor was it so powerful an idea that it could *by itself* bring about radical nationalist change. Nationalism of the Romantic variety did create the foundation for endless future discussions on the cultural and ethnic heritage of German and Italian states but by no means did the doctrine unite create the respective nation-*states*. The process of unification nationalism in both these states was a combination of favourable historical circumstances, the efforts of a small but varied class of liberal reformers and politicians and the manner in which the reigning Austro-Hungarian empires responded to these efforts. Breuilly astutely notices that the obvious success of the German nationalist movement itself created the widespread and mistaken impression that the ideas of the Romantics were responsible for it. Interestingly, when the

Parliament met at Frankfurt am Main in 1848 to found the new German state, its discussions were dominated by liberal nationalist ideas, *not* ethnic or romantic ones.

Just as the success of German and Italian unification led to an exaggerated emphasis among historians regarding the role of the Romantics, the apparent failure of the other instance of unification nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe – **Poland** – led to its considerable achievements *not* being recognised. However, Breuilly believes that the case of Poland is proof of the existence of nationalism as a major force to a far greater degree than either of the cases we have been considering. The influence of Romanticism especially the historicist rediscovery of *a* homogenised national language[14] restricted the scope of nationalism to a purely cultural or ethnic kind in Germany and Italy. Not so in Poland, where the case for national unification was initially made in terms of a recovery of the old multi-lingual, multi-cultural historic kingdom of Poland. Present-day Poland was then divided between what is referred to as 'rump' Poland, some areas under direct Russian control, and an intermediate kingdom of Congress Poland that was established with nominal Russian control between 1815 and 1846 to replace the old kingdom 'finally been laid to rest' in the eighteenth century. Congress Poland enjoyed its own constitution, university and even its own standing army. The *nationalist* element in this set-up was provided by the middling ranks of the old Polish nobility (*szlachta*) that formed a still-powerful but disgruntled social class due to the steady stripping away of its powers by imperialist powers Prussia and Russia.

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[14] Of all the 'primordial' identities one can claim as the basis for nationhood, the obsession with a unified 'national' language is a peculiarly European legacy to nationalism. As Anderson (1982) notes, since it is difficult to give the date of birth for any language, it appears to loom primordially out of the distant past and makes an excellent candidate for ethnic nationhood. But languages were historically tremendously diverse, so a fair amount of nationalist forgetting (in the Renan-ian sense) must have gone into the creation of one German language, to the exclusion the thousands of other dialects like Bohemian-spoken Czech.

In areas like Congress Poland that enjoyed the maximum autonomy from this external control, the *szlachta* used their power to launch insurrections in 1830 and 1863. What is interesting about the Polish case is that initially the *szlachta* favoured a form of *restoration nationalism* that extolled the virtues of the old kingdom. However, gradually a combination of events including the haunting memory of the brutal massacre of pro-nationalism landowners by their own peasant-tenants in Galicia in 1846, and an aggressive 'Russification' followed by radical land reforms throughout Poland destroyed most of the *szlachta's* power. It was at this point that Romantic ideas from Germany and Italy were gradually adopted by nationalist elites and the image of the old multicultural Polish kingdom was replaced by a Polish *nation*-state in the modern unified *homogenised* sense of the term.

What made this newer unification nationalism in Poland more powerful than the German or Italian varieties was its survival in the face of huge odds. There was no prior impetus towards unification as in the case of Confederation Germany, this had to be painstakingly created with vertical alliances between the *szlachta* and newer popular elements including peasants and students. Breuilly observes that approval by Western European powers like England and France of this new popular nationalism couched in liberal terminology did much to safeguard the fledgling Polish nation-state.

Three conclusions emerge from Breuilly's analysis of unification nationalism: *first*, that nationalism in Europe like elsewhere required a combination of factors to become a major force – these always went beyond the views of intellectuals and included the presence of strategically-placed sections of nobility or other social elites willing to exploit weaknesses in the ruling empires. *Second*, nationalism followed a non-linear

trajectory even in the heyday of its European birth – periods of consolidation and strength were interspersed with periods of 'quiet and collaboration' with foreign or pre-national forces. Nothing demonstrates this more devastatingly than Hobsbawm's comment on the Galician massacre of nationalists mentioned above, "The Galician peasants in 1846 opposed the Polish revolutionaries even though these actually proclaimed the abolition of serfdom. preferring to massacre gentlemen and trust to the Emperor's officials."[15] It was only through a snowballing process of formation of nation-states that the doctrine gained momentum but it was not (as pointed out by Carr too) until the First World War that nationhood acquired an air of 'naturalness'. *Third,* very often there was little or no agreement within the diverse threads of the nationalist movement on what type of political community should be created in the future – the desire to return to pre-national dynastic or feudal systems was often stronger than the desire to create a nation-state in the modern sense of the term. In this situation the approval and influence of previously existing powerful nation-states in the region was key in taking this nationalism to its logical contemporary conclusion.

Reform nationalism took place both within and outside Europe. The basic feature of reform nationalism is that it can exist only when the principle of the nation-state is sufficiently well-established in precedent, thus reform nationalism is a historically more *recent* phenomenon. The fundamental principle here is reform of what are seen as outdated political institutions embodied within the state in line with already-established models that are widely perceived as desirable or inevitable to survive in an increasingly globalised world. In such a situation of massive restructuring of state institutions and

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[15] E.J Hobsbawm *The Age of Revolution* New York, Mentor 1964. p.169

redefining of the relationship between state and society, nationalism provides the co-ordinating factor. Breuilly demonstrates that in the case of Europe, this form of nationalism easily tended towards a 'reform conservatism' culminating in fascism as shown by the German, Italian and Rumanian examples in the twentieth century. The important lesson in this regard is the element of ressentiment during times of economic crisis that leads to popular support for authoritarian regimes that is couched in nationalist terms. Breuilly thus stresses the *continuity* between nationalism and fascism in opposition to Anthony Smith's attempt to distinguish the two.

In the *non-Western* examples of this type of nationalism – China, Japan and Turkey – the absence of any formal colonial control in these countries resulted in a much more pragmatic and thoroughgoing nationalism there than anti-colonial nationalism. There were important differences within these examples of course. In Japan, this process of reform was most successful since the opposition could take over the imperial state institutions instead of having to replace them as was the case with the decadent Ottoman empire in Turkey. In China, nationalism built upon previously existing Confucian and Manchu notions of a Chinese civilisation, however the odds against such an adaptation were huge, since at the level of values it was difficult to reconcile a notion of Chinese superiority[16] with the need for radical nationalist change. The threat of Japanese invasion did much to consolidate this fledgling nationalism and when the communists came to power, they retained many features of it for their own political and economic aims.

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[16] Expressed in the arrogant characterisation of China as the 'Middle Kingdom' in imperial accounts.

The remaining form of nationalism that Breuilly considers is **separatist nationalism**. This category covers within its sweep such diverse examples as the nationalism engendered by the decaying Ottoman and Habsburg empires in Europe, earlier Arab nationalism and anti-colonial nationalism (Breuilly considers this last category to be a special form of this separatist nationalism). This part of Breuilly's study usefully highlights the similarities and differences in European and non-European nationalisms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is relevant to our concerns on the dissemination of nationalism. That these comparisons are undertaken while retaining historical detail and without value-judgments about the desirability of otherwise of particular nationalisms is a testimony to the strength of Breuilly's methodology. It is beyond the scope of this study to cover this category in detail so let us return to our central concerns and draw some conclusions from Breuilly's research in this area.

The *general conclusion* that Breuilly draws from his study of the Ottoman and Habsburg cases is that here as elsewhere that the differences in the Habsburg and Ottoman *states* were also crucial in determining the nature of nationalist response.

Nationalism also arose along different trajectories within these decaying empires due to the varying strength of the cultural groups that were formerly contained within their large borders. As mentioned earlier, Breuilly argues that the *internal* functions of co-ordination and mobilisation and the *external* function of legitimacy as central to the process of formation of nationalist opposition. While the Habsburg empire was a feudal one that consequently developed absolutist and constitutional features, the Ottoman empire functioned with the use of a broad collaborator system and the use of religious identity in public life. In the Habsburg case, since external legitimacy was not a problem (the

international community cast a benign gaze) the first two functions assumed importance. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire was regarded as a 'highly unstable and decaying unit' within the international community, hence the external function of securing legitimacy for their nationalist movements became a central concern for groups like the Turks and Serbians.

In both empires, there were ethnic groups like the Greeks, Magyars and the Germans who occupied a dominant position and were able to convert their superior bargaining power into successful nationalist movements. Here again as in Poland, Breuilly shows that nationalism for these culturally dominant groups usually meant a defense of the considerable political autonomy enjoyed especially by the nobility in a *pre-nationalist* age and thus they 'worked with a historic territorial concept of the nation'. There were exceptions to this general rule including individuals like Kossuth, the radical Hungarian nationalist who realised that in the nationalist age, language differences within the new Magyar state could justify further sub-nationalism which would have to be conceded. This in fact is exactly what happened. The claim for nationhood by culturally dominant groups like the Magyars or the Greeks in turn stimulated responses from subordinate groups like the Czechs, Bulgarians and Rumanians (the in the Habsburg context). These new nationalisms used the language of ethnicity more vociferously to claim a more democratic, nationalist solution to their subordinate status.

This is one of the most striking parts of Breuilly's study – the fact that early on in the history of western nationalism and political theory, a firm link was established between claims to ethnic nationhood by subordinate groups and democratic values. Breuilly

believes that this association was especially forged by the situation in the Habsburg Empire. He states,

> "...in the effort to sustain democratic values greater recognition is given to the claims of ethnic nationalism. This association of democracy with the right of self-determination on the part of linguistic groups was particularly derived from the situation in the Habsburg Empire. and its impact on western public opinion was to give ethnic nationalism a powerful source of legitimacy...increasingly in the eyes of the international community, these responses came to be identified with democratic values."[17]

What Breuilly suggests contrary to the claims of a significant section of western political theory is that the ethnic nationalism and liberal democratic values were not mutually exclusive but indeed, *together* provided the context in which the modern state settled the issue of how the political community must be organised. In the era of Empire, a system of collaboration and patronage allowed a huge mosaic of smaller or bigger cultural, ethnic and language groups to jostle for space in one unwieldy loosely defined territory. However this was no longer possible in an era of the sovereign nation-state.

Since the nineteenth century at least, (if not earlier) self-determination, democracy and nationalism based on a homogenised language-or-culture-based ethnicity became increasingly the norm in the modern European state. It is due to this inextricable nexus that simplistic arguments that are sometimes made within western political theory *against* ethnic nationalism and *for* liberal democracy must be interrogated. More suspect are those theories that assume that western nationalisms have been liberal in character "whereas eastern nationalisms easily tend towards a contrary development".[18] In fact,

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[17] Breuilly ibid. pgs. 98-99
[18] Please refer to the Hans Kohn quote in chapter one.

Breuilly believes that *the welding of universalistic political discourse with a particularistic ethnic one constitutes the fundamental principle of all nationalisms.*

As for the adoption of the idea of nationalism in *non-European* contexts, Breuilly argues that in the non-Western world, the nexus described above between ethnicity and democracy did not develop in the same way, for the simple reason that economic and language/culture distinctions did not coincide neatly as the case of the Ottoman Empire shows. This prevented the rise of internally coherent dominant cultural groups that could convert their historic privilege into demands for nationhood. Nationalism here was in fact, very often couched in political rather than cultural terms. It was not as if a case is being made for a more 'liberal' or noble nationalism in non-European situations. Indeed, the terms 'liberal' and 'illiberal' do not make sense in this context. Rather, the delayed nature of state formation in much of the non-European world meant that acquisition of a modern state by the nationalists assumed top priority. This meant that the fledgling political elite was willing to put aside its internal cultural divisions (*if* they coincided with economic ones to become salient) to concentrate on 'nation-building'. Indeed, as happened with Turkey under Kemal, this type of non-European nationalism was often framed in radically liberal and democratic terminology. It must be stressed that there were important exceptions to this above rule including Japanese and Arab nationalisms where the presence of a common language and to a degree, common cultural and political heritage resulted in a western style, intellectual-led search for cultural identity. As Anderson points out, among the reasons for the success of the 'small band of middle-ranking samurai' in overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogunate was the "relatively high

degree of ethnocultural homogeneity resulting from two and a half centuries of isolation and internal pacification by the Bakufu"[19].

Anti-colonial nationalisms

The absence of any direct colonisation and the perception of a serious sudden threat by a homogenous middle class meant that Japan was able to adopt a nationalism consciously modelled on Europe, or on Hohenzollern Prussia-Germany to be precise. However, the inescapable solid fact for most of the non-western world in the early and mid-modern era was direct colonisation by a western imperial power. In such a situation, the structure of the modern nation-state and the idea of nationalism was introduced to the western world through the colonial encounter. The distinction between the nationalisms in Europe and in the *colonised* East in Breuilly's work from his larger theoretical position regarding the centrality of the state to the creation of nationalist opposition. In the colonial situation the salient element would of course be the *colonial* state. Breuilly notes that the colonial state was able to rule over a huge territory like India by a shrewd but not always successful combination of collaboration and non-interference in local affairs.

Thus for Breuilly as for many other historians, the most likely explanation of the *rise of nationalism* is the break-down of the economic and political *collaborator system* under colonialism. This break-down did not happen suddenly but in stages and gradually built up enough momentum to become a nationalist opposition that could challenge the imperialist power.

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[19] Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Growth of National Consciousness* London Verso 1983 p.95

Breuilly insists that the emphasis on collaboration as a model for explaining colonialism should not take away from the enormity of the anti-colonial resistance it its national or thousands of local manifestations – the latter being the area of focus for new historical research by the subaltern school as we will briefly discuss in the next chapter.

To conclude our discussion on Breuilly, we may say that the focus on the state and on politics as the frame of reference for considering nationalism has allowed him to make immensely useful comparisons across both variables – time and space – without falling into any of the traps that we outlined in the previous chapter. This is also due to his commitment historical research and only serves to prove that contrary to a layman's belief, an emphasis on history does not necessarily mean that theory is less relevant for explaining contemporary events. In fact, Breuilly's typology is especially useful to explain present-day nationalism for example, East Timor and Kashmir represent separatist nationalism while Germany has once again adopted unification nationalism. Further, much of the economic and political restructuring taking place within East Asian states is arguably achieved under the imperatives of a type of reform nationalism. Breuilly's work on nationalism has made an indelible contribution towards challenging Europe-centric political theory's conventional assumptions regarding nationalism including the role of intellectuals, the radicalism of nationalist doctrine, the connections between ethnic nationalism and liberal democracy and most importantly, the inextricable relationship between the modern state and nationalism as politics. Thus we are hopefully closer to answer to our first question regarding dissemination posed at the beginning of this chapter.

However, where Breuilly does not go quite as far as one would like is in answering our *second* question – in his analysis of nationalism in its non-European forms. The emphasis on the colonial state as central to anti-colonial nationalism is an important one, but Breuilly is by no means the most original writer in this context. He uses historical research from other sources including the Cambridge school and to a lesser degree, the subaltern school in combination with his own basic typology to analyse anti-colonial nationalism. In this process he does reach some useful conclusions – consider his succinct framework for analysing the rise of anti-colonial nationalism in India in terms of three key factors – "the 'nationalisation' of factional conflict; the contest for the allegiance of the dominant peasant; and the view of Congress as the step-by-step replacement of the Raj."[20]

In not considering governmental nationalism, Breuilly seems to have missed the essence of nationalism especially in non-European and postcolonial context and resulted in the *elision of two issues*. The first is the fact of nationalism *after* state formation. Ultimately, the aim of all anti-colonial nationalisms is to become a part of the state structure. Since Breuilly's thesis does not allow governmental nationalism the analytical space it deserves in the postcolonial context, it would lead one to the conclusion that after independence because the Congress was absorbed almost *en toto* into the state, its politics ceased to be nationalist. Having known the enormous power of the rhetoric of nation-building in most postcolonial societies undertaken after independence as represented by the Nehru era, the non-inclusion of it within his central framework is a serious lacuna. As we hinted in the introduction, standard scholarship does not include the phenomenon of *nation-building* in

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[20] Breuilly ibid. p. 144-145

an account of *nationalism*. Breuilly recognises the fact that nation-building is of significance to third world contexts, however, he does not seem to have followed through the full implications of his own observation in this respect. Does one conclude with Breuilly that even in the West, once the nationalist opposition is successfully able to convert itself into the nation-state, nationalism ceases to exist except within the new opposition?

These are complex issues and will be addressed in the conclusion of this study with a discussion of Michael Billig and Rogers Brubaker's pioneering insights in this field. We may simply mention here that despite his otherwise excellent analysis, in this aspect Breuilly joins Gellner and Hobsbawm and many others in keeping the understanding of nationalism chronologically and analytically in the past since nationalism as opposition in the Indian and indeed all over the decolonised world means anti-colonial, not postcolonial nationalism.

The second issue is that of nationalism *within* state formation. Many historians including Breuilly would agree that the imported nature of the development of state structures and of modern politics means that in colonised societies, the entire context for participating in modern politics is created by the colonial state. This is not to say that powerful pre-modern or more strictly pre-colonial structures do not exist that continue to exert their influence in the colonial and nationalist periods. *Rather* what is being stressed is the well-known fact that in the European context power bases (both ecclesiastical and secular) that predated the modern nation-state shaped political opposition well into the modern era. In colonial societies, in the absence of analogous power bases, the rise of a viable opposition to the modern state from *outside* the state structures is difficult to imagine. As a result,

nationalism usually incorporates under its broad sweep almost all politically significant movements. Hence the 'umbrella character' of the Congress party in India before and after independence that numerous studies have mentioned. Hence also the limited appeal of the framework of nationalism as opposition to the modern state in postcolonial societies.

A possible argument that one could make *within* Breuilly's framework is that Hindu nationalism may be the strictest example of nationalism within the subcontinent since it existed as the unacknowledged opposition within the Indian nationalist movement even before independence and after independence this opposition nationalism has succeeded in taking over the state. Breuilly's work was published before India witnessed the phenomenon of ethnic nationalism *within* governmental structures that Hindutva today represents. Therefore, one cannot say whether he would reach this conclusion. However, Breuilly's thesis *as it stands* leads one to the conclusion that in India nationalism is more strictly represented by the fractured pro-independence movement in Kashmir rather than the confident nationalistic posturing of the BJP – this is unacceptable as an explanation.

Breuilly also leaves some important questions regarding the exact mechanics of the adaptation of nationalism as a doctrine in non-European contexts unanswered. What are the reasons that nationalism *has always* provided such an attractive means for participating in politics in diverse cultures? Breuilly's understanding of nationalism as a mode of politics engendered by the modern state in these societies certainly provides a good reason, but does not explain the details of cultural adaptation. To understand the appeal of nationalism in non-European cultures better, let us turn to probably the most widely discussed writer on nationalism in recent times, Benedict Anderson.

Benedict Anderson – *The 'Notion' State?*

Anderson's work *Imagined Communities* was published just a year after Breuilly's and concerns itself with precisely the questions we have raised above. Anderson's central thesis and his theoretical aims are captured in his words as follows:

"My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how their meanings have changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. I will be trying to argue that the creation of these artefacts towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they became 'modular'...I will also attempt to show why these particular cultural artefacts have aroused such deep attachments."[21]

The most striking feature about Anderson's statement in light of our discussion until now is his radically novel treatment of nationalism as a 'thing' in itself. This reified status of nationalism is expressed quite literally in Anderson's appreciation of the phenomenon as a commodity of a particular kind – a cultural artefact. In this sense Anderson's work can justifiably be seen as the first thinker after the classical theorists to rehabilitate the study of nationalism as a legitimate and *independent* area of interest within the social sciences. As Partha Chatterjee (1995) notes, the publication of Anderson's work rescued the study of nationalism from the dusty files of area specialists and brought it back to the center of academic debate.

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[21] Anderson ibid. p.4

In this sense, although both Breuilly and Anderson are committed to historical analysis and make efforts to understand the appeal of nationalism beyond the level of intellectuals at the level of a mass phenomenon, their similarities end there. If Breuilly's central concern was (to use a recent phrase) to 'bring the state back' into the analysis of nationalism, Anderson's analysis is notable for its almost total exclusion of that variable. (Anderson's primary concern is thus with understanding nationalism as a phenomenon *in its own right* and not as an expression of some other variable, be it the politics of the modern state *or* modernisation *or* secular industrialisation. To the extent that Anderson *does* concede the existence of some context within which nationalism can be understood, it is what he calls the 'large cultural system':]

"What I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being."[22]

This is the second most striking thing about Anderson's analysis –(his conscious adoption of the study of nationalism as a *cultural* rather than political or economic phenomenon, although he retains a useful emphasis on the role of material factors) We shall see where and how this emphasis translates into concrete insights during our discussion of his theory below. It may be useful to first understand the reasons for his choice of this particular analytical category. These are to do with his opinion on Marxism as theory and as practice as is briefly explained as follows.

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[22] Anderson ibid. p.12

[Marxism as theory is criticised by Anderson for its perceived failure to deal with ideological phenomena including nationalism] As we discussed above, this formed the background to Breuilly's analysis. In fact, Breuilly's thesis was part of a growing dissatisfaction in the social sciences with Marxist or narrowly materialist accounts as has already been referred to in our discussion on Gellner and Hobsbawm. [Anderson notes that Marxist writers themselves including Tom Nairn and Hobsbawm have considered the theory of nationalism to be Marxism's great historical failure] But he believes that this judgement does not go far enough since it involves an erroneous assumption that Marxism actually made serious attempts at all to achieve theoretical clarity in this area. What is more true is that "nationalism has proved an uncomfortable anomaly for Marxist theory and, precisely for that reason, has been largely elided, rather than confronted."[23]

Marxism as practice tells a similar tale of woe; in Anderson's words, "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms – the People's republic of China, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and so forth – and in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from a prerevolutionary past."[24] This of course is not an original observation as Anderson himself notes. What he does find striking about recent history is the recent wars between Vietnam, Cambodia and China. According to him, "these wars are of world-historical importance because they are the first to occur between regimes whose independence and revolutionary credentials are undeniable, and because none of the belligerents has made more than the most

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[23] Anderson ibid. p.3

[24] (Anderson ibid. p.2) Barbara Ward writing in the mid-50s called the disagreements between the erstwhile Soviet Union and China as an example of the most basic type of 'flat-out, slap-up, ding-dong kind of quarrel'! Of course, much of the literature produced in the United States at this time refused to take seriously the complex disagreements over Communist doctrine between the Soviet and Maoist regimes, seeing these simply as proof of the 'failure of Communism'.

perfunctory attempts to justify the bloodshed in terms of a recognisable *Marxist* theoretical perspective.[25]"

Let us note that [Anderson is writing in the early 1980's] so his tone is one of somebody having made a discovery. However, events since the publication of his book including the spectacular fissuring of the USSR into numerous nations have only served to confirm his thesis that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (ibid. p 3) With this background, we may now understand Anderson's thesis.

[Although the scope of Anderson's work is vast and the narrative eclectic, one can isolate *two distinct and parallel parts in his work* – one is his theoretical arguments and the second is a historical account the rise of nationalism in Europe and elsewhere. Further, within this second part there are two aims which can be discerned by focussing on what he means by nationalism as a 'cultural artefact' that 'became modular'. When Anderson talks about nationalism as a cultural artefact, he is concerned to explain its formation and rise *within* Europe against the background of the collapse of earlier religious and cultural certainties – this forms the first part. When Anderson's speaks of nationalism as a 'modular form' "capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations", he is seeking to trace its adoption *around the world* – this forms the second part of the historical narrative] Thus Anderson is concerned with our two questions regarding dissemination in a direct way and we shall follow the above scheme in explaining his study of nationalism.

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[25] (Anderson ibid. p.1)

(Let us first summarise his central theoretical claims. Anderson's first claim is that every nation is an *imagined* community. "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[26] Anderson is concerned perhaps more than Breuilly and others, to discard an unsympathetic judgmental understanding of nationalism as 'false consciousness' or as an ideological invention, or even as the need for identity in any simplistic sense[27]. The replacement of such negative imagery with the positive imagery of *imagination* in nationalism is immediately apparent in the title of his book and this theme runs like a thread through the entire work uniting otherwise diverse arguments. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Anderson's focus on the element of imagination has echoes of Renan's and Seton-Watson's subjectivism, and to this extent the concept invites similar praise and criticism as any subjectivist theory. We noted previously that subjectivism in the explanation of nationalist consciousness becomes a problem only when it gives no account of how the nation was formed historically. (Anderson to his credit does make creative attempts to explain the contemporary subjective act of imagining the nation with a description of how this process took place in history. He also seeks to balance the subjectivism of his central claims with an account of the objective *material* conditions including especially the role of what he calls 'print capitalism' in making such national imaginings possible.)

(Anderson is at pains to clarify that the element of imagination does not imply that the national community is fictive or fake in any sense. Thus his criticism of Gellner's

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[26] Anderson ibid. p.6
[27] Anderson believes that Tom Nairn's otherwise sympathetic study of nationalism is also marred by a view of it as a 'neurosis', as a pathology of modern developmental history. Anderson ibid.p5

juxtaposition of the nation as an imagined community to some other more 'real' community. In fact every community larger than "primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined."]

Here we have in succinct terms a central insight in Anderson's work – his belief in the thoroughgoing modernity of the nation and indeed of 'community' as we understand it in the modern era. With Anderson's argument, the endless distinctions between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesselschaft* made by Weber and later, Toennies between organic and impersonal societies are replaced by a commonsensical but still profound observation. We may extrapolate to state a fact – *nothing* in our contemporary world, including all forms of communal membership can be said to be untouched by the processes of capitalist modernity in all its manifestations. This modern membership demands from the tribals of western India an uncomplaining willingness to merge their self-sufficient ways hitherto organised *locally* around the mighty Narmada river, into the mightier stream of national life.

We may extrapolate from Anderson's argument to wonder if the only fiction then is within social science – the category of a 'real' community that does not require at least an iota of imagination to allow it to command people's loyalties. This concern with 'real community' seems to be a peculiarly European preoccupation as expressed within the Romantic tradition and contains far-reaching implications for the social sciences in general and nationalism in particular – we will reflect upon this in the conclusion. For now let us note that Anderson's observations above have done much to consign the fiction of the 'real' *un*imagined community to a Gellnerian 'dustheap of history'.

The second claim made by Anderson is that the nation is imagined as a *limited* and

sovereign political community. It is limited because its boundaries are clearly demarcated)

– "The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the

human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for,

say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet."[28] (The nation is sovereign because

within this clearly demarcated boundary, most nations imagine themselves to be free to

do exactly as they please. Anderson believes that the notion of sovereignty is intimately

linked to an age when the pluralism of religions destroyed the legitimacy of the divineiy-

ordained hierarchical realm. This in turn is related to a fundamental change in the history

of Europe as Anderson himself points out, to 'Enlightenment and Revolution',)when

"even the most devout adherents of any religion were inescapably confronted with the
living *pluralism* of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological
claims and territorial stretch..." (Within this territorial stretch), "nations dream of being
free, and, if under God, directly so."[29]

We may use Anderson's analysis to argue that compared to the more fluid territorial

concepts of the medieval age, national boundaries are defined more strictly and territory

(including every barren inch of glacial land in Siachen!) is guarded with missionary zeal.

Michael Billig makes a similar point when he states that the "boundary consciousness of

nationalism itself knows no boundaries"[30].

(What seems striking about nationalism is that territorial boundary is seen as defining the

limits not only of State power and sovereignty *but also of the moral circumference for*

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[28] Anderson p.6
[29] Anderson ibid. p.7
[30] Michael Billig ibid. p.21

action by the state. Within a demarcated territory a nation is the embodiment of untrammeled agency and no other body dare pass moral judgement on its action.] Perhaps no better expression of this in recent history than the confidence with which the BJP government as guardians of this national principle fended off criticism from the 'international community'[31] after the Gujarat genocide. In an increasingly *plural* world, concepts like nationalism must have arisen to maintain an uneasy balance of power organised around territory just as the concept of toleration maintains a truce between religions. This indeed seems to be the essence of nationalism – the *universalisation of particularism* in morality – if such a term may be coined. We will return to this discussion in the next chapter.

(The *third* and final theoretical claim that Anderson makes here is that the nation is imagined as a *community* because)

"regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."[32]

(Thus the nation as community is both deep and horizontal. Horizontal because as Anderson says somewhere else, the nation is conceived of as 'flat and fully operative over each square inch of territory'. This 'flatness' is related to Anderson's previous argument about the collapse of the hierarchical dynastic realm and the rise of sovereignty.]

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[31] Of course, this term needs to be interrogated, being a thinly-disguised euphemism that actually refers simply to the rich club of nations. Notice the fantastic element of imagination involved in *this* community!
[32] Anderson ibid. p.7

As for Anderson's other claim regarding the 'fully-operative' national membership that effects colossal sacrifices from individuals, we retain serious doubts. The problem seems to lie in the question that many theorists including Anderson and for example Anthony Smith start from - *why do people kill themselves for their country*? The truth about people dying for their countries looks to us rather less spectacular than many theorists seem to assume. As Wallerstein has argued in a recent commentary, most people are indifferent to the states that they live in and usually they try to stay out of the way of public power or participation[33]. There is no doubt that the national imagining while 'shrunken' to use Anderson's evocative phrase retains enough ammunition to *demand* sacrifice, as we hinted in our mention of the Narmada tribals above. However, whether it manages to actually *achieve* that level of sacrifice is doubtful. The example of soldiers dying on the battlefields is hardly a good one in this context, knowing the solid economic reasons that drive most people into the army. Conscription during and *especially* during times of war (described by governments as a 'national crisis') would not be necessary but for this fact.

The phenomenon of people dying *to establish a future nation-state* (the examples here are indeed spectacular – young suicide bombers in Palestine and an entire generation lost to militancy in Kashmir) is more compelling. If Anderson's argument refers to this latter phenomenon (and it is not certain that it does), it contains a valid point – one may reflect for a moment on the incredible difference between the general indifference that already established nations elicit and the commitment that people show for a *future* national utopia. However, here too there are no straightforward conclusions to be drawn – though nationalism can be seen to provide the overall context for such sacrifice, the actual

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[33] Immanuel Wallerstein *Commentary No.42* (dated June 15 2000) from Fernand Braudel Center website.

immediate reasons that people kill themselves for a cause must be more complex. What is true is that nationhood seems in the modern age to subsume many other revolutionary ideas in times of crisis so that it becomes the single-minded focus for people seeking a resolution of complex political issues. And even in times of revolution (as Hobsbawm's and Breuilly's analyses of the French Revolution show), the actual number of people that are willing to put their lives at stake 'for the nation' is limited. *This is what gives the Palestinian suicide bomber her place in history.*

Anderson's view of the diverse reasons that people enlist for 'larger' causes through a simple national lens does not consider these above facts. It probably follows from the fact that unlike conventional liberal/Marxist dismissal of nationalism as a retrograde force, Anderson remains somewhat awe-struck by the strength of nationalist sentiment as mentioned above. Anderson draws on what he believes is the intimate connection between the nationalist imagining and *death* to explain patriotism. He argues that what gives nationalism a command over people's loyalties is its apprehension of the enormous need within everybody to explain death and contingency in a satisfactory way. Nationalism, more than what Anderson refers to as 'evolutionary/progressive styles of thought' including Marxism and liberalism fulfils this need for *continuity* between life and the afterlife. These observations by themselves are not striking, as Anderson himself admits, what makes them more compelling is his placing of nationalism within the larger context of the 'dusk' of the religious modes of thought that gave an account of man-in-the-cosmos and of death.

This brings us to Anderson's **second aim** – to explain the historical rise of nationalism. As mentioned above, the first part of this second is aim is more strictly concerned with

Europe, with placing nationalism within the context of "the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being"[34]. Let us summarise Anderson's main findings in this area.

To understand the 'cultural roots' of nationalism in Europe, Anderson believes an appreciation of fundamental change in three areas is crucial – *First*, the notion of **religious community**, of Christendom in particular. The reasons for this change are the discovery of the non-European world from as early as the thirteenth century onwards (here Anderson quotes the 'greatest of all European travel books' – the description of Kublai Khan by Marco Polo) and the internal demotion of the sacred language of Latin and consequently, the idea of a sacred community across all of the Christian world and Europe specifically. Travel brought home the fact of plurality to Europe as we have been arguing and the demotion of Latin meant that the power of a 'trans-European Latin-writing bilingual clerisy' that could mediate between the illiterate masses and the church. or between 'earth and heaven' themselves as Anderson puts it, waned steadily after the Middle Age – one can imagine the consequences for a medieval hierarchical Latinate of the rise of larger and larger communities of vernacular speaking literate masses. This point is related to the one that Anderson's book is perhaps most remembered for – the role of print capitalism – this point will be explained later.

Second, the **dynastic realm** which changed from being the only imaginable political system, one in which monarchy organised all politics and patronage around a high centre to one in which "state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square

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[34] Anderson ibid p.12

centimeter of a legally demarcated territory.}[35] An appreciation of this awesome change from a medieval dynastic monarchical power organised around *occasional* spectacular displays of power to one in which state power is *routinised* and infuses the very interstices of society is what makes Michel Foucault's study of modern disciplinary power ring chillingly true[36] {Anderson argues that dynastic power was maintained in a pre-national age not through war exclusively but through a policy of sexual politics as achieved by royal intermarriage within Europe} – here he astutely observes that miscegenation was a sign of superordination as shown by the fact that there has not been a single 'English' dynasty ruling in London since at least the eleventh century.

The *third* change that Anderson wants to bring to our notice is in **apprehensions of time**. Anderson argues that nationalism is possible only in an age when medieval notions of 'cosmic-universal time' are replaced by 'mundane-particular time'. This change is the change from Messianic time, a simultaneity of past and present (as shown in medieval art where no contradiction was perceived in showing the painting's contemporary patron *alongside* Biblical figures!) to the modern notion of 'homogenous empty time'. Anderson argues that the modern nation is a perfect analogue for "the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time.[37]"

Anderson seems to be pointing to the fact that in the modern age, simultaneity is more of a geographical concept and apprehensions of time are analogous to 'flat, fully operative' state power. Both of these in turn are analogous to the nationalist principle of organising

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[35] Anderson ibid. p.19
[36] Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish* London, Penguin, 1972
[37] Anderson ibid p.26

political membership – an obsession with territory and land as against hierarchy. However, as we will argue in the conclusion, the stressing of the horizontal-ness and flat-ness of modern nationalist imagining, while providing clues to the strength of nationalism, may also be taking the notion too far. Anderson's unique contribution to the notion of modern simultaneity is in fact arguably elsewhere – in his deployment of the notion of simultaneity that had already been brilliantly conceived of as he admits by Walter Benjamin and Erich Auerbach, to analyse two *manifestations* of modern simultaneity. These are the *novelistic form* and the *newspaper* – here Anderson quotes Hegel in saying that the newspaper is to the modern man the equivalent of the medieval man's morning prayers!

Let us now turn to the role of **print capitalism.** Here we may start with an appreciation of another cultural commodity unique to modernity – the mass-produced *book*, which Anderson believes is different from any other medieval commodity in being a mass produced version of a unique self-sufficient art form. Book-publishing according to Anderson was one of the earliest forms of capitalist enterprise and thus "felt all of capitalism's restless search for markets". Thus to appreciate the manner in which print capitalism became salient to the rise of nationalist consciousness, one must return to an earlier point about the demotion of the status of Latin.

The role of print would have been unimaginable in an age where a clerisy tightly controlled the production of knowledge in Latin however, the Reformation changed all that. As Anderson notes, when Martin Luther nailed his blasphemous edict to the door of the church in Wurttemburg *he also became the first bestselling author so known.*

In a classic case of anachronistic posturing, Latin itself became more 'Ciceronian' and arcane in response to the tremendous threat first from Lutheranism and then from the even more plebian Calvinist movement. "The logic of capitalism then ensured that once the elite Latin market was saturated, the potentially huge markets represented by the monoglot masses would beckon."[38]

The final impetus to printing in vernaculars came from what Anderson terms the "slow, geographically uneven, spread of particular vernaculars as instruments of administrative centralisation by certain well-positioned would-be absolutist monarchs" (ibid p.40). Here Anderson brings back into his analysis *a point stressed by Breuilly* – the role of the absolutist state in nationalism. We may summarise Anderson's thesis regarding the role of print capitalism in nationalism by quoting at some length from his work:

"...print-languages created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of a huge variety of Frenches, Englishes, or Spanishes, who might find it difficult to comprehend each other in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community".[39]

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[38] Anderson ibid. p.38
[39] Anderson ibid.p.44

An interlude and some analysis...

Anderson's argument about print capitalism as captured above is lucid and needs no explanation but one may add that in the face of what he calls 'human linguistic diversity', print capitalism created *not one but several new imagined communities* by separating and standardising the vernaculars.

Also, our concerns about the *dissemination of nationalism* lead us to stress that although the idea of an imagined national community became generally diffused beyond a few intellectuals through print capitalism, the *absolute* numbers of the literate population were still smaller than one would imagine. What was important as Habermas has convincingly shown was that as 'reading publics' were formed and they met in salons and coffee houses during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in cities all over Europe, they formed what he terms the 'bourgeois public sphere'[40]. We may enrich and expand Anderson's analysis by imagining the impact that such literate bourgeoisies can have on the rise of nationalism. Nationalism provided the language by which such a politically ascendant bourgeoisie participated in modern politics in a capitalist age. What one must stress here is that as much as print capitalism created reading publics, there must have been involved in nationalism an active *grabbing of the power to imagine a community* by a class that has the greatest stake in the new nation-state – the *bourgeoisie*. If a critique can be made of Anderson's otherwise brilliant analysis in this area, it is that it often does not emphasise enough the element of *power* in the process of the subjective construction of nationalism by elites.

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[40] Jurgen Habermas, *The Rise of the Bourgeois Public Sphere* Translated Thomas Burger, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press 1989.

Anderson does *obliquely* point to the fact of power when he acutely observes that the standardisation of vernaculars was essential to achieving a new fixity to language that in the long run helped to "build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation". We may recall here our earlier discussion on the historicist rediscovery of language within German and Italian nationalism.

In fact, Anderson believes that it was is these latter (nineteenth century) European nationalisms that the issue of the *relationship between print-languages and power* becomes especially salient and even problematic. The "golden age of vernacularising lexicographers, grammarians, philologists and litterateurs", not to forget professional *historians* meant that there were now numerous new print-vernaculars. However, the uneven spread of the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie meant that in the beginning, 'power and print-language mapped different realms'. Thus the philological revolution was not always realised in terms of actual consumption by what was still an uneven bourgeoisie. thus which vernaculars achieved the sacred status of print-language was highly unpredictable. This situation was remedied by the gradual growth of literacy, commerce, industry and state patronage of dominant languages but in certain places like the polyvernacular Austro-Hungarian Empire, the consequence of the contingent rise of print-vernaculars were often 'explosive'.

Such a historicist-lexicographical rebuilding of the nation, just like everything else about nationalism was at first only a *limited and contingent* phenomenon as we have been arguing. As Anderson also notes, all the changes that preceded, accompanied and gave rise to nationalism remained contingent till very recently, for instance, till 1914 dynastic states sought to hold on their pre-national glories. We shall return to this point yet again

in the conclusion but for now we may legitimately ask *how such contingent phenomena have become hegemonic not simply in Europe but all over the world in our times.*

Here Anderson believes it is in the nature of nationalism that models of nationalist imagining, once created, "could become formal models to be imitated, and, where expedient, consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit."[41] In the Indian context, the rediscovery of official Hindi as a national language distinct from *Brajbhasha or Maithili* and especially from Urdu with all its Islamic connotations comes to mind.

As mentioned in the beginning, the analysis of *nationalism as a 'modular form'* allows Anderson to reflect on (as the title of his book states) 'the spread of nationalist consciousness'. According to him, by the nineteenth century if not earlier, the model of the nation had become 'available for pirating' by different states around the world. In Europe the influence of nationalism as a modular cultural commodity resulted in the latter 'official nationalisms' followed especially by former dynastic states seeking in Anderson's unforgettable phrase, to stretch "the tight, short skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire" as was seen in Russia and even in less well-known examples like England (recall Anderson's critique of Seton-Watson's refusal to recognise examples of official nationalism in Paris, London, Madrid etc. in chapter one).

Anderson's discussion of official nationalisms in areas as diverse as Japan and Hungary is fascinating, however what is more relevant to our concerns about dissemination is the concept of nationalism as a 'modular form'. If this concept talks about the 'export' of nationalism, it must have specific implications for the *second part of Anderson's analysis*

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[41] Anderson ibid. p. 45

as we stated at the start of our discussion – an effort to understand non-European nationalism. Let us summarise Anderson's arguments in this exciting but also, as we shall hopefully be able to prove, somewhat controversial and contradictory section.

Nationalism – A Creole Creature?

The most striking part of Anderson's argument about non-European forms of nationalism is his contention that nationalism arose in the Americas *even before* it did in Europe. In a section entitled 'Creole Pioneers', Anderson poses the riddle of why this was so, "why was it precisely *creole* communities that developed so early conceptions of nation-ness – *well before most of Europe*? Why did such colonial provinces, usually containing large, oppressed. non-Spanish-speaking populations, produce creoles who consciously redefined these populations as fellow-nationals?"[42] Anderson notes that this was no mean feat, resulting in the sudden splitting of the three hundred year-old Spanish-American empire into eighteen separate states in Latin America.

Anderson's answer is that 'Creole nationalism' was a product of the fact of colonialism, or more precisely, of administrative unification under colonialism. Administrative unification by itself can create the material conditions for statehood to be imagined, however to explain *nationalism*, one needs to recognise a further fact about colonialism – the colonial practice of retaining bureaucratic *difference* through racial exclusion in administrative structures.

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[42] Anderson ibid. p.50 (emphasis in the original)

We referred to the fact that British rule in India was perceived as unfair (and irrational to that extent) in our discussion of the work of Edward Shils in the previous chapter. This principle of colonial-imperial exclusion was crucial in creating the sense of resentment that is always a feature of most nationalisms (we may recall here our point about *ressentiment* and Kedourie's analysis of B.C.Pal in the previous chapter).

Of course the principles of *race* that were so obvious in British rule in India were bent somewhat in the Latin American situation, where the American creoles were mainly of the same racial stock as their imperial masters, especially during the early days of colonisation. For the Creoles, the accident of their birth in the Americas had already fixed their subordinate status in the imperial eye – according to Anderson, the Enlightenment indirectly strengthened this racism. For example, Rousseau and Herder's arguments on climate and ecology as formative for culture and character could easily lead to the vulgar conclusion that the creoles, born in the Americas, were irredeemably inferior. After this point the racial similarities between the metropolitans and creoles themselves became a source of further imperial disdain – the reasons were to be found in the imperatives of colonial power. As Anderson notes dryly,

"From the sovereign's angle of vision, the American creoles, with their ever-growing numbers and increasing local rootedness with each succeeding generation, presented a historically unique political problem...If the indigenes were conquerable by arms and disease, and controllable by the mysteries of Christianity and a completely alien culture...the same was not true of the creoles, who had virtually the same relationship to arms, disease, Christianity and European culture as the metropolitans...They were to be economically subjected and exploited, but they were also essential to the stability of the Empire"[43]

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[43] Anderson ibid. p.58

But if the creoles were excluded from higher office, they were also now a formidable numerical and economic force, and like their European bourgeois counterparts, they used the opportunities afforded by print capitalism to generate an indigenous Creole identity and subsequently Creole nationalism. However, despite this striking achievement, Creole nationalism was never able to convert its nationalism into a successful Americas-wide nationalism. Anderson states in passing that this might have had something to do with material factor - *the fact of the lower level of capitalism and technology in the Spanish Americas.*

Conclusion and Critique

This last point about *material* factors wraps up our summary of Benedict Anderson's work and brings us to our main critique of his analysis especially of non-European nationalism. We shall pose this critique in the form of a riddle as Anderson himself does – Why was it, if Creole nationalism arose *before* its European counterpart, that this earlier form of nationalism did not become the modular form available for pirating throughout the world? If the nation-state was not a hegemonic form of political community even in Europe as late as 1914 and in fact existed alongside dynastic and monarchical states, why did it assume such a disproportionate level of global popularity? Why is it that a historically latter form of nationalism was more successful in exporting itself throughout the planet including to the colonies of Asia and Africa than an earlier nationalism also born in a colonial structure? Arguably, Creole nationalism had more in common with nationalism in, say, India or Kenya or Indonesia than the European models that were according to Anderson's analysis, successfully emulated globally.

Not least of these similarities was the *pattern of state-formation* based on geographical unification that colonial administration brought about, and the *pattern of ressentiment-based nationalism* that racist exclusion from that administration brought about (as we argued above).

Although Anderson reflects creatively on the appeal of nationalist *ideology* in different parts of his study, we are interested here in the spread of nationalism as a political force around the world. The clue to an answer to our riddle above may lie in that obscure little fact tucked away in Anderson's analysis regarding material factors – the fact of the lower level of capitalism and technology in the Spanish Americas mentioned above. The crucial factors here must be *colonialism and capitalism* or more importantly, the export of the idea of the nation-state through these twin processes. An appreciation of global capitalism and colonialism as its ally at crucial points (we may recall here Lenin's still-valid thesis about imperialism being a stage of capitalism) gives the idea of the *nationalism as ready for export* some much-needed substance but it is interesting that Anderson mentions it so little in his general thesis. When he does, it is belatedly and in passing (as a quote below from his work proves).

We may extrapolate from Anderson's comment on the lower technological and economic development of Creole nationalism to conclude that the European model of the nation-state was more successfully exported than the Creole model because of the former's command over superior technology and over *colonies* in that order. Anderson's idea of nationalism as a cultural artefact can further be developed in terms of a concept of a cultural *commodity* that like other commodities in the capitalist age, lends itself to export.

But even with this recognition, questions arise that Anderson does not fully answer although he provides clues at several places. Anderson brings to our notice the 'striking fact' in his own words that colonies achieved a level of state formation *centuries* before many European states as mentioned above. Even in that mother of all empires, England, nationalism assumed salience only towards the end of the nineteenth century and especially after the First Great War, centuries after its conquest of the East. Anderson makes the astute observation that it is instructive that India became a *British* colony only after the 'Mutiny' of 1857; before that it was a possession of the East India Company. The well-known fact of the Queen Victoria assuming the title of Empress of India very late in her career as monarch becomes intelligible only in this context.

If European powers were sorting out the tangled skeins of their nationhood as late as 1914 as noted by Carr and others and if nationalism became a global ubiquity only after this phase, then one must seek to understand the *precise relationship between nationalism and colonialism in this era*, however here Anderson is far less instructive than elsewhere. The reasons for Anderson's oversights in this area seem to follow from a fairly simple oversight – *chronology*. To explain, let us consider Anderson's statement that "the 'last wave' of nationalisms, most of them in Asia and Africa, was in its origins a response to the new-style global imperialism made possible by the achievements of industrial capitalism."[44] This is perhaps the only time that Anderson mentions the role of global imperialism and industrial capitalism which as we have argued requires much more analysis.

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[44] Anderson ibid.p.139

Even more problematically, Anderson places the chronology of nationalism in Asia and Africa somewhere in the middle of the twentieth century when he refers to nationalisms in these areas as the 'last wave'. If nationalism was indeed a feature that arose in the twentieth century only in Asia and Africa, then they have as Anderson says, "a profoundly modular character". European nationalism then can be seen as the cultural commodity or the modular form that was imported by these twentieth century nationalisms.

But arguably, nationalism in Asia and Africa can be placed chronologically in the mid-twentieth century only if one adopts an extremely shallow understanding of nationalism as the moment when the colonies gained their *formal political independence*. If the processes of state-formation and especially nationalism began in the colonies much earlier as the Creole experience shows, then one must look for the roots of this process in an earlier era. It is puzzling that Anderson does not do so, given the fact that his analysis of European nationalism is engaged in precisely the same – tracing the roots of the process in the early modern period.

Let us propose an alternative theory based on Anderson's *in*sights and his *over*sights – nationalism arose as an alternative to empire – in the colonies *as much as in the metropolis*. Is it not true that nationalism as a principle is antithetical to the principles of empire? If this is true of the colonies, it must be equally true of the imperial powers. The striking fact in this respect is that the rise of nationalist agitation within *India* was almost simultaneous to a consolidation of nationalist arguments in *Britain* during the late Victorian period leading up to the First World War.

The great divide within British society in this period was between the Tories seeking to retain the glories of Britannia and the Liberals looking towards a new inter*national* age. Historians have convincingly argued that the British finally left India when they realised that it had become not simply unprofitable but also *ungovernable*. Not least in these factors leading to ungovernability was a groundswell of international opinion that held that the principle of nationalism, not colonialism, was the only legitimate way to organise the new world order and that this must apply to *all* states if it was to be effective. As the idea of nationalism acquired a respectability and indeed, an air of inevitability from the late nineteenth to the twentieth century (not least by the wave of nationalisms in Asia and Africa). British liberals used the national principle to garner nationalist support for the War in Europe as well as to argue for giving the colonies their independence.

If one can hold a global argument about nationalism in the modern age, then it would be to view it as the consequence of a *longue duree* shift in the way the international order has been organised over the past three centuries. The role of capitalism in shaping domestic opinion within Europe and international opinion on the issue of nationalism is crucial. As the principles of empire and colonialism became increasingly anachronistic to the demands of the new international capitalist order, *nationalism arose as the hegemonic doctrine to organise international politics*.

Anderson's concept of the 'modular form' may be useful for European contexts but is an overdrawn one, if not actually misleading at least in the case of India and probably elsewhere[45].

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[45] My knowledge is largely limited to India, so I cannot say about the rest of the colonised world with certainty.

It suggests a hermetically-sealed 'thing' – a commodity called nationalism that can be pirated but always *originates* in one place, in one locale, in one factory so to speak. What if the process of the spread of nationalism was not as one way as the image of a model being pirated suggests, but was in fact a *two-way process of strengthening of the nationalist principle through cyclical reactions* between the colonies and the metropolis?

What may be useful here is Tom Nairn's thesis that nationalism in the contemporary western world is a reaction to the nationalism of the non-Western developing world[46]. Nairn argues that although initially nationalism may have developed in Europe, anti-colonial nationalisms generated counter-nationalisms in the imperial states in the postwar era. Breuilly is dismissive of this argument, stating flatly that nationalism developed in Europe first and in the colonies later – a familiar. However, if Nairn's thesis is correct, it may be usefully extended to the pre-war era including the nineteenth century.

Of course these are very tentative reflections that would require some specific historical research to prove, but it may help to use Anderson's thesis to further our understanding of nationalism where his analysis ends. Let us say here that Anderson's thesis has the effect of painting a one-way picture of the spread of nationalism from Europe to the rest of the world. This picture is only half–true as it does not bolster its legitimate arguments regarding the role of Europe in spreading this powerful doctrine with either an account of the *material factors involved outside Europe, or with an account of how the colonies also shaped nationalism in the West.* Let us turn to the next chapter which begins with a polemic against Anderson and takes the debate further.

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[46] Tom Nairn "Marxism and the Modern Janus" *New Left Review*, 94 (1975) pp.3-29

CHAPTER THREE

Anti Narratives and Correctives...

We have seen in the first two chapters the manner in which political theory has made attempts to explain the rise of European nationalism and also engaged with non-European and anti-colonial nationalism. We analysed the tendency within standard eurocentric accounts to treat 'eastern nationalism' as a less desirable variant of the earlier healthier 'western' variety and we also outlined some problems within sociological and historical accounts that make a teleological argument about nationalism and modernisation. In the previous chapter we discussed two particularly compelling and analytically rich accounts of nationalism including non-European nationalism but ended with a discussion of the main theoretical problem in Benedict Anderson's analysis of Asian and African nationalisms – his placing them chronologically in the mid-twentieth century.

Partha Chatterjee takes *this* chronological problem as the starting point of his critique against Anderson in his study of nationalism in India. However, to understand the timing and the tone of the Chatterjee's argument, one must *also* place his critique against the background of the ideological omissions and commissions of the standard western-centric literature on nationalism. The reader may recall that the first chapter ended with a brief mention of the result of these biases being the appearance of a rift between 'standard' theory and a set of critiques of standard eurocentric writings that are collectively known as the subaltern and postcolonial schools. This chapter begins with a discussion of

Chatterjee's polemic against Anderson[1]. The reasons for choosing to look at this critique more closely are two fold: The first is of course for the account itself – as we shall see below. Chatterjee uses historical research from India and especially Bengal in the nineteenth century to argue that in fact nationalism in India began much *earlier* than standard accounts and especially Anderson's thesis would imply. Chatterjee is able to push the chronology of Indian nationalism back by consciously starting from a different definition of nationalism than either Anderson's or that employed by standard nationalist historiography. The second reason for studying Chatterjee's work is that though it was largely misguided in reading the tone of Anderson's argument as we shall hopefully be able to show, it is representative of as well as constitutive of post-colonialist writing – it sparked off a storm of writings in a similar vein as this early critique and was influential in pushing the debate on nationalism among third world intellectuals in a particular direction.

Many latter contributions to this debate on nationalism concern themselves directly with the question that we raised in the introduction – how are we to judge nationalism in the Third World? Is it a regressive or progressive phenomenon? The rest of this final chapter will critically trace the contours of the latter debates within subaltern and postcolonial studies that have dominated writing on non-European nationalism and also look at some alternatives to this debate.

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[1] Partha Chatterjee *The Nation and Its Fragments*, Delhi, OUP 1995 Chatterjee also has a previous book (1986) dealing with similar themes, but we have chosen to study this present (1995) one because his general arguments and in particular his polemic with Anderson in this one are more fully developed.

Let us begin with Chatterjee's critique of Anderson with his argument that the problem with Anderson's account of nationalism is that it relies what has been a standard, unquestioned view among Indian historians for too long – a nationalist understanding of nationalism as a *political* movement. To quote Chatterjee,

"To be fair to Anderson, it must be said that he is not alone to blame. The difficulty, I am now convinced, arises because we have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a *political* movement much too literally and much too seriously. In India, for instance, any standard nationalist history will tell us that nationalism proper began in 1885 with the formation of the Indian National Congress."[2]

The fact that Chatterjee accuses Anderson of succumbing to a standard *political* view of nationalism is especially ironic in light of the fact that Anderson is concerned precisely to avoid standard political accounts of nationalism and bring to our notice the cultural roots against which nationalism came into being. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, Chatterjee is in fact correct in his analysis of Anderson as far as Asia and Africa are concerned since Anderson does not extend to these regions his general, Europe-centered view of nationalism as a *cultural* phenomenon. In fact he offers almost no specific account of Asian and African nationalisms except to say that they arose as 'profoundly modular' creatures in imitation of European nationalisms.

However, it is not certain that Chatterjee appreciates the fact that Anderson's analysis actually makes this distinction between European and Asian / African nationalisms, since

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[2] Chatterjee ibid. p.5 emphasis in the original.

he seems to think the problem is in applying European ideas of the role of the modern state in understanding Indian nationalism. As we saw in the previous chapter in fact, Anderson's analysis is fundamentally different from Breuilly's in almost entirely *omitting* the role of the state in his understanding of nationalism. The striking fact of early colonial state formation and the colonial principle of bureaucratic exclusion in the formation of Creole nationalism that he mentions could have been used usefully to understand the Indian colonial situation. Anderson however reserves a distinction between European and Asian/African nationalisms as we have hopefully been able to demonstrate. Thus Chatterjee is right when he says that "the specificities of the colonial situation do not allow a simple transposition of European patterns of development"[3] but misguided when he accuses Anderson of extrapolating European patterns of development to Indian nationalism...

When Anderson says that Asian and African nationalisms are 'modular' or have a 'profoundly imitative character, his work can be taken as an example of a Euro-centric account to the extent that he denies the specific creativity that Asian and African nationalisms must have displayed in employing nationalist language and imagery to suit their local contexts[4]. Although towards the end of his book (pg.104), Anderson does pay lip service to the fact that "the new states of the post-World War II period have their own character", the general thrust of his argument underplays their *creativity*.

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[3] Chatterjee ibid. p.7

[4] It must be noted that Anderson corrects many of his own arguments about Asian nationalism in latter editions of his book in a new chapter entitled 'Census, Map, Museum' where he concedes the role of the colonial state's administrative peculiarities in nationalism. In a review article – "Western and Eastern Nationalism – Is there a difference that matters?" *New Left Review* May/June 2001 – he argues against the putative 'difference' between Asian and European nationalisms and clarifies that at no point did he wish to imply that an 'East-West' axis is the best way to understand nationalism.

However, Chatterjee's solution to this bias is neither to understand the peculiar and particular patterns of colonial state formation in Asia or Africa nor the manner in which politics in these regions creatively refashioned the idea of nationalism during this era. It is definitely not to place Asian and African nationalisms in a global *longue duree* historical perspective that takes sufficient note of the role of colonialism and capitalism in a post-empire era, because he believes these are grand narratives that do not explain the specificities of Indian nationalism. To the extent that that Chatterjee believes that any account of nationalism must explain the specific cultural form that the idea takes while becoming salient in non-European cultures, he is correct in providing an alternative to Anderson's history. However to assert that nationalism anywhere bears the stamp of its specific cultural locale is not a radically original theoretical claim and in fact a truism.

Thus Chatterjee seeks to go further by demonstrating that in fact Indian nationalism can be understood not through a sameness with European nationalism (which in his opinion is confined to the 'outer' political realm) but through a difference that was established in what he calls the 'inner domain' of *culture*. Chatterjee's response to Anderson is in fact derived from the mistaken belief that Anderson believes nationalism to be an essentially political phenomenon. This in fact is not true at least of the European part of Anderson's analysis as we argued, thus Chatterjee's analysis of nationalism as a cultural project starts from a mistaken premise and ironically ends up being very similar to Anderson's. Chatterjee's *central thesis* is that the root of Indian nationalism is to be found not in the colonial state but in the formation of a cultural idea of the Indian nation, well before the start of official nationalism. In his words,

"The colonial state, in other words, is kept out of the "inner domain" of national culture; but it is not as though this so-called spiritual domain is left unchanged. In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being...the dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power."[5]

Chatterjee's project then becomes one of writing the history of the role of Indians in fashioning their own nation as a cultural project. The attempt to write history from the margins of nationalist or imperialist historiography is a familiar subaltern theme, however unlike the subalterns who write history 'from below', Chatterjee retains in his analysis the main subjects of nationalist historiography – the state and the (Bengali Hindu) elite. Van der Veer (1994) observes that much of the literature on nineteenth century India focuses on the dual role of the colonial state and the "colonised" middle class and Chatterjee's work seems to follow this trend.

Chatterjee's self-avowed difference from standard imperialist or nationalist historiography in describing the 'most powerful, creative and historically significant project' of Indian nationalism is based on two parallel arguments – the first is regarding the 'inner domain of culture' – here he cites evidence mainly from nineteenth-century Bengal. The second argument is regarding the relationship between the state and this 'inner domain'. Together the two arguments establish what Chatterjee's claims is the distinctiveness of the Indian nationalist imagination. He also claims that he does so not argue for an Indian distinctiveness for any 'sentimental reasons' but for the fact that evidence on the colonial period points the other way – so we may examine this evidence.

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[5] Chatterjee ibid.p.6.

In the *first* argument is regarding the 'inner domain' of culture, Chatterjee cites the example of the *use of language* by Bengali nationalist elites. According to Chatterjee,

"The bilingual intelligentsia came to think of its own language as belonging to that inner domain of cultural identity, from which the colonial intruder had to be kept out; language therefore became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and then had to transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world.[6]"

Chatterjee further brings to our notice the fact that these developments had much to do with the establishment of an "institutional network of printing presses, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines and literary societies"[7] The historicist rediscovery of language in European nationalism and the standardisation of vernaculars to meet the demands of modern print capitalism have been mentioned in the previous chapter – in this area of nationalist consciousness then, the similarities seem to be more fundamental than the differences. Though Chatterjee is at pains to stress that despite the influence of European missionaries in these literary and linguistic processes, the middle classes retained a hold on them, his positing of a *radical* difference with Europe in this area seem overstated. In fact, in his polemic against Anderson, Chatterjee takes it as his task to demonstrate that in fact, the 'modular influences' of modern European languages and literatures did not produce similar consequences in Bengal as they did in Europe. In any case, Anderson at no point in his book *Imagined Communities* claims that they did, confining his analysis of modern European languages to Europe itself and stating only that the role of colonial languages prevented the establishment of a 'national language' *proper* in the colonies.

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[6] Chatterjee ibid. p.7
[7] Chatterjee ibid.p.7

To illustrate the above points better, let us take the *other example* given by Chatterjee. This pertains to the setting up by this Bengali intelligentsia, of secondary schools and colleges parallel to those established by the colonial State. As Gellner, Wallerstein and many others have argued[8], the role of formal education in fostering nationalism in European nations has been fundamental. The only difference within Chatterjee's account of Indian nationalism seems to be the presence of the 'colonial intruder'. The fact of colonialism is no doubt a crucial difference as we too have been arguing. However here too parallels in the *essence* of nationalist sentiment (or more accurately, *ressentiment*) in Bengal can be drawn with for instance with German nationalism where the very real threat of the Napoleonic invasion spawned a fervent search among the Romantics for the authentic German spirit uncorrupted by the 'anaemic cosmopolitanism' of the French.

Chatterjee also underscores the fact that the Bengali elite kept the state *out* of these processes of literary production and education. This brings us to his second point regarding the relationship (or rather the utter absence of one) between the 'inner' domain of nationalism and the 'outer' domain of political agitation in his work. Numerous historical studies have emphasised the reinforcing and sometimes competing constructions of the private and public spheres in India through a process of *mutual interaction*[9]. Even if a difference can be drawn between the two realms, the rise of 'ethnic' or 'cultural' and universalistic nationalisms indeed are perfect complements to each other in the era of the modern nation-state as Breuilly's analysis in the previous chapter shows. However, Chatterjee posits a radical break between political and cultural

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[8] For an even more cynical view of this process than Wallerstein, see Michel Foucault's description of the school system in his *Discipline and Punish* ibid.
[9] See the work of Peter van der Veer (1994) and Sandria Freitag (1989) – please see bibliography.

nationalism and further believes that this break is what gives Indian nationalism its character. Chatterjee's claims of Indian *exceptionalism* in nationalism are in fact untenable and only serve to prove that the development of Indian nationalism followed a trajectory characteristic of *all* nationalisms.

The attempt in his analysis to place the Indian imagined community in the 'inner' realm may be justified on the ground that he seeks to tell the other half of the story given the fact of dissatisfaction within the third world with standard eulogising nationalist accounts of the political project of nationalism which after all, simply ended up taking over the colonial state in most cases. There is no doubt that the ultimate aim of most anti-colonial nationalisms led by a middle-class elite with a narrow social base was the capture of state power. This was the cause of much of disillusionment of the post-independence era in much of Asia and Africa as has been widely documented. Also as we shall argue later, a study of these questions opens up avenues to think more rigorously about one of our central concerns – the liberatory and oppressive aspects of anti-colonial nationalisms.

This emphasis on the 'inner domain' could then be made part of a larger argument regarding the mutual construction of the two domains in the service of the modern nation-state. Chatterjee does not follow these (in our view useful) lines of argument however; and mentions the 'outer' political domain in passing only, dismissively. In fact, although at several points Chatterjee brings unusual larger insights to his study, the *tone* of Chatterjee's arguments seems to forget a universal fact of nationalism – the homogenisation of a 'cultural' essence (recall Aloysius endorsement of Gellner's analysis of nationalism as circumscribing culture within power) to underpin a political project. The political project may be described as the *attainment of a modern state*. In Europe, the

most striking example of the pursuit of these twin goals of nationalism simultaneously or at least cyclically, is provided by the country renowned for a purely *romantic* form of nationalism – Germany. As Breuilly shows, the German Parliament that met in 1848 during the heyday of the Romantics drew up a thoroughly liberal constitution. Further as Roman Szporluk's analysis[10] has convincingly shown, throughout the nineteenth century the first and foremost preoccupation of the great German nationalist Friedrich List was the elimination of *economic* inferiority with France and Great Britain and the establishment of Germany as a modern state.

Chatterjee's ignoring of variables such as the state is of a piece with the absolute absence of an emphasis on power and politics in his study of nationalism. As one can see in the first quote by Chatterjee above, these oversights follow from his dismissal of the analysis of political power in nationalism as a preoccupation of 'conventional histories'. For all his oversights in the same area, Anderson's work as we saw retains a useful emphasis both on comparative historical detail and on the (contingent) construction of national identities through what he termed the 'explosive interactions' between capitalism and linguistic diversity. Chatterjee's work however is notable for its astonishing refusal to include not simply any serious account of capitalism but also any comparative perspective at all in its portrait of a hermetically-sealed Hindu Bengali nationalism. Apart from the fact that Chatterjee's analysis follows much of the standard literature on nationalism in 'keeping the phenomenon analytically in the past', his *form of theorising* may have disturbing larger implications for third world theory and actual politics in general – as Aijaz Ahmad has argued about Chatterjee's work,

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[10] Roman Szporluk *Communism and Nationalism* ibid.

"the more strident versions of communitarianism are blowing apart legacies of secular citizenship in countries as diverse as Algeria, Egypt and India; and yet, the idea of self-governing religious communities as an alternative to secular citizenship in the modern nation-state is gaining ground in that branch of postcolonial theory...[11]"

One does not have to share all of Ahmad's somewhat simplistic notions of strife-free secular countries being suddenly 'blown apart' by communitarian strife to appreciate the manner in which a culturalist discourse such as Chatterjee's can be appropriated by the Hindu Right in contemporary times. More to the purposes of this study, as Achin Vanaik has written[12], Chatterjee's 'slide into culturalism' and 'through it towards even greater sympathy for indigenism' counterposes an authentic "narrative of community" to the "narrative of capital" itself identified with and standing for the narratives of universal history. If the purpose of this study has been to avoid precisely such simplistic binary oppositions, and retain a commitment to the variables of the state, power, politics and a comparative *longue duree* history of capitalism, then Chatterjee's work is almost entirely uninstructive about the larger questions we have been struggling with. Instead, it shows all the peculiar preoccupations of the body of writing that is now collectively referred to as **'postcolonialism'**. These preoccupations as mentioned earlier were initially formed in response to the prevailing distortions of standard western-centric accounts but in effect, the postcolonial school has contributed precious little to our understanding of nationalism in non-European contexts. This is due in good measure to its *reinforcing of problematic and simplistic East-West polarities* that we discussed in the work of Orientalist western-centric writers like Hans Kohn and Edward Shils in the first chapter.

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[11] Aijaz Ahmad, *Postcolonial Theory and the 'Post' Condition*, Socialist Register 1997 (internet version)
[12] Achin Vanaik quoted in Neil Lazarus *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* Cambridge, CUP 2000

To understand how this amazing development took place, let us study the trajectory that *third world writing on nationalism* in this most recent phase has taken by dividing it into two broad trends.

Writing History from 'Below'

The *first trend* in the literature was an effort to write 'history from below' — a clearly recognisable *subaltern school* position. This approach is grounded in what is essentially a legitimate concern with describing 'local histories' that are not usually captured in imperialist, rigidly Marxian and nationalist accounts of history. This school has in its early halcyon days, produced a fascinating body of work inspired by seminal texts such as E.P *Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class* (New York 1963) and Eric Hobsbawm's historical writing. In the context of India, the work of Shahid Amin on Chauri Chaura[13] and to a lesser degree, Ranajit Guha's early writings[14] have compellingly argued for a people's history not subsumed under a nationalist mythology that views the role of the masses in terms of a simplistic 'contribution' to a larger movement defined by the national elite. Amin for instance shows how contrary to standard Indian historical accounts, the non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhi was interpreted in diverse ways around the country with violence being reserved as a valid political tool in violation of his injunction against it. David Hardiman's work on the peasant nationalists of Gujarat is also noteworthy for its meticulous early research[15].

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[13] Shahid Amin *Event Metaphor Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922-1992* Delhi OUP 1995
[14] Especially his *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency* Delhi OUP 1983
[15] David Hardiman *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat* Delhi OUP 1981

Also, although it is not self-proclaimedly 'subaltern', Amita Baviskar's book on the Narmada Valley is of immense value for understanding the worldview of the tribals there and the changes it has undergone. Amita Baviskar *In the Belly of the River* Delhi, OUP 1995

In sum, the subaltern perspective has done much to clarify the (eventful and fitful but not passive) *role of the masses* in nationalism – this as the reader may recall was one of the central problematics regarding dissemination that we raised in the second chapter. It has quite simply written some histories that *needed* to be written in a situation where as Hobsbawm puts it memorably,

"we know too little about what went on, or for that matter what still goes on, in the minds of most relatively inarticulate men and women, to speak with any confidence about their thoughts and feelings towards the nationalities and nation-states which claim their loyalties...we know what national parties and movements read into the support of such members of the nation as give them their backing, but not what these customers are after as they purchase the collection of very miscellaneous goods presented to them as packages by the salesmen of national politics."[16]

So for instance when Ranajit Guha[17] uses the Gramscian distinction between 'dominance' and 'hegemony' to describe the colonial power experienced by the subalterns, he captures a useful truth about the various guises of state power not simply in the colonial era *but also after independence*. His descriptions of the kinds of dominance (taxation, forced labour, eviction, dispossession) the colonial state exercises over the subalterns and the relative lack of effort by the former to seek hegemony (in a moral, cultural and ideological sense) over the latter has chilling parallels with the attitude of the contemporary national state towards the Narmada tribals.

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[16] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, ibid. pp.78-79

[17] *Colonialism in South Asia: Dominance without Hegemony and its Historiography* quoted in Lazarus ibid. p.90. Lazarus also brings to our notice the creative use by Abdul JanMohamed of the same Gramscian categories in another, creative way to characterise different *epochs* namely the pre-independence (era of dominance) and post-independence (era of hegemony). Lazarus ibid. p. 89

The one problem with an overly subalternist perspective or as Lazarus has put it,

"proclaimedly radical intellectualism' is that the category of 'the people' or variously,

'peasant consciousness' or 'subaltern' itself get reified. Ironically, this reification of the

category of the 'subaltern' seems to have replaced earlier reified Marxist categories like

class that subaltern studies had sought to move away from. According to Lazarus since

these categories come to stand in for many things – a claim to authenticity of the writer's

work being foremost among these – the process of reification is an exercise in bad faith.

Interestingly, this 'bad faith' can extend to the actual field of politics itself as Pierre

Bourdieu argues,

"It is clearly in the political field that the use of 'people' and the 'popular' is most
directly profitable...this strategy permits those who lay claim to a form of proximity with
the dominated to set themselves up as holders of...an exclusive mission..."[18]

This astute observation should warn us about the unreflective use of such categories as

the 'people' that *nationalist* historiography is especially prone to. Here we may recall

Weber's analysis in chapter one – nationalism ensures that the 'prestige interests' of a

group are set off as those of 'the people' on a historic mission. The above discussion was

not meant to suggest that one must abandon any attempt to 'speak for the subalterns' as

the title of Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay states[19]. Spivak herself reaches a radically

avant-gardist standpoint on this issue by entirely denying the possibility of speaking on

behalf of a subaltern subject without misrepresenting her.

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[18] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Uses of the 'People'* quoted in Lazarus ibid. p.110
[19] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Nelson and Grossberg p.271-313 reproduced in
Padmini Mongia *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory* Delhi, OUP 1997

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore further these fascinating but often obscure debates regarding the construction of the subaltern's subjectivity by the writer. The discussion was rather meant to argue that the shift in Spivak's thought is representative of the shift from subaltern to postcolonial studies in a general sense. Spivak is not simply arguing that the subaltern subject cannot be represented, rather she suggests that any representational exercise including what were earlier known as 'progressive' or emancipatory politics/writing smacks of an 'empiricist residue' and must be thus abandoned.[20]

The **second trend** in post-Eurocentric accounts of nationalism within the third world can be understood in light of Spivak's arguments – this trend was an increasing denial of what are contemptuously referred to as 'metanarratives of emancipation'. In a seminal article[21], Sumit Sarkar traces the trajectory from subaltern to later subaltern studies, to postcolonial studies. According to Sarkar,

"Subaltern studies emerged in the early 1980s in a dissident-Left milieu, where sharp criticism of orthodox Marxist practice and theory was still combined with the retention of a broad socialist and Marxian horizon. There were obvious affinities with the radical-populist moods of the 1960s and 1970s, and specifically with efforts to write 'histories from below'...The radical Thompsonian theory despite assertions that are made to the contrary today for polemical purposes, never really became fashionable in the eyes of Western academic establishments...things have changed much since then...domination is conceptualised overwhelmingly in cultural, discursive terms, as the power-knowledge of the post-Enlightenment West."[22]

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[20] The term 'empiricist residue' is used by Neil Lazarus in his critique of Spivak's position. Lazarus points out that Spivak herself is unable to 'live up to her own injunction' in her writing or reporting on women of colour or on other issues that are important to her. Lazarus ibid. p.117

[21] Sumit Sarkar *The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies* Writing Social History, New Delhi OUP 1997

[22] Sarkar ibid.p.84

The larger point for Sarkar as argued compellingly by Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad too[23], is that whereas the early subaltern studies retained affinities with the milieu it was produced in, postcolonialism has been assimilated into the First World Academy's own intellectual investment in avant-gardist and ultimately conservative discourses such as postmodernism and post-structuralism.

Postcolonial Preoccupations

Though it is impossible to summarise the central aims of this diverse field of writing that includes in its ambit as Ahmad puts it, virtually the entire globe, there *are* some recurrent themes in postcolonial literature that prove the point made by Sarkar, Dirlik and Ahmad – *prime among these* is the tendency to analyse colonial power as well as the resistance to it *not* in terms of historical-material factors like the state or capitalist relations but as 'discursive practices'– a consequence of postcolonialism's roots in literary criticism. The *second trend* is a rejection of empiricist historiography and empiricist social sciences in general within postcolonial studies as captured in the seminal 1992 article by Dipesh Chakrabarty[24] and carried forward by Partha Chatterjee and Gyan Prakash in the latter's conscious adoption of what he calls 'post-Orientalist historiography'. The *third dominant theme* is a concern with hybridity, exile, displacement, diaspora and cross-culturality as shown especially in the writings of Homi Bhabha and Paul Gilroy. *Finally*, there exists within postcolonialism a preoccupation with identifying what are seen as 'derivative

[23] Arif Dirlik *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* Critical Inquiry 20 (Winter 1994) reproduced in Mongia ibid.
AND Aijaz Ahmad *The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality* in Mongia ibid. pp.276-293
[24] Dipesh Chakrabarty *Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for the Indian Pasts?* In Mongia ibid.

discourses' or 'mimetic practices' followed in the non-West as a result of the imitation of the West's hegemonic 'metapractices'.

Postnational Constellations?

The *most important consequence* of postcolonialist discourse as mentioned at the start of this chapter has been the re-introduction of the fraught, ahistorical and problematic categories of 'East' and 'West' that were ironically a feature of the Orientalist early writing of Kohn, Shils and Geertz. We can illustrate this point more clearly by studying the postcolonialist discourse on *nationalism*. Postcolonialism has brought its peculiar preoccupations as described above to produce what we have termed in our chapter title, an 'anti-narrative' against nationalism. However it may help to remember that this 'totalitarian' disavowal of nationalism is comparatively recent in the literature. The initial impulse against the nation-state within postcolonialism was not conservative but in fact was a radical intellectual expression of the widespread disillusionment in Asian and African states in the years following independence.

As Wallerstein and many others have noted, the power of the postwar European nation-state to invest and indeed, interfere in the scope of individual activity has been steadily increasing. In the case of the *postcolonial* state, it became obvious that the repressive structures of the colonial state had remained intact and far too often, the indigenous leadership had ended up replacing the colonial elite and used the state to keep themselves in power at any cost as demonstrated in India by the Emergency declared in 1977 by the

then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi[25]. The obvious abuse of state power led to a range of anti-state positions being adopted by third world intellectuals as was reflected in the initial (radical) literature.

However, economic developments in the 1980s that we collectively term 'globalisation' meant that a *new critique* of the state was emerging from within and outside the State from the defenders of the new international economic order – the new industrial elite comprising equally transnational corporations and technocrats within government structures. It must be noted that the critique of the state does not necessarily lead to a critique of the *nation*, however the most recent trend of writing within neo-liberal policymaking and academia has tended to conflate the two by stressing the irrelevance of *national* boundaries in the face of transnational re-structuring of the globe. An example of what Samir Amin has termed the 'ideology of the nation-state in crisis'[26] theory is:

"there has been a rapid and recent change in the nature of economic relations among national economic relations among national economies which have lost much of their distinct claim to separate internally driven development, and that domestic economic management strategies have become ineffective to the point of irrelevance."[27]

As Neil Lazarus has argued building on Wallerstein's path-breaking studies of the world capitalist system and Paul Smith's more recent contributions, there are good reasons to doubt this 'strong' version of the globalisation thesis in light of –

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[25] I am grateful to Dilip Menon for pointing out the role of the Emergency in the rise of anti-statist stances within Indian scholarship during the early 1980s.
[26] Samir Amin *Maldevelopment* United Nations Books (internet excerpt) page nos. unavailable.
[27] William Tabb, quoted in Lazarus ibid. p.43

"countervailing documentation (that) suggests that the vast bulk of contemporary trade is not 'global' but remains heavily concentrated within the core capitalist states, that very few of the corporations involved are in any strict sense 'transnational' and that even where patterns of decentralisation and denationalisation are in evidence, it is for the most part only in respect to production that they are so."[28]

Lazarus instead suggests that it is crucial to retain a *longue duree* perspective on capitalism that views the recent thrust within capitalism towards globalisation as simply a standard in-built feature of the system rather than a radical break. Even if one concedes that the globalisation represents a significant change from the postwar 'Fordist' system of accumulation as many theorists including David Harvey have convincingly argued, there is no reason to automatically assume that the nation-state must lose its historic role as a regulator of goods, people and capital. Indeed, as many economists have argued, the tasks of the nation-state are now more crucial than ever.

Within the *third world*, globalisation has meant the restructuring of Asian, Latin American and African economies through neo-liberal economic policies. In such a situation of economic uncertainty radical economists especially those belonging to the 'dependency school' have argued indeed that national governments have an especial role to protect their domestic labour force. However, in terms of the literature here, the post-independence critique of the state was ironically assimilated into neo-liberal critiques of the (non-Western, developing) state to produce an anti-state discourse well suited to the needs of a section of Anglo-American academics and policymakers.

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[28] Lazarus ibid. p.48

Writers like Leela Gandhi[29] have sought to trace a 'postcolonial' understanding of nationalism that is sympathetic to the phenomenon within the literature. However, the influence of the larger factors above means that such an effort usually results in a 'culturalist' defence of the nation that sits uneasily with a disavowal of the nation-*state* – this is the tension revealed in Chatterjee's own writings too.[30] On the whole however, one can state that nationalism is viewed within postcolonialist writings as an example of a 'bad totality' in R.Radhakrishnan's words. We may add that this bad totality of nationalism is for postcolonials, also *totally bad*, as in the nation-state is seen to have no redeeming features and nationalism is seen simply as 'illegitimate' politics[31].

At the risk of oversimplification, we may say that postcolonialism makes *two related claims* about nationalism – one, the more strictly empirical claim that national boundaries are fluid and impermanent due to the constant rupturing of these by the hybridity achieved through migration and diasporic activities and two, the normative claim that nationalism can never be a legitimate site to launch any radical politics within the third world since the postcolonial nation-state is always an alien 'mimetic' creature – here the work of anti-colonial critics like Frantz Fanon is used (tendentiously in our view) by postcolonial critics like Bhabha. The overall aim of these two claims is to rupture nationalist narratives as well as the ontological reality of the nation through diverse discursive methods.

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[29] Leela Gandhi *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* Delhi OUP 1998
[30] Chatterjee's earlier work including an article in '*Development Planning and the Indian State*' in T.J Byres (ed.) retains a focus on the state in his critique of the Nehruvian era; his later work emphasises either the fact that the nation is a 'derivative discourse' or seeks a 'culturalist' defence of Indian nationhood as discussed above.
[31] The term 'illegitimacy' is Ashis Nandy's as used in his book *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism* Delhi OUP 1994

The *first* empirical claim is expressed quite clearly in a statement by Bhabha – It is not only that "colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities" are:

"wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation"[32].

This postcolonial argument – claiming a radical transnationalisation of territory and of people's subjectivities – is countered somewhat easily in the face of a reality when most ordinary men and women are constrained by the boundaries of the national states they *reside and work* in. As Ahmad puts it, "Most individuals are really not free to fashion themselves anew with each passing day, nor do communities arise out of and fade into the thin air of the infinitely contingent[33]."

A statement by Tim Brennan brilliantly captures the amazing one-sidedness of the position of postcolonial and cultural studies in general on this issue,

"It is not so much the involuntary or coercive aspect of displacement that is forgotten but the one-sidedness of the conclusions drawn about the felt community of the nation. An overwhelming number of accounts look to reigning politico-emotive mythologies – ideological rituals of invented history and ethnic exclusion – while failing to analyze the reality of simpler, more knife-like communal sense based upon the passport, the green card, and the open-ended residency permit. Since nationhood in wage-setting plays almost no role in current theory, a simplistic coupling of formally cosmopolitan experience and transnational identity is facilitated."[34]

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[32] Homi Bhabha *DissemiNation* p.315 quoted in Lazarus ibid.p.135
[33] Aijaz Ahmad in *Postcolonial Theory and the 'Post' Condition* ibid. page nos. unavailable.
[34] Tim Brennan quoted in Lazarus ibid. p. 137

This 'knife-like' communal sense mentioned by Brennan forms the basis of modern nationhood at an everyday level, however it is something that few scholars have written about in the standard literature. A part of the problem is in the near-total elision of the question of the contemporary state within postcolonialism. However, the problem may be deeper – as we saw in the previous chapter, even as astute and comprehensive an analysis of nationalism as John Breuilly's finds scant mention of the less spectacular, everyday types of nationalism engendered *within* state structures.

The consequences of this gap in scholarship are significant as we have been attempting to argue – one can reach the conclusion that the forms of ethnic strife that are witnessed in some pockets of the world today are the only examples of nationalism proper and have little in common with facts of modern political membership like the passport and immigration laws. In fact, there are intimate and reinforcing connections between various kinds of nationalism, as the pioneering sociological work of Rogers Brubaker and Michael Billig has shown and as we will discuss in the conclusion. For now let us note that for Bhabha to make the claims that he does simply points to his own privileged subjectivity since the only people who can freely move between national boundaries in an unequal world controlled by global capital and by governments arrogating powers to shoot illegal immigrants, seem to be Coca-Cola executives and First World intellectuals such as himself. In fact, postcolonial intellectuals for all their analysis of colonial power in fact show a scant recognition of *contemporary* structures of power and privilege. While most of them remain firmly within rarefied First World academic circles, they believe they can assume an ontological position *outside* all power bases.

To be fair to the diversity of anti-nation ontological positions however, it must be noted that arguments about the fluidity of national boundaries have also been made within more *radical* critiques than Bhabha's. Paul Gilroy's work[35] on the historic and contemporary centrality of slavery and Black diasporic migration to the construction of Anglo-American nationhood is a good example In fact, these new critiques of nationalism are not unrelated to a powerful tradition within conventional radical and socialist thought denouncing nationalism as an inherently regressive, pathological or violent phenomenon that distracts people's attention from more noble pursuits like class-based agitation and revolution. Indeed, as mentioned in the first chapter, the enmity between nationalism and 'progressive styles of thought' (Anderson's term) has been the subject of hundreds of studies, including Roman Szporluk's book on the polemic between two German contemporaries – Karl Marx and Friedrich List. Any conventional reading of Marx and Engels would not fail to notice their intense antipathy to bourgeois nationalism including the kind they witnessed in the Germany of their time. We noted in the previous chapter the optimistic assertion by the socialist Hobsbawm of the waning of nationalism in the modern age – Hobsbawm's thesis may be incorrect, but his radical sympathies are undoubtedly strong.

However, this may be the problem, as Michael Lowy has argued astutely – the great historian may be mistaking his desires for reality. This is understandable given the enormous violence that seems to be written into the history of nationalism as has been well-documented in a rich body of liberal writing on the subject. The nation-state remains an institution based on coercion not simply outside its boundaries (in terms of war) but

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[35] Paul Gilroy *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1991

also *within* it – thus a fact like the massacre of Huguenots seems to be necessary to maintain the glories of the French nation. However, a recognition of the violent potential of most nationalisms and nations and avoiding nationalist historiography is not the same as arguing that the *nation in fact has ceased to exist*. Much radical thought seems to confuse the two and radical postcolonial critiques are no exception.

Let us return now to the other, *normative* claim made by postcolonialism – *this is more directly related to our question regarding the nature of third world nationalism*. The problematic as set by the postcolonials is one of modernity itself – the nation-state is a concept introduced to the non-West by Europe and therefore for Asia and African and anywhere else outside Europe, it is doomed to remain a 'profoundly modular' form in Anderson's words.

Part of this recent postcolonial critique is quite simply a third world intellectual's anguish at the fact that something so ubiquitous in his/her society is in fact an invention of some other society – thus Chatterjee's attempt to demonstrate the creativity of Indian nationalism. This part of the critique can be countered with the observation that after all, many inventions have been similarly borrowed by Europe from the rest of the world. The printing press and gunpowder – two inventions arguably pivotal to European civilisation, were invented in another, previous civilisation – China. The examples could be multiplied – algebra, decimals, the zero – came to Europe through the Persian Empire that in turn borrowed some of these concepts from the Indian subcontinent. Coffee was discovered and widely cultivated in the ancient Ethiopian kingdom of Axum *centuries* before it was taken by Arab traders to the rest of the world. These somewhat facetious examples are only invoked to stress that the history of the world has always been one of

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massive, ongoing trade in goods *and ideas* between various regions – due to what Wallerstein may have called the 'always-already' integrated character of the world system as such[36]. This is a fact that amazingly gets obscured often in debates regarding the 'West' and the 'East', and inspires not simply Eurocentric accounts of the 'spread' of doctrines like nationalism but also misguided attempts to demonstrate the uniqueness of 'Eastern' nationalisms as we have argued previously regarding Chatterjee's response to Anderson. It has been our contention that nationalism has a more complicated history than a straightforward *imitative* import of the concept from the 'west to the east' implies. In fact, the manner in which Lazarus has theorised the bias within conventional political theory concerning the nature of capitalism seems to be true regarding *nationalism* too:

"Concerning capitalism, it is clear that for Giddens it has remained essentially a 'Western' instance over the course of the past 500 years – and this notwithstanding its *own ceaseless historical reconstruction* and the vagaries, complexities, and contradictions that have attended its geographical dispersion across the globe (multiple and various forms of resistance, imposition, recuperation, accommodation, modification, etc.)...there are no good reasons for arguing that while capitalism spread more or less 'organically' from its point of origin in England to 'Europe', its subsequent development must be referred forever to this continental locus. This is both counter-intuitive and historically distorting (inasmuch as it fails to reckon with the constitutive role of the 'non-West' in the production of the 'West' itself, that is to say, the 'always-already' integrated character of the world system as such)."[37]

Nationalism too must have undergone its own process of 'ceaseless historical reconstruction' – it is counter-intuitive to imagine that a doctrine so successfully

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[36] The pioneering work of Sanjay Subrahmanyam brings light the constant and massive trade that went on between Europe and the rest of the world, and *within* regions outside Europe. Many of these facts render nonsensical, standard political theory's picture of a slumbering non-West being suddenly awoken to the fact of colonisation and modern capitalism by a Europe that had fortuitously undergone an industrial revolution recently and was now ready to conquer the world. The industrial revolution itself had significant connections with extra-European trade and inventions a fact that new research is unearthing.

[37] Lazarus ibid. p.24 emphasis mine.

globalised in the modern world could remain fundamentally a 'European invention' without reducing the concept to a caricature of itself. As **Halim Barakat** has argued in the context of Arab nationalism, the above facts destabilise "the notion that nationalism was borrowed from the West. They demonstrate, instead, the emergence of nationalism as a genuine result of the internal and external dynamics of Arab society."[38] To paraphrase Chatterjee, we are not claiming this for any sentimental reasons but for the fact that the history of the world testifies to it.

Thus, contrary to Dipesh Chakravarty's call to 'provincialise Europe', one can address the thorny postcolonial questions of 'modernity' and 'derivative-ness' by arguing for a more thoroughgoing *universalism in theorisation* that adequately addresses the fact of the restless, ceaseless reconstruction of ideas between various regions of the world. It is argued that *neither goods nor ideas can be manufactured or exported without the periphery influencing the centre*. Much of Marx's and Wallerstein's effort as Neil Lazarus and others like Samir Amin have argued is to stress that the 'peripheries' of the world system are *intra*-systemic, not beyond its purview. If this is historically true, then it must also must be made analytically central. Partha Chatterjee makes a similar claim to think of both 'Western universalism' and 'Orientalist exceptionalism' as particular forms of a "richer, more diverse and differentiated conceptualisation of a universal idea"[39]. What may also be required is a new theory of global historical change that is cyclical and not unilinear.

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[38] Halim Barakat, quoted in Lazarus ibid. p.128

[39] Chatterjee ibid. p. 13. As we have hopefully been able to argue, Chatterjee's study of a hermetically-sealed Hindu nationalism succumbs to 'Orientalist exceptionalist' discourse. Thus it seems Chatterjee does not follow through his own suggestion fully.

Of course to say the above is not to lose sight of the *constitutive power of capitalism or colonialism in 'exporting' specific European ideas*, and indeed to make these appear inevitable or hegemonic in non-European contexts. It may be reasonably argued that the nation-state did not arise in response to the political and economic conditions prevailing indigenously within the colonies but was a creature of colonialism itself, with its and the infrastructural priorities peculiarly skewed towards the Empire's needs. Thus Partha Chatterjee's lament that "Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new forms of the modern community but in our surrender to old forms of the modern state."[40] This part of the postcolonial critique against the West is much more difficult to counter, as the fact of widespread Asian and African disillusionment mentioned above demonstrates. During the last years of anti-colonial struggle and at independence, in **Basil Davidson**'s words on Africa,

"The mood was not euphoric but certainly optimistic...the social freedoms that had provided the real magnet behind nationalism were making themselves increasingly felt; and the grim silence of the colonial years was already shattered by a hubbub of plans and schemes for a more favourable future...the world became a larger and happier place."[41]

After independence, the complexity and diversity of issues that anti-colonial struggle had raised were seamlessly appropriated into an *imitative bourgeois nationalism* geared towards eliminating difference with the 'western' state as captured in the rhetoric of 'nation-building'. In the process, many institutions of the colonial era were unthinkingly retained and invested with great powers.

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[40] Chatterjee *The Nation and its Fragments* ibid. p.11
[41] Basil Davidson *The Black Man's Burden* pp.95-96 quoted in Lazarus ibid. p.69

The term 'nation-building' we have been arguing is uniquely significant to third world nationalisms and the rhetoric of 'catching-up' with the 'West' in building a nation, or more accurately a state gives nationalism its power here. In the process of this desperate 'telescoped' national development towards a glorious future unmarked by east-west distinctions, much damage can be done – the case of the displacement in the Narmada case and numerous other similar cases around the third world comes immediately to the mind – this will be referred to again in the conclusion. We may add here that in this context, the distinctions between 'modernising' and 'revolutionary' third world regimes becomes insignificant. In the post-independence era, governments all over the third world showed an amazing similarity in their policies. In Lazarus's words,

"This mood of optimism has of course been brutally punctured by the setbacks and defeats that have marked the years since independence. Nor have these setbacks and defeats been limited, by any means, to states that have followed the neocolonial path of 'modernisation' and dependent development. On the contrary, the record tells at least as decisively against avowedly revolutionary regimes in the postcolonial era: even where the anti-colonial war might be said to have been won, and quite literally so – as in Vietnam, Algeria and Mozambique – for instance – the ensuing 'peace' has clearly been lost."[42]

The above facts hold a clue as to why questions of nationalism the response of intellectuals to nationalism and the nation-state in the third world *must remain* characterised by a profound ambivalence. Even if much postcolonial literature can be critiqued for very rarely stating in clear terms the issues that arise from an imitative adoption of the reified forms of the bourgeois nation-state, a fraction of postcolonialist literature does seem to deal with these issues. As Neil Lazarus correctly points out, the

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[42] Lazarus ibid.p.105

task of defending third world nationalism in the face of the recent postcolonial and Anglo-American academic criticism against it now falls *solely and squarely* on the shoulders of Aijaz Ahmad (although Lazarus himself can be said to have made a significant contribution to this debate). Ahmad and Lazarus have rightly used the work of anti-colonial activists and intellectuals[43] to argue that the anti-colonial struggle was not simply a process of vertical alliances between elites but did indeed involve masses of people in various ways. There is no good reason to entirely dismiss what Lazarus terms "the liberationist credentials of at least some anti-colonial nationalist movements." [44]

These theorists have also rightly pointed out the *theoretical* differences between bourgeois nationalism and anti-imperialist nationalism, arguing that one must, like Fanon only oppose the former and retain an emphasis on the latter if one is committed to radical theory or politics. This is in direct contrast to the postcolonial assumption of an impossible Archimedean point above all emancipatory theory. As Ahmad puts it, only from this radical position, must one,

"select particular nationalist positions for criticism, even at times very harsh denunciation; a critique of nationalism without that explicit location in the determinate socialist project has never made any sense for me, either politically or theoretically... (this requires) the actuality, even the necessity of progressive and revolutionary kinds of nationalism."[45]

Given the conventional view of nationalism and Marxism as opposing doctrines, the defence of nationalism by the self-avowed Marxists Ahmad and Lazarus seems puzzling

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[43] Including Amilcar Cabral, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon (who as Lazarus rightly argues, remains profoundly pro-humanism and pro-nationalism), C.L.R James and Rabindranath Tagore.
[44] Lazarus ibid. p.77
[45] Aijaz Ahmad *In Theory* quoted in Lazarus ibid. p.75-76

at first glance. However such a defence make sense when one recognises that they are only echoing a powerful tradition of writing within Marxism about the desirability of nationalism as an economic and political tool to defend weaker nations against the ravages of the world economy. As mentioned in the first chapter, contrary to popular notions, Marx himself showed his public sympathy for nationalist causes and Lenin famously disagreed with Rosa Luxembourg in extending support to the same, even when these used patently non-Marxist terminology. Consider the following statement by the Czech nationalist Franticek Palacky:

"The capacity of those other (less fortunate) nations for development is in no way limited. Nature in and for herself draws no distinctions between nations as though some were noble and others ignoble; she has not called upon any one nation to dominate others, nor set aside any nation to serve another. [46]"

In fact, nationalism has a continuing appeal anywhere in an unequal world where diverse sections of people cannot fail to feel the full force of the developed West's economic, cultural and ideological hegemony over minute facets of their lives. In the face of a global retreat of socialist and radical theory and politics everywhere, Ahmad's injunction makes profound sense especially for a third world reeling under the neo-imperialist restructuring referred to above. However, an examination of such a defense shows that although the anti-colonial struggle is more easily defended, the *post-colonisation* forms of nationalism are less easily defended.

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[46] Quoted in Szporluk ibid. Also see Aijaz Ahmad (ed.) *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: On the National and Colonial Questions* Delhi, LeftWord 2001 **AND** Sanjay Seth *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics* Delhi Sage 1995. Engels is notorious amongst progressive and Marxist intellectuals for his dismissal of Franticek's beloved Czechoslovakia as an example of a 'non-historic nation.'

It is true that third world governments *are able to appeal* to such a nationalistic resistance – it also in fact explains why they can rally not simply conservative middle classes but also 'progressive' intellectuals behind them on occasions when the nationalist project seems under threat.[47] However, the appeal of anti-imperialism at a theoretical level does not mean that a unified national resistance to imperialism *is in actual fact possible*. Anti-imperialist resistance is not created by the plain fact of imperialism.

Experience has shown that in the context of global capitalism, such a socialist politics has been circumscribed by the demands of nationhood in a *bourgeois* sense, thwarting the possibility of a combined 'liberationist, anti-imperialist, nationalist consciousness'. As Etienne Balibar says, "...national units form out of the overall structure of the world economy, as a function of the role they play in the structure in a given period. Nations form against one another as competing instruments in the service of the core's domination of the periphery."[48] If as has now become clear about the erstwhile Soviet Union, the overwhelming logic of capitalism has been able to produce a 'state capitalism' *and a form of nationalism* based on suppression of huge masses of people even there, then one cannot expect the third world to stand up to the might of the same logic in terms of a unified nationalistic resistance.

Thus, the belief on the part of Ahmad and to a lesser degree, by Lazarus regarding the possibility of nationalism as an anti-imperialist force is naïve given the adjustments that global capital seems to have effortlessly made with nationalism. The explanation for Ahmad's arguments may be found in the same teleological belief in 'even development'

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[47] We may recall here the CPI (M)'s support to the BJP government during the Kargil war.
[48] Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein *Race, Nation and Class*, London Verso 1991

thai Tom Nairn held to be a feature of the European Enlightenment and that we mentioned in the previous chapter. The problem seems to arise not so much from Ahmad's defence of nationalism as a practical strategy in the face of neo-imperialism, but due to his underlying theoretical assumption that all nationalism is a necessary 'cementing' stage that states must go through to reach a better future. This would explain the stunning silence on the part of such a defence about the colossal displacement justified under 'national interest' in cases like the Sardar Sarovar Project What Nairn says of teleological beliefs in general seems especially true of Ahmad –

"the concept of nationalism as a generally necessary stage of development for all societies is common to both materialist and idealist philosophies. Nationalism is also an internally-determined necessity, associated with Marxists with the creation of a national market, economy and viable national bourgeoisie. Moderate, reasonable nationalism is seen as healthy and a precondition for further progress...the gist of a global folklore...is that nationalism is...a 'growth-stage' located somewhere in between traditional or 'feudal' societies and a future where the factors of nationality will become less pertinent."[49]

As Wallerstein asks rhetorically, what if the world is not divided into *national* economies but into internecine (intra-national and trans-national) sectors always engaged in a rapacious struggle to control populations?[50] In this situation, anti-imperialist nationalistic resistance becomes a fiction since nationalism itself comes to mean a vertical (not flat as Anderson argues) feeling of community between elites. Here, the recent rise of what Anderson has recently called 'long-distance nationalism' is instructive[51].

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[49] Nairn ibid. p. 335 Aditya Nigam (2001) has incisively critiqued Ahmad's position in this context.
[50] Wallerstein has made this argument throughout his career but here the point is taken from his *Race, Nation, Class : Ambiguous Identities* with Etienne Balibar ibid.
[51] Benedict Anderson "Western and Eastern Nationalism – Is there a difference that matters?" ibid. p.42

Contrary to Gilroy's and Bhabha's assertions that these diasporic groups 'rupture' nationalistic ontology, the growth of diasporic transnational elites has led not to the melting away of national boundaries but to the consolidation of an aggressive ethnic nationalism.

This is most clearly seen in the NRI support to Hindutva and in similar examples of Algerian nationalism within France, Sikh nationalism within Australia and Croatian nationalism within Canada. Such nationalism in the third world also responds to the continuing aggressive nationalism all over the *first* world. In fact, contemporary nationalism must be seen not in terns of national boundaries but in terms of transnational actions of *national* elites – *there is no longer any contradiction between nationalism and internationalism in this sense.* Here we may recall our point in chapter two regarding nationalism representing the universalisation of particularism in the modern world.

To conclude our discussion in this chapter, we may argue that contemporary nationalism like the phenomenon in history seems to follow a cyclical process of consolidation, reaction and further consolidation between the developed and developing blocs of the world without disturbing the institutions of global capital. While one can grant the need to retain an anti-imperialist, nationalitarian[52] *theoretical and political optimism* in the face of the conservative thrust of recent postcolonialism and the reign of neo-imperialism, such nationalism in fact is conspicuous by its absence almost everywhere today.

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[52] Anouar Abdel-Malek's term – he uses it to distinguish anti-imperialist nationalism from bourgeois nationalism.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction, this section will not be as much a summary of the preceding chapters as an effort to rethink the three research questions we asked in light of the especially thorny problems raised by our discussion so far. The *first question* was regarding the nature of contemporary nationalism and its relationship with material variables. A detailed discussion of the first variable – the modern state – follows below. We will concentrate here on the relationship between nationalism and the other two pertinent material variables in the analysis of nationalism –colonialism and capitalism by returning to the three images that we described in the introduction and reflecting more on the issues raised there.

We have already argued for a more thoroughly universalised *longue durée* approach to understanding the complex factors at work in the spread of nationalism through colonialism. Let us reflect on the relationship between nationalism and capitalism. What a traditional view of nationalism as a primarily cultural/identity-based phenomenon fails to grasp is the intimate and reinforcing relationship between nationalism and the *ideology of capitalist modernity as an always-unfinished project*. Given the vagaries of the global capitalist system, the economic and ideological dominance of any nation (including the United States in a unipolar world) is never fully assured and thus governments are able to draw on the always-unfinished ideas of modernity and progress to achieve a truly restless, dynamic form of nationalism.

Therefore the picture of a liberal, reasonable, cosmopolitan nationalism that is devoid of the features of ressentiment and xenophobia must be seen as a piece of First World mythology. This is the reason that an ultra-nationalistic Ross Perot speaking a xenophobic anti-Mexican language could launch a credible Presidential election campaign – indeed, following the events of September 11, 2001 Right-wing nationalism in the USA has only grown. As much writing has documented, the rise of Right-wing nationalistic parties all over the developed West can be unambiguously connected to the rise of unemployment and other systemic features of global capitalism.

Even in the first world then, nationalism is characterised by anxiety, we may even say a paranoid dynamism seeking to stay ahead in an uncertain world. If the world is uncertain for the developed West, then it is definitely uncertain and indeed, *unequal* for developing states. Third world governments too seeking to remain a part of the global capitalist system must rally nationalist support in times of similar (and worse) economic uncertainty by imitating in the outer realm this dynamic nationalism described above. However, as we have hinted, nationalism is not a straightforward imitative project here. What Chatterjee states about nineteenth century Bengali nationalism is in fact relevant to describe *present Hindutva nationalism* – as much as it is dynamic in the outer realm, it is equally predicated on retaining a difference in the inner realm – this part of Hindutva is in fact homogenising and *consolidatory*.

This *simultaneous embodiment* of the dynamic and the consolidatory, , the profane and the sacred, the routine and the dramatic, the banal and the extraordinary aspects of nationalism indeed is not extraordinary at all but a central feature of contemporary nationalism – the blending of paranoid and confident rhetoric is the reason that support

for American Right-wing nationalism comes not from the poor and the homeless but from rich vested interests. This simultaneity is what informs Hindutva too and lends it *the amazing ability to project a majority – the Hindus – as threatened in their own land.*

Thus also the absurdity and the truly disturbing character of Hindutva for non-believers of its mythology. It seamlessly stitches together 'hot' and 'cold' nationalism to achieve a suffocating control over public life and expression in contemporary India. What allows Hindutva to appropriate the ideological and political space so completely that it can speak of Muslims and anti-dam activists in the same breath? This study has constantly revealed the tension between 'state-seeking nationalisms' and 'nation-seeking statisms' (if such a term may be allowed). Here we may state that the two forms of nationalism are simply expressions of the constant speaking in a forked tongue by *all* contemporary nationalism. Cultural nationalist movements may use the terminology of ethnic identity in a brazen manner, but they also feel the need to appropriate a solid, secular, *modern* base for their actions. This is the reason that the movement for the Sardar Sarovar Dam can and does periodically acquire the same feverish nationalist connotations as the movement for the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya. This is the reason the BJP can speak of opposition to both its economic *and* cultural programmes as 'anti-national'.

The second part of the first question was regarding the relationship of nationalism with material variables. The most important variable is the modern nation-state – Indeed, as we have been arguing, if one is to achieve any theoretical clarity in a subject that is notorious for not possessing any, nationalism must be viewed as a form of politics peculiar to the modern state.

This is an appropriate occasion to introduce the work of the theorist **Michael Billig.**[1] It will be impossible to summarise his complex and fascinating analysis so let us restrict ourselves to his insights about the state. Billig begins his study by noting the power of nationalism today and further believes that the phenomenon is too deeply and thoroughly ingrained in modern life to study it narrowly in terms of particular social movements and make distinctions *between* nationalisms. We will return to Billig's analysis of why such 'intellectual amnesia' occurs. Let us note here Billig's central claim that if all states today are *nation*-states, then nationalism is simply the ideology that maintains *all* nation-states *as* nation-states. As mentioned in the introduction too however, viewing nationalism as a ubiquitous ideology common to all states lends itself to the charge of being a truism.

Thus the need to retain a solid historical perspective and construct a typology of nationalisms. In this respect, we were hopefully able to summarise John Breuilly's impressive classification that includes unification, separation and reform nationalism. Breuilly's framework for nationalisms is certainly useful to explain the historic rise of the phenomenon against different types of states (including multi-lingual Empires and the absolutist state) but we argued that it was constrained by a refusal to consider governmental nationalisms as legitimate examples of the phenomenon. An alternative framework is provided by **Rogers Brubaker.** Brubaker notes astutely that nationalism has been both cause and effect of the "great reorganisations of political space that framed the short twentieth century...but the forms of nationalism that have *resulted* from the

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[1] Michael Billig *Banal Nationalism* London, Sage 1997. The reader may recall that we have mentioned more than once during this study that we will consider Billig's and Brubaker's pioneering analysis of nationalism in the conclusion. This is undertaken here.

nationalisation of political space are different from those that helped *engender* it."[2] He

further notes that the literature on nationalism has focussed on 'state-seeking

nationalisms' while neglecting the 'nationalising' nationalisms of existing states. Thus

Brubaker addresses directly the question of nationalisms *within* state structures that we

argued are a feature of nationalism everywhere and especially as expressed within the

rhetoric of 'nation-building' within the developing world. Brubaker's framework includes

three types of nationalisms. The *first* type are *'nationalising'* nationalisms that make

claims in the name of a 'core nation'

"viewed as the legitimate owner of the state...despite having 'its own' state, however, the
core nation is conceived of as being in a weak cultural, economic of demographic
position within the state. This weak position – seen as a legacy of discrimination against
the nation before it attained independence – is held to justify the 'remedial' or
'compensatory' project of using state power to promote...the interests of the core
nation."[3]

The *second* kind of nationalism according to Brubaker is *homeland nationalism*, or more

exactly, the transborder nationalism of "external national homelands". "Homeland

nationalisms "assert states' right – indeed their obligation – to monitor the condition,

promote the welfare, support the activities and institutions and...protect the interests of

'their' ethnonational kin in other states."[4] Brubaker argues that homeland nationalisms

thrive when the 'ethnonational kin' are seen as threatened by the nationalising

nationalisms policies and practices of the states they live in. The *final* kind of nationalism

is that of the national minorities within the state that seek a separate nation-state.

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[2] Brubaker ibid. p.4 (emphasis in the original)
[3] Brubaker ibid. p.5
[4] Brubaker ibid. p.5

Brubaker clarifies that "national minority" like "external national homeland" or "nationalising state" designates a political stance, not an ethnographical fact.

Immediately one is struck by the applicability of Brubaker's framework for the nationalism within South Asian state structures. 'Nationalising states' almost perfectly describes the political project of Hindutva today and in fact explains better than Breuilly's analysis the reason that Hindu nationalists are able to hark back to a supposed pre-independence discrimination to launch anti-Muslim compensatory programmes in the post-independence era. The 'external national homeland' nationalism can be seen in Pakistan's position in relation to Kashmir, and national minorities can be used to describe the pro-independence movement within Kashmir.

The *second question* in the introduction was regarding the relationship between nationalism and political ideologies. We believe that the influence of different ideologies on nationalism must be studied within the broad intuition as Billig mentions above that *nationalism itself is the most ubiquitous ideology today*. This as we have mentioned earlier too, is not to argue that one must dismiss nationalism or any comparable phenomenon as a consequence of the 'hold of ideology'. We mentioned Breuilly's critique of theories that use 'ideology' as a catchall explanation. In the Indian debate on Hindu nationalism, Ashis Nandy makes a similar critique of what he calls the standard modernist secular interpretation of communal riots in India. According to Nandy,

"most modern social thinkers and activists in India have used communal ideology, if not as the ultimate source, at least as a major independent variable in their explanations of communal riots."[5]

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[5] Ashis Nandy et al. *Creating a Nationality* Delhi OUP 1995 p. 10

It is rather to stress that one must seek to understand better the historical rise of nationalism as a hegemonic ideology in complex relationships with other ideologies. Here Anderson's work, especially the parallels he draws between the change from the hierarchical-dynastic-divinely sanctioned world to the national principle, can be multiplied to yield extremely useful insights. For instance, the notion of *toleration* as it was developed in the century or so of tussle between Church, State and King following the Reformation may arguably be seen as the religious parallel to the political principle of nationalism. The concept of toleration is uniquely the product of an age in which the western world had to make serious attempts to deal with the collapse of medieval certainties and with *pluralism as a fact*.

Anderson mentions that the discovery of the non-western world through travel by sixteenth century Europe was reflected in many social and political commentaries of the time including those by Bacon, Swift and More. As we mentioned earlier, travel was to have a profound impact on political thought and on the European obsession with 'real community'. All of the Romantic tradition within Western political thought could be seen as an effort to construct precisely such a community. This effort has been an integral part of Western social commentary since at least the discovery of the New World, when the non-European societies discovered by European travelers would often become embodiments of the real community, of distant lost utopias Colonialism probably simply deepened these themes within western political thought.

This discussion is recalled to remind ourselves that such broadening of the ontological horizon must have been instrumental in bringing home the fact of pluralism to fledgling western nations. The historical debate on toleration and its contemporary heir – the

debate within political theory on multiculturalism and cultural relativism – have much in common with the often uneasy balance of power that the doctrine of nationalism as a *moral* solution maintains in a world of sovereign nation-states. The conferring of radical sovereignty in the face of an obviously unequal power balance in the world seems to be the reason for the enormous continuing hold of nationalism as an ideology all over the third world. When governments use nationalist arguments to promote otherwise unpopular and even blatantly 'anti-people' policies, they are obviously relying on a combination of the external and internal sovereignty that moral particularism affords.

Of course nationalism has also had other bedfellows including liberalism and Marxism. We have already discussed in detail the complicated and fraught relationship between nationalism and Marxism. About liberalism it may be said that there is indeed a strong historic relationship between the two, contrary to Fukuyama's effort to portray the two as completely divergent philosophies.[6] This perhaps follows from the hegemonic rise of the modern western European liberal nation-state. Billig notes however, that while liberalism and Marxism like Christendom or Islam have been territorially delimited, nationalism has "swept aside" all ideological rivals in its triumphant historical march. The last observation made by Billig above has echoes of Hobsbawm's teleological view of nationalism. However Billig's view of nationalism is anything but teleological – he notices astutely that although

"historical forces may have combined to produce the nation-state as modernity's logical form of governance, yet, a willful anarchy seems to have accompanied the way that the logical principle has been established in practice."[7]

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[6] Francis Fukuyama, quoted in *Modernity and its Futures* edited by Hall, Held and McGrew, p.21
[7] Michael Billig ibid. p. 23

The *final question* was regarding the categories 'Eastern' and 'Western' nationalism and whether these terms are useful to describe reality. We also wondered whether nationalism in the third world was a progressive or retrograde phenomenon. For the first part of the question, it will be useful to return to the most striking part of Billig's analysis – his attention to what he refers to (note the title of his book) as 'banal nationalism' – the everyday, routine forms of nationalism practiced by first world states. Billig's central argument is that by focusing exclusively on the role of ethnicity and identity in nationalism, Western-centric theory has narrowed the definition of nationalism to what he refers to as "hot" nationalism. Theorists can thus obscure the everyday, "cold, banal nationalism" that goes on in the First World and simultaneously argue that the East is witnessing rampant retrograde nationalism. Billig expands Renan's analysis by stating that nationalist 'forgetting' does not apply merely to historical events but indeed, that forgetting their own 'banal' nationalism is a *critical* part of First World nationalism.

We have already critiqued an East-West axis as a Eurocentric obfuscation in our discussion of Hans Kohn's work in chapter one. We may mention here that Neil Lazarus has commented on the widespread misuse of the term 'western' to describe very specific historical events that took place in specific European states. - As he says in this context of the industrial revolution and capitalism,

"if we are going to trace capitalism to its origins and argue for its essential constitution there, we ought at least, for precision's sake, to parse it through reference to southeastern England rather than the 'West'"[8]

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[8] Lazarus ibid. p. 23 Lazarus believes that this tendency to construct an abstract 'West' results in a dematerialised understanding of modernity being a fundamentally cultural disposition. We may mention here Liah Greenfeld's analogous belief that democratic tendencies are also a cultural disposition *inherent* in Western societies.

We have also argued in several places against a dematerialised understanding of any phenomenon so we would like to stress here rather that such an understanding makes the question of the 'export and imitation of nationalism' particularly problematic. We have argued for a different framework from Anderson's in this respect. Tom Nairn captures in a particularly brilliant passage our tentative reflections on capitalism, development, modernity, imitative-ness and of course, nationalism as reflective of all these complex processes. We may quote him in detail here.

"Because it was first, the English – later British – experience remained distinct. Because they came second, into a world where the English Revolution had already succeeded and expanded, later bourgeois societies could not repeat this early development. This may of course be seen as the ordinary logic of developmental processes. It was an early specimen of what was later dignified with such titles as 'the law of uneven and combined development'. Actual repetition and imitation are scarcely ever possible, whether politically, economically, socially, or technologically, because the universe is already too much altered by the first cause one is copying."[9]

As for the second part of our final question – what are we to make of third world nationalism and is an anti-imperialist resistance possible? We discussed the transnationalisation of nationalism and its seamless alliance with aggressive ethnic nationalism in the previous chapter. Given these facts, we are forced to conclude that notwithstanding the importance of retaining anti-imperialism as a practical strategy within the third world, it is impossible not to feel a measure of philosophical pessimism about the future of this Janus-faced doctrine. As arguably one of the greatest nationalists – Friedrich List – famously said, "Between man and humanity stands the nation-state."

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[9] Nairn The Break-up of Britain ibid. pp17-8

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