

# Marxism and Nationalism - Nation and Nationalism

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In the broad social sciences as well as in the discourse on politics, there is no consensus on how we should understand the nation – what its origins are, or on its meaning and value. By contrast there is widespread acceptance that nationalism – whether understood as doctrine, ideology, sentiment, identity or movement – is a modern phenomenon. But after this, agreement largely ends. Two central divides exist with respect to mapping the nation and hence its relationship to nationalism. Is the nation old or new? Is it predominantly cultural or political? That is to say, even as most would accept that the nation (and nationalism) is both cultural and political, which is the dimension that is more important for grasping its (their) nature? From these two basic divides in perspective stem a whole host of ambiguities of comprehension and assessment that has created a situation whereby all theories of the nation and nationalism are partial.

Moreover, given the multi-hued character of these two phenomena, there are overlaps among these different theorizations. So even as one must adjudicate as to the relative worth among these approaches and mark out and explain clearly one's preferential choices, it is also the case that among the otherwise dismissed approaches – dismissed because they are more limited or inadequate in their overall comprehension – some approaches nevertheless provide a deeper insight into this or that aspect of the nation and/or nationalism. To get a sense of just how complex these two phenomena are, and of the relationship between them, let us list some of the various questions that have been thrown up about the nation and nationalism.

Is the nation defined by objectively given characteristics of language, ethnicity, territory, history, etc., or by subjectivity alone? Does nationalism engender the nation or does the nation precede the emergence of nationalism? Is nationalism inclusive or exclusive? Is nationalism civic or ethnic? Is nationalism particular or universal? Is nationalism progressive or regressive? Or is nationalism all of the above in variable admixtures? Given these ambiguities it is hardly surprising that so many important modern thinkers from Marx to Freud to Weber to Durkheim to Keynes to Gramsci to Trotsky to Foucault have had so little to say about it.

So where do we start our exploration? The dominant current in the general discourse sees the nation as a modern phenomenon. But how modern is modern? Depending on how one perceives the background conditions and causal factors that have given rise to the nation, the dating of the origins of the first nations, ranges from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the era of industrialization. Of course, a whole host of nations and nationalisms only emerge in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of anti-colonial struggles. Insofar as the nation is both cultural and political, what distinguishes the modernists — namely those who believe the nation is a wholly modern construct — is that they give much more weight to the political dimension. That is to say, the emergence of the nation cannot be understood separate from its connection to the effort to establish some political control over a territorial space, i.e., autonomy within the modern form of the state — the nation-state or the multi-national state; alternatively, to merge with an existing nation-state or to establish a new nation-state.

Nevertheless, even among modernists, there is a small minority which while acknowledging the modernity of the nation, believe that the more important things that have to be said about the nation really come from addressing its cultural dimension whose roots belong much more to the past. In this respect they are aligned with those who because they emphasize the centrality of a cultural heritage of some sort to the notion of the nation, insist on tracing its foundations to a pre-modern, often ancient past. It is with this broad category of thought that we will start before coming to the modernist school.

### **Perennialism, Primordialism, Ethno-Symbolism**

The views of some important representative thinkers are taken up here — notably Steven Grosby, Anthony D. Smith and Bernard Yack, each of whose views have powerful overlaps with each other and with various others subscribing in part or whole to this broad category of thinking; so much so that it is not necessary to pigeon-hole contributors as belonging to any single one of these three categories. This is why the subheading above refers to -isms and not to -ists. Nonetheless, for all that is shared across these three classifications some do describe themselves as being a perennialist, a primordialist and an ethno-symbolist [1].

Perennialism is a perspective that leaders of many contemporary nations have put forward, namely that their particular nation has in some essentialist sense been existing since time immemorial or at least beginning in some ancient past and surviving ever since through ups and downs that could include periods of submergence by ‘outsiders’ or by ‘foreign rule’, or once having a golden age but declining thereafter, but always capable in the appropriate circumstances, of resurgence, revival, re-birth! For perennialists the nation of today is a ‘politicized ethnic-cultural community’ of common ancestry and thereby having qualities distinguishing it from all other nations each with its own unique ‘authenticity’ and ‘collective will’. In today’s world most but not all of those holding such a perspective would be adherents to and promoters of an *organic* nationalism [2]. A few though might simply regard nations as perennial in the simple sense that they are persistent and recurring entities but not to be seen as ‘natural’ or organically distinct from each other. This minority might well accept that today’s nations are best understood as the legatees of immemorial ethnic or cultural groupings which have always existed in recorded history and it is this legacy that makes today’s nation immemorial. But all perennialists (and not just them) give much more importance to ethnic derivation than to modernist processes in explaining the emergence and character of the nation today.

For Grosby, the pull of the nation comes from its connection to the dilemmas of the human condition. There is a trans-historical need to locate oneself in time and space — the answer to the ‘who am I’ question. The need for a national identity is related to a human given — the concern for life

protection, procreation and generational transmission. The nation then is like a kinship structure only wider, and created by 'cultural commonness' over a territorial space which in a sense is one's 'home' and 'parent', hence the terms 'motherland' and 'fatherland'. So 'the nation is a community of kinship' that is joined to what he terms as 'territorial descent' [3]. It is a 'social relation of collective self-consciousness' where that consciousness comes from *inherited* cultural traditions even if those traditions are *selected* and therefore vary as contexts change over time and space [4]. This shared consciousness is embodied in myths/beliefs and symbols some of which will be rooted in material objects like flags or particular buildings of historical significance expressive of that community's unique history and culture. So the nation comes before nationalism which Grosby understands as above all a more recent ideology which reinforces a 'national identity' whose basic underpinnings are already there in that there is an existing 'structure of familiarity' that keeps away anxieties of behaviour through generationally transmitted customs, norms, values and beliefs - a habitus that routinizes behaviour and means one doesn't have to choose how best to cope at every point of time. This provides necessary psychic health because it stabilizes one's sense of self which in turn is not separable from being identified with some others.

For Smith also, ethnic identity and community is the key point of reference. Yes, he says, there are both nations formed from above before the era of emergent nationalisms, as well as later nations emerging because of nationalism as ideology and movement e.g., so many of the Third World countries. But we must still recognize the 'cultural and ethno-symbolic nature of ethnicity and nationalism' and the 'recurring nature of ethno-symbolic ties' [5]. The older nations (most European states) have 'ethnic cores' residing in ancient or medieval times but this is also the case with nation-states like Israel, Egypt, Persia, Assyria, Greece with their respective senses of distinctiveness kept alive and sustained by ethno-symbols producing and maintaining an 'inner world' of national feeling.

Smith goes further. He argues that all nations today have four elements - community, territory, history and a sense of destiny, that is to say, a futurist possibility of greater fulfilment as a nation that therefore requires devotion from its members. But the individual strength of these ingredients varies. There is a) 'ethnic selection' - the idea of being special; b) a sacralised territory whose protection through the ages has meant that there are a pantheon of national heroes and saints to be remembered and honoured; c) the nation had a 'golden age' of martyrs who sacrificed themselves for the nation and its future fulfilment/destiny.

Bernard Yack believes nationhood is old but adds his own twist to the reasoning behind this claim. All the above cited three (plus many more, including many modernists) want to understand why national affiliation arouses so much passion. Why does the nation as an imagined community cast such a powerful emotional spell that its members are willing to die for it? In this is it not like a family though writ wider? And insofar as kinship structures have long existed and are ubiquitous, surely the key to grasping its nature lies in its similarity to those cultural groupings of old? Unlike the modernists who insist that the nation is a modern social and political construct, perennialists, primordialists and ethno-symbolists insofar as they accept that modern processes have had some role in shaping contemporary nations, will nonetheless insist that there is the 'evolution' rather than the 'construction' of nations.

For understanding the nation, Yack replaces the idea of the community as a form of 'collective solidarity' or 'collective identity' with the view that it is based on a stronger bond of 'social friendship' i.e., it is a form of collective loyalty based on 'mutual concern'. Thus the nation is a moral community having a distinct moral psychology. It is an inter-generational community with inherited loyalties and because different communities have different things to share, they are different nations. Furthermore, modern moral concepts like popular sovereignty can arise with the advent of nationalism but they supervene on the essence of nationhood as an older form of community. For Yack it is the *fact* of being inherited, not agreement over cultural content, that is important. The

nation is a 'cultural heritage community' and 'nations territorialize memory' [6].

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The arguments put forward by those who insist that the nation is a pre-modern entity has more weaknesses than strengths. But the emphasis on culture and on some kind of common cultural continuity from the past, i.e., an inter-generational transmission of 'feeling' has two main strengths. The fact of mortality is an important source of culture 'that huge and never stopping factory of permanence' [7]. For culture is the capacity for symbolic self-transcendence and can thus expand one's sense of being across space and time. So communities of belonging - and the nation is one form of this - can exercise an extremely powerful emotional pull. They help situate one's life, and more importantly, one's death as part of a wider flow of continuity and belonging - an uninterrupted chain of being! No wonder then that even those most modern of nations that cannot invent an ancient or medieval past (e.g., the US) will nonetheless seek in symbolic ways to 'immemorialize' their existence; to present themselves as communities of fate and destiny worth dying for. One cannot fully comprehend the 'passion' that lies within the national identity (and national identification) without understanding the importance of the 'cultural past' even when fictitiously constructed. This then is the first strength.

The second is that at least for some nations of today, an older history of cultural commonness, an earlier 'ethnic core' of some sort, has fed into the construction of the modern national identity. Or, as many a modernist would acknowledge at least for this small subset, that the past has been the necessary but not sufficient condition for their emergence as nations created 'from above' e.g., England. For such countries many threads in the nationalist discourse may be old but the overall fabric that is woven is new.

But now to the problems in claiming that the nation is pre-modern. The political dimension of the nation is, as it has to be, either ignored or greatly downgraded. It is only in modernity that a mass politics comes about as a matter of routine; and it is only in the modern era that there emerges a new principle central to all nations in their marriage with the state i.e., the nation-state - that of popular sovereignty. If once kings ruled, now nation-states govern. The 'people' (constituted as separate nations) are the legitimizers of public authority even if not the exercisers of state power [8].

But even where the arguments for seeing the nation as pre-modern are supposedly the strongest - on the terrains of culture and identity - the problems are considerable. What distinguishes pre-modernity from the advent of modernity is that in the latter era, the rate, depth, scope, and continuity of change is so greatly different as to create another world altogether. The world has changed more in the last 250 years than in all the centuries before and changed more in the last fifty years than in the previous 200 years. By contrast, all pre-modern societies are more static and socially immobile. There is a basic separation between 'high' and 'low' culture and the latter itself is so localized that one has to talk of low cultures in the plural acknowledging its geographical dispersion and diversities of content. So how valid is the postulate of cultural unity in the past that is supposed to underlie the creation of the nation?

As for the claim that the nation is a wider community of 'kinship' can we ignore the fact that while the family and the clan are face-to-face groupings, the ethnic and the religious group are more imagined? According to one commentator, ethnicity has been defined in three ways: as a) shared kinship and common ancestry; b) shared occupation. These two are objectively precise definitions. The third is a looser definition open to subjective choice and means c) any group having a shared

identity because of one or more common cultural attributes [9]. The *ethnie* of the past, whether understood as small in numbers and highly localized or as much larger in size and spread more widely, either way the *ethnie* is definitionally *apolitical*.

National identity and loyalty applies to a population and space much greater and wider than the older cultural groups that are supposed to lie at the nation's heart. So how did the transmission of feeling from *ethnie* to nation take place? What particular traditions of and interpretations of the past get selected for generational transmissions? Who were the cultural guardians and interpreters among the elites? What were the institutions and mechanisms of transmission? There are two cultural attributes that have been more widely spread population-wise and spatially, namely religion and language. But here a 'reduction' of their influence is required if they are to be seen as key ingredients in the formation of the nation.

Is it not non-cultural factors like political continuity of state rule as in China or Persia that better explains a cultural or civilizational continuity? Yet despite a Han Chinese cultural continuity over the ages this alone did not create Chinese nationalism. Elite Chinese self-consciousness was not that China was one civilization among many and hence the progenitor of a distinct national identity but that it was civilization itself, the 'Middle Kingdom' between the Heavens and the Depths. It was the nineteenth century encounters with foreign powers that led to the emergence of a spreading sense of Chinese national distinctiveness to be directed against foreign impositions.

As for culture so for identity: modernity's impact on the structure of identities has been enormous and extremely disruptive. In modernity many more identities, not just face-to-face but also many more imagined ones, are created. Identities are sharpened and become more bounded. They are more fluid and dynamic. They can be intensely felt but are also more revisable. Identities combine and repel in new ways. There is identification with more impersonal entities – the nation, state, gender, race, humanity. This is the shift from closer relational identities to more abstract, imagined, categorical ones. Unlike the collective identities of the past which are mediated through particular groups and social strata, the national identity is an unmediated, individualized, horizontal relationship. It is a new social imaginary. Just as the *ethnie* (here understood in the looser sense of a linguistic, religious, regional, etc., group) subsumes and abstracts from kinship, the nation – even when the *ethnie* is an ingredient in its formation – abstracts from the latter [10]. Isn't the modern personality a more self-reflexive one which more willingly *adopts* identities rather than having them handed down?

Insofar as modern processes create immense and unprecedented social upheaval, new social solidarities and new identifications emerge as psychic and social coping mechanisms. Yack's notion of the nation as a community characterized by 'social friendship' i.e., fellow-feeling is inadequate and far too sanguine. The content of nationalism is much more mixed and elastic. There is not just fellow feeling but because there are often competing nationalisms, there are strains of combativeness and even hostilities within particular nationalist discourses and sentiments. The reason why this is not perceived by those who see the nation as above all a cultural artefact is something they share with all those who give excessive and unbalanced weight to culture and see social order as decisively based on *cultural consensus* of some sort or the other.

## **A Modern Phenomenon**

It is precisely because of its political dimension i.e., its relationship to the state that the nation (as well as nationalism) must be understood as a modern phenomenon. Theorizing must begin from this recognition. But depending on how one perceives the emergence of modernity – the weights to be



assigned to the different causal factors - there will be correspondingly different approaches. Here the main divide would be between Marxists on the one hand and on the other hand, Weberians/Neo-Weberians/Liberals some of whom may be unaware of their debt to the Weberian legacy. This broad group of thinkers is a much looser one having diverse views within. In explaining the emergence of dramatically new phenomena Weberians/Neo-Weberians do not primarily focus on production relations/surplus value/marketization. For them *changes in mentalities* is the pivotal mechanism. Since this arises from prior material changes and dislocations some would focus on this as a starting point for understanding nationalism; others would give greater explanatory autonomy to ideas or identity transformation for understanding nation or nationalism. Marxists can certainly appreciate the rise of the Enlightenment (of which Marxism and Liberalism are the principal legatees) and of the Protestant Reformation as contributory factors to the emergence of modernity, first in Europe then spreading elsewhere, but pride of place would nonetheless be given to the rise of capitalism and its operative laws of motion. Where Marxists would speak of a capitalist modernity where the adjective is of greater import than the noun, Weberians/Neo-Weberians and others would speak of a modernity that is *also* capitalist.

But there is no straight line from Marxism to the nation and nationalism; nor any specifically Marxist theory of the nation and nationalism as distinct from later Marxists providing valuable insights, theoretical and political, for grappling with these modern developments. What is germane is that given the diverse understandings of the emergence of modernity there are different starting points from which different attempts at theorizing have launched themselves - changes in social structure, changes in political structure, changes in political consciousness, changes in social consciousness [11]. Once again, partial insights are to be derived from the partial theories of the best thinkers no matter which have been their initial starting points of exploration.

For Ernest Gellner, the nation is a political entity that is functional for the rise of an industrial society where social mobility is much greater than in the past, where work is much more the organization of people and of messages (semantic work) than of things and therefore must rely on a context-free form of mass communication which in turn means a dominant standardized language of a created 'garden culture' (a 'national high culture') so a centralized bureaucracy can properly operate. Mass literacy and the development of an education system that makes this possible becomes a must. There is a great deal to commend in Gellner's materialist explanation. Eric Hobsbawm for example, accepts Gellner's definition of nationalism as meaning the process whereby the political and the national unit become congruent. So nationalism can take the pre-existing cultures and turn them into nations; it sometimes invents cultures and turns them into nations; or it can destroy pre-existing cultures and yet form nations. Language becomes standardized when there is printing, mass schooling-mass literacy. Nationalism and the nation are modern. Nationalism starts off being elitist but then develops a mass character to create political loyalties to an existing or aspiring state. It is nationalism that engenders the nation [12].

But of course, in some cases like Serbia, Ireland, Japan, Finland, Mexico, nationalism pre-dates industrialization while in the era of anti-colonial struggles nationalism emerged in agrarian and even tribal societies. Given this diversity among nations and nationalisms, and given Tom Nairn's once Marxist orientation, he saw the *unevenness* of capitalist development and its industrializing processes as a major causal factor behind the rise of nationalisms. But the 'human material' of this diversity was an ethnicity preceding modernization and so different theories would provide differing emphases on the old and the new. That is to say, modernity and all that comes with it, is the necessary but not sufficient condition for developing a comprehensive theory of nationalism [13].

In stressing the political nature of nationalism (and nation) one can go in any of three directions even as there will be overlapping concerns and some shared arguments. Nationalism can be seen (i) as mainly an ideology/doctrine, namely as a set of political principles; (ii) as an institutionally

oriented movement where the key political structure or institution is the state; (iii) as a matter of sentiment/identity/consciousness when it becomes difficult not to give due weight to the role played by cultural processes.

If understood as doctrine, then tracing the origins of nationalism becomes an exercise in the history of ideas and their impact. The intelligentsia appears front stage and there will be an exploration into different types of nationalisms like liberal nationalism, integral nationalism, an organic nationalism, and so on. The contrast between ethnic and civic nationalisms comes in for scrutiny. Here nationalism is seen as a belief system of considerable shaping power over peoples' lives. It is something like a surrogate religion [14]. Elie Kedourie saw this doctrine as emerging from the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment and invented in Europe in the early nineteenth century. Colonialism then dislocated the colonies in various ways creating among other things a clash of cultures wherein 'marginal men' became attracted to Western notions of independence and self-reliance thereby adopting and adapting the doctrine of nationalism to suit their purposes [15]. If Kedourie's approach ignored the earlier formation of nations as in England, France and the US, his generally more idealist approach to the fairly momentous historical changes that led to the rise of nationalism has made this starting point the least inviting of the four.

An exemplar of the second of the three approaches outlined above is John Breuilly. Like Kedourie, Breuilly emphasizes the importance of ideas not in themselves but in their connection to, and stimulation of, political action. That is to say, Breuilly highlights movements seeking state power which rationalize this search with claims of cultural distinctiveness that then require that an independent state be formed, or that the collective in question be united with some other state to which it should belong. Nationalist ideas and politics spread by *imitation* and are appealing because of the desire for self-rule and material progress by different 'peoples'. What is more, for Breuilly nationalism demands that the nation-state be the site of primary loyalty. The nation for many reasons must not be confused with an *ethnie* because beyond having cultural myths themselves transformed for contemporary purposes, it has a legal, political and economic character that is very much modern. That presumably most cultural of group attributes – language – is no longer just a repository of myths, memories, etc., but now serves the nation by becoming institutionally significant for law, polity and economy. In contrast, the 'Pre-modern ethnic identity has little in the way of institutional embodiment beyond the local level [16].'

But though Breuilly does say that the appeal of nationalism comes from being a salve of sorts for the alienation that arises from the split between state and society itself coming from modern conditions of state sovereignty, bureaucratic centralization and capitalism, he does not source this appeal in nationalism's cultural dimension. Yes, nationalism must be seen as having a political thrust while an ethnic group unified by some cultural commonality does not in itself have this thrust. But that is no reason to ignore or even minimize the importance of that cultural dimension. Even a civic nationalism is not purely political for it does not require adherence to some specific set of political beliefs. So in countries like the US, France, Canada with a seemingly strongly civic-political form of nationalism, one can be a nationalist and a fascist or racist or a religious bigot. As one commentator has rightly said, 'All nationalisms are cultural nationalisms of one kind or another. There is no purely political conception of the nation, liberal or otherwise [17].'

The reason why changes in social consciousness should constitute one's theoretical point of embarkation is simple enough. Given the diverse contents of nationalism, there is only one thing that is common to *all* nations/nationalisms. It is not religion, language or any other cultural ascription. Nor is every nationalism based on shared history or undivided common territory. New nationalisms or the desire to form new nation-states suddenly emerge, and if some were more predictable given longstanding tensions, there are others whose past realities of equable co-existence internally precluded such prediction. The fact that new nations then 'look to history' to present some

characteristic as unique and therefore defining themselves as a distinct 'people', is itself reflective of a modernist outlook and sensibility. This postulating of a cultural unity all too often involves getting that history in some way wrong. The initial point of analytical departure then is national identity and consciousness.

Nationalism being a modern construct replaces the 'subject' by the 'citizen'. What constitutes the nation above all is that a 'people' come to believe that they are a distinct people and the factors giving rise to this collective self-belief are immensely varied. There is no common check-list of attributes or any irreplaceable or unshakeable ascription bar the belief itself. A nation emerges when a significant number of people see themselves as constituting one, and seeks political control over a territorial space. Since one is using the word 'significant' there is on occasions an inescapable vagueness in recognizing the emergence of a nation. This number may or may not be, quantitatively speaking, a majority. Its aspiration for nationhood may or may not politically succeed. A former nation-state may break up (Czechoslovakia) or merge itself in another (East Germany with West Germany to form the German Democratic Republic).

The nation is a state of mind but one with a political thrust. Since it is a state of mind, the nation can die out; it can be newly born; and is historically contingent. But how long it will endure one cannot say. The anti-modernist critique of the modernists is that the latter must assume that the nation would fade away quickly and since this has not happened, the modernist case for the nation is seriously flawed. But this is not so. To insist on the nation being modern and historically contingent does not necessarily mean that an early time-table must be put forward for its lifetime though it is true that many a Liberal thought nationalism would give way to universalism while early Marxists of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, being highly optimistic about the imminence of socialism worldwide, did think that nationalism would soon be succeeded by an ever expanding internationalism.

This recognition of the fundamentally subjective character of the nation and nationalism is why Benedict Anderson called the nation, not just one imagined community among many others, each distinguished by the particular 'style in which they are imagined'; but that the nation was an 'imagined political community' [18]. Quite the most accurate single line definition of the nation however, would be to see it as *a cultural entity lodged above all in consciousness striving to become a political fact* [19]. As mentioned earlier, this could be a striving for political autonomy or for separate nationhood, usually the latter.

## **Four Thinkers**

Even among the modernists who have made identity and consciousness the starting point for their theories of the nation and nationalism, the divide between Weber and Marx remains. And it results in different understandings of how nationalist sentiment and feeling arose and spread; of its relationship to capitalism and modernity; in the identification and assessment of nationalism's virtues and vices. The two thinkers inspired more by Weber than Marx are Charles Taylor and Liah Greenfeld [20]. The two more inspired by Marx are Benedict Anderson and Neil Davidson [21].

Of central importance to both Greenfeld and Taylor is the way changes that pave the way for the rise of modernity disrupt the human psyche and one's prior sense of identity. The national identity is a kind of salve that provides psychological well-being and a new sense of self-worth for the ordinary individual because there is greater public recognition of this identity that increasingly displaces the older stratified and fixed hierarchy of the complementary set of orders where the priests pray for the Lord God, the nobility fights for the Lord, and the peasantry works for the Lord. There is in place of



the older notion of 'honour' and of 'behaving honourably' within your particular station in life, the growing acceptance of the principle of equal dignity of all. For as Greenfeld insists, central to the notion of nationalism is both the principle of fundamental equality of members and of popular sovereignty. The latter becomes the key legitimizing principle of the authority enjoyed by whoever now rules. The source of this new thinking must then be related to the rise of the Enlightenment and its expanding impact. How did this new sense of dignity arise?

For Taylor a stronger sense of religious individualism first emerged especially with the advent of the Protestant Reformation which had to, and did, affect Catholicism as well. This was later followed by a more secularized (de-sacralised) individualism which would give greater priority to the pursuit of human flourishing in this life. A new sense of time emerges. Time is linear because a new notion of progressive change emerges. It is secular because God's 'higher' time is no longer so prioritized. It is homogenous because events now are seen to happen simultaneously across the now much wider imagined community of 'people like us' [22]. So Taylor sees the rise of cultural nationalism first among modernizing elites as a result of their desire for dignity in and through a broader identity because modernization disrupts the narrower social categories of lineage and clan that elites earlier connected to for their sense of self-worth. This generalization by elites of a new nationalist sentiment to create what (borrowing from Anderson) Taylor calls a 'social imaginary' comes about in different contexts. It can come about by a) charismatic leadership (Taylor's example here is Gandhi in the Indian national movement); b) modern processes of communication to generalize elite, concerns, hope, beliefs, etc.; c) divisive action by minority groups motivated by physical fear against a hostile other [23]. The new social imaginary is no longer a hierarchical society where one's relationship to that social order was 'mediated' by some inter-personal web of relationships, i.e., the group or class to which one belonged. It has become a horizontal one with a direct relationship to the 'nation' as an *individual* and equal citizen alongside other individual members. This individual connection also means an investment of oneself in the national identity giving it a stronger hold in one's psyche. Taylor then, dates the emergence of the nation and nationalism somewhat later than Greenfeld for whom it is the emergence of the national identity that leads to modernity!

Like Taylor, Greenfeld says one must first historically reveal how the elite comes to have a sense of dignity and to see itself as a 'nation', and then how this sentiment gets extended to include a 'people. But she is distinctive among all modernists theorizing about nationalism in claiming that it is nationalism that is the real spirit of capitalism, the key factor in reorienting the economy towards the pursuit of growth. Nationalism 'provided a new set of ethical considerations and social concerns that invest economic growth with a positive value....' [24] Moreover, if for Gellner, the true subject matter of modern philosophy had to be the 'steam engine' (i.e., industrialization), for Greenfeld, the true subject matter of modernity should be nationalism. Identity provides a 'social map of reality'. It situates the bearer and gives direction for action. It shapes expectations for the individual and of others towards him or her and thus provides order in a chaotic human world. 'Both nationalism and religion are order-creating cultural systems.' [25] Among the multiple identities of the self, the one that is widest in scope can encompass the others and organize them within a more overarching and comprehensive framework. It is therefore the most fundamental and self-stabilizing of all the identities. This most important identity used to be religion but is now the national identity which bestows dignity to each member of the nation.

However, it is in her later 2006 study that she develops more fully her understanding of culture and identity and of the process by which nationalism surfaces. Here, she argues that what distinguishes humans from animals is culture which lies between the environment and neurophysiology. It is the process by which external stimuli are symbolized in the brain to create agency (will) and identity. What we can call the 'imaginative capacity of the brain' is really the cultural capacity to symbolize and it is this that creates the mind. 'Culture creates the mind'. [26] Unlike animals which are

biologically programmed to behave in set ways in their species collectives, humans must search for cooperative models of group behavior. Order and status she says is basic to human nature and culture-identity is the key stabilizer and ordering principle of a society whose primary role is to ward off anomie which comes from inconsistency in a human collective between different values, norms, perceptions of reality. An ordered society rests on cultural consensus and it is one's fundamental identity that provides that vital 'social map'.

Cultural change comes about when new sources of anomie emerge in different contexts and times. Anomie is caused by status disturbance among elites when social conventions that legitimize and prevent challenge to the existing order break down. The English and French revolutions reflected this decisive breakdown leading to the emergence of nationalism which in due course as it unfolded worldwide took three forms. There is an individualistic nationalism – an association of free and equal members. There is a collective nationalism expressing a unitary will of some sort which can take either a civic or an ethnic form. What distinguishes each from the other are the different interpretations of the two core political principles, namely popular sovereignty and equality of membership. Authoritarian rule can claim to express the popular will, and equality of membership rights does not necessarily mean democratic rule.

But Greenfeld has also become more critical of, and disillusioned with, the supposedly healing qualities of the national identity. Her growing uneasiness with modernity now leads her to move away from seeing nationalism as the resolution of anomie to now seeing that 'nationalism inhibits the formation and normal functioning of the human mind.' [27] It can no longer provide a 'clear social map'. It is not a strong source of identity stability because it does not grow 'naturally' from one's environment such as those identities that would be connected to cultural 'givens' like one's birth, home, language, religion, and so on. 'There are far more people who are made deeply unhappy by the openness and pluralism of modernity than those who are made happy.' [28]

What are we to make of all this? Because Greenfeld reverses the proper relationship between modernity and nationalism (and national identity) she has to place principal responsibility for the former's failings at the door of the latter. But the disorientations caused by the enormous flux of modernity, as compared to the much more static character of society and therefore of self in pre-modernity, are due above all to its capitalist character; for it is capitalism that unleashes a dynamic of change that is permanent, rapid and exceptional in its power! What we find then is a new and deeper form of disorientation – a capitalist alienation. Given their frameworks of thinking, Greenfeld and Taylor respectively will place primary blame on nationalism in the first case, on modernity in the second. The result is a kind of shared nostalgia paradigm, a longing for the certainties of the past which presumably better secured the psychic and mental health of humans. For Taylor, religious belief is the necessary palliative today even as the multicultural nature of the world probably means that a system of nation-states will endure and the best we can perhaps hope for is a humanized and ecologically sensitive modernity. For Greenfeld the dilemma is deeper for it is unclear what other identity can replace the national as the stabilizing 'central mental process' or 'central "organ" of the mind'. [29] Neither sees transcending capitalism as the way forward.

Both these thinkers fuse culture with society and see the former as the more important term. Society is seen not so much as a nexus of economic, political and cultural-ideological relationships as above all a 'meaning system' which can be best deciphered by grasping its principal cultural code. This kind of approach to understanding the sources of social order makes cultural consensus the key organizer and stabilizer. This is, in my view, an unbalanced culturalism. The search for the sources of order or stability in a society must be conducted at the level of the social itself, or in the socio-cultural system as a whole, and not purely or primarily at the level of the cultural system. Social order is not a simple or straightforward function of meaning. It has as much, if not more, to do with issues of power, and therefore with matters of social tension, dominance and conflict, as it has to do

with issues of cultural and moral norms, values and beliefs [30].

There are four sources which combine in variant ways to maintain social order – culture/custom, exchange or rational choice, coercion, and finally, the lack of unified dissensus where the case for seeing widespread and pervasive dissensus is as strong as the claims made for perceiving a cultural consensus. It can be argued that in modern societies there are many more options of all kinds and that which keeps a society in some sense together, is not consensus but the lack of a unified dissensus, i.e., the absence of a counter-consensus challenging the social order. For normal functioning, active agreement is not necessary. Passive acceptance of the existing order of things is enough. The weakness of negative factors is more relevant to the explanation of social normality and order than the strength of positive ones.

— -X---X---X---

The original spur to Benedict Anderson's 1983 study, *Imagined Communities* (subsequently extended in a 1991 edition) was the outbreak of fratricidal wars between 'socialist countries', above all in Indochina. The practice by these states of 'socialism in one country' was bad enough and self-serving in the political-diplomatic arena of geo-politics but waging actual wars against each other was something else! This led Anderson to see nationalism as a sentiment and sense of loyalty somewhat akin to an extended kinship but more like a religion which is generally more inclusive than any extended kinship even. Marxists, he felt, had not grasped the importance of the 'sacred' and its connection to the problem of finitude and mortality. Nationalism had in some sense become a replacement for religious loyalties. There was a decline of the great unifying belief systems of Christendom and Islam while the elite self-absorption of the 'Middle Kingdom' was being shaken by the widened horizons resulting from the explorations of the non-European and Arab worlds. The 'sacred' languages of Latin and Quranic Arabic which were supposed to give access to 'religious truth' were being demoted in importance, while Chinese encounters with more powerful outsiders were eroding the self-confidence of the Chinese imperial bureaucracy whose internal coherence was based on the 'Mandarin system'. In addition, other cultural de-stabilizers were the emergence of a) new concepts of social equality and growing questioning of the view that social hierarchy and complementary of functions was natural and God given; b) a separation of cosmological and human historical time with concern over the latter becoming increasingly important since there was available a new awareness of possible cumulative progress in this life. That is to say, there were new ways in which fraternity, power and time could be linked. For Anderson then, the nation is the modern secular version of the 'sacred' community.

As a modernist and Marxist, Anderson sought to connect the rise of nationalism to capitalism. Here, he highlighted the importance of print-capitalism and standardized print-languages of the non-sacred vernaculars in explaining the spread of the idea of nationalism from elites to masses. The 'horizontal comradeship' of the nation is created by all kinds of artefacts in the form of symbols, poems, plays, stories, pictures, buildings of the new 'collective'. State activities also contributed the forging of this national consciousness through censuses, maps, museums and through its administrative routines.

[31]

Though Anderson is emphatic that the nation is very much a political community, his is primarily an exploration into the culturally imagined character of the nation. Valuable as this is, it leaves a great deal out. The 'emotional unification' of the imagined nation is not just a product of cultural activities but there also has to be a constructed separation from other nations where the political and the extra-national must come in. Cultural-emotional unity alone does not a nation make. That group has to be politicized; there has to be a striving for some specifically political end. It is a grouping operating in those 'political fields' concerned with the 'conditions and transformations that created modern nation-states'. One such field is that of external conflict and war and therefore nationalism is

connected to the study of the economic and social history of the nation-state in a wider context of transnational processes of *inter-nationalism* [32].

Like Anderson, Neil Davidson also sees the nation as subjectively defined but nationalisms for him are differentiated more by their differing relationships to 'external social reality' than by different 'styles of imagining'. There is a difference of emphasis between these two Marxist thinkers. Davidson insists that sharing a cultural attribute of some sort does not alone make for a distinctive sense of the collective-self. For that there has to be a contrast with some other group, community or nation. This is a sensible enough caution but more debatable is his insistence that national consciousness must be separated from having a national identity. The former is an 'internal psychological state' while the latter is necessarily an external relation or contrastive state which has to have some signs or markers showing to one-self and others that one *holds* to a particular identity. This is unconvincing. One can with as much plausibility argue that a 'national' consciousness is also a contrastive state. But by making this separation Davidson wants to claim that while a national consciousness may have emerged earlier, it is capitalism that 'crystallizes' a national consciousness from prior disparate elements. This then allows him to argue that national identity and therefore nations and nationalism come about as the capitalist mode of production becomes stronger and then dominant. So a national consciousness emerges unevenly across Europe (1450-1688) among certain elite groups; it spreads to other parts of Europe and to North America (1688-1789); and then there is diffusion to the masses (1789-1848). On the one hand Davidson wants to tie the rise of the early nations in Europe (England and France) as strongly as he can to the rise of capitalism as the main mode of production. On the other hand, he insists that the emergence of capitalism must be tied to the bourgeois revolutions in England and France.

The dating of the origins of capitalism thus becomes important for Marxists because they seek to connect the first nationalism in England to this origin. Greenfeld though a modernist says national identity/nationalism first arises in the very period of the fifteenth and sixteenth century which for Davidson designates the time when national consciousness emerges. Robert Brenner and the school of 'Political Marxists' he inspired provides a way of reconciling the partial claims of both Davidson and Greenfeld. Political Marxists can agree with those who trace the rise of a sense of nationhood in England to the early sixteenth century and yet insist that this was tied to the rise of capitalism precisely because capitalist social relations first arose in the first half of the sixteenth century. Political Marxists reject the argument that the bourgeois revolution of the seventeenth century in England was the necessary pre-condition for the capitalist mode of production to make the crucial breakthrough to becoming the dominant mode [33].

Where Davidson and other Marxists are on strong grounds is in arguing that the rise of capitalism created a much more complex society in which the rising class, the bourgeoisie needed a new social glue, namely nationalism, to sustain its rule over the lower orders. Industrialization and urbanization create new and highly disruptive life experiences resulting in new psychological needs where nationalism provides a form of psychic compensation in the face of growing uncertainties and newer and more generalized forms of alienation. The particular merit of Davidson's intervention into the debate is that he highlights the functional importance of nationalism for class domination! Nationalism provides psychic compensation for alienation not assuage-able by consumption. It mobilizes working classes for 'our' ruling classes against 'other' ruling classes. He does well to remind us that while there are limits to how radically progressive nationalism can be, there are no limits to how reactionary it can be [34].

## **Marxist Legacies**

It is only in the last quarter of the twentieth century that Marxist intellectuals began to address the issue of nationalism with the seriousness it deserved. Before that, the Marxist legacy of thought on this issue dating from the work of Marx and Engels themselves was incomplete, contradictory and ambiguous. Common to all the different currents within this tradition – Marx and Engels, the Austro-Marxists like Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, then Luxemburg, Lenin and Stalin – was that the ‘national question’ (as it was called) properly belonged to the period of the transition to capitalism and of its further development till that stage was transcended with the coming of the socialist revolution and its subsequent spread internationally. On the one hand classical Marxism held that capitalism needed, and would in many cases get, the politically unified and solidified national territories it required for the free movement of goods, capital, labour for large-scale production and mass distribution of commodities. On the other hand, in capitalism ‘all that is solid melts into the air’ meaning that powerful processes would be unleashed which would erode national boundaries and cultures. The latter was more likely not only or merely because of capitalism’s internal dynamic but because the rising power of the working class in bourgeois states meant the strong likelihood (though not certainty) of successful proletarian revolutions that would lead to territorial, cultural, political, economic cosmopolitanism [35]. This confidence about reaching the desired goal was widely shared even as different currents within classical Marxism did subscribe to different time-scales for eventually reaching this end; and even about how the national question might be resolved, whether under bourgeois or working class leadership.

### **Marx & Engels, the Austro-Marxists**

Marx and Engels believed in sharp binaries. Nationalisms were good or bad; there were ‘historic’ and non-historic’ peoples, ‘developed’ nations and ‘undeveloped’ nations, ‘live’ and ‘dying’ nationalities, ‘revolutionary’ and ‘non-revolutionary’ peoples, ‘broken’ and ‘unbroken’ nations [36]. Everything was to be judged according to the criteria of whether or not they constituted progressive peoples and struggles, where progressive struggles meant these had to be either against feudal absolutisms (accordingly M & E supported the Poles) or against capitalism where it had entrenched itself in Britain (here M & E supported the Irish) [37]. That is to say, one needed to support the struggles of the progressive bourgeoisie to create the conditions for capitalist development where this was required; and for weakening capitalist dominance where this was possible. In the first case, which then were the terrains and peoples that had the capacity to so develop? Here Marx and Engels distinguished between large and small nations, between those peoples which had a larger or more recent or more continuous history of statehood and therefore higher potential to develop along properly capitalist lines than other ‘backward’ ones which would have to be absorbed by their more ‘civilized’ neighbours. Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy had states – they were historic nations. Serbs, Croats, Basques, Czechs, Slovaks were non-historic peoples.

Given this one-sidedness in their understanding of nationalism it is hardly surprising that the Marx of *The Communist Manifesto* would declare that the advanced capitalist countries were showing the ‘mirror of the future’ to the colonized countries, or that Marx and Engels would welcome the French conquest of Algeria (1830-47) and the US invasion of Mexico (1845-7). [38] Yet in the *Manifesto* Marx also declared that ‘working men have no country’ but ‘must constitute itself as the nation’ to achieve ‘political supremacy’. Subsequent writing made it clear that by this he meant that proletarians in France must be prepared to wage a war of national defence against the Holy Alliance (Prussia, the Austrian and Russian empires later joined by monarchical France) while revolutionary democrats in Germany should wage a similar defensive ‘revolutionary nationalism’ against foreign intervention. In both cases the pre-condition for success was an alliance with the peasantry and



middle classes. In the justified criticisms of Marx and Engels on nationalism and their dismissal of the peasantry as something of a doomed class, this insight is often forgotten [39].

Austro-Marxists like Otto Bauer and Karl Renner in their understanding of how nations and nationalities were formed gave more importance than other Marxists of their time (and Marx and Engels) to matters of culture and community going beyond the common recognition of the importance of language or of the level of economic development. Bauer, the most representative figure of the Austro-Marxists, took the view that corresponding to a given mode of production would be a specific mental culture which along with heredity created common traits passed on by law and custom. This tendency to tie nationalism to personality simply as a matter of culture is best resisted. But his emphasis on the cultural dimension had the real merit of recognizing, more than his contemporaries, the significant power of the nationalist appeal. Bauer believed capitalism produces a *nationally* conscious working class and not only a class conscious one. In fact the nation's shared history and culture could make that more powerful than class bonds. It followed that one would have to deal with the fact of there being a 'national character' and not just a class character to nationalism. [40] Nor did the Austro-Marxists think that the overthrow of capitalism would lead to an easy cosmopolitanism. Yes, capitalism restricted the cultural development and flourishing of the working class and of all the people. The working class had to take the lead in overcoming capitalism since changes in the mode of production would be a crucial input into transforming the existing common culture; and for this Bauer believed a 'socialist federation of nationalities' would be required.

If Bauer also accepted that there were 'non-historic' peoples he did at least allow for them to be re-awakened by capitalism. His emphasis on 'cultural-national autonomy' with its implied recognition of the equality of all cultures was certainly welcome but the main problem with the Austro-Marxists was that the political perspective they offered was quite inadequate for their times. In the context of the existing Tsarist Empire, Bauer called for civil equality and federation within the Empire rather than calling for the overthrow of Tsarist rule. This had organizational implications. In contrast to Lenin's effort to build a more centralized party structure as a fighting instrument (whether operating underground or openly) Bauer's perspective called for a federated structure much more loosely bound since overthrowing the Tsarist state was not supposed to be on the current agenda. Nor was cultural-national autonomy a substitute for the much more democratic call for respecting the 'right to self-determination' that Lenin would put forward.

### **Luxemburg and Lenin**

Even though Rosa Luxemburg opposed national oppression she rejected the idea that there could be the 'right to self-determination'. Like Bauer she preferred to endorse autonomy and federalism. She denied that nations or peoples can have the right to self-determination believing that this would play into the hands of the ruling class. Moreover, like most classical Marxists she thought small nations would be unviable and in any case promoting national unity and nation-state formation belonged to the era of the rising bourgeoisie, not now. For Lenin the national state was the norm under capitalism and such states could be big or small. He also preferred big units but recognized that these should come about voluntarily and believed that smaller nations would eventually integrate either as a consequence of capitalist compulsions or through socialist internationalism. The multinational state under capitalism (like Tsarist Russia) would be backward or reactionary but even here he allowed for an exception - Greater Austria which was stable and capitalist though encompassing Germans, Hungarians and Slavs. Luxemburg believing that in many cases the struggle for national independence was a diversion from class struggle would assign the 'right to self-determination' only to the working class not to the 'people' as a whole. Furthermore, she

believed there could be no such thing as absolute rights since rights were always contextual. So certainly support freedom from oppression – national or otherwise – but what sense did it make to say there is a ‘right’ to freedom from oppression [41].

Later Marxists including Lenin had to address nationalist upsurges in Eastern Europe, Tsarist Russia and anti-colonial struggles. Lenin was not looking to develop any theory of nationalism but seeking a practical political perspective and guideline for advancing the socialist cause which he believed also meant advancing democracy since there could in his eyes be no contradiction between the two [42]. If in Western Europe he saw the ‘national question’ as settled, this was not so in Persia, Turkey, Russia, China and the Balkans where bourgeois democratic national movements had emerged. Lenin also for the first time took up the colonial question and allied national liberation movements, where they were developing, to the socialist cause. After 1914 and the outbreak of inter-imperialist wars he saw these anti-imperialist struggles along with class struggles as central to socialist internationalism.

From his writings after 1914 we can see the evolution of his thinking and to this day (though it is by no means a magic wand to be waved in all cases) his formulae for respecting the ‘right to self-determination’ of an oppressed nation or nationality; for the stands to be taken by revolutionaries in the oppressor and oppressed nations; for prioritizing the interests of proletarian internationalism, remain amongst the most important and treasured legacies of the socialist tradition for dealing with the ‘national question’ itself extended in what it is meant to refer to, and cover [43]. Lenin’s key points were as follows: (i) distinguish between the interests of oppressed classes and the notion of ‘national interests’. (ii) Distinguish between ‘oppressed, dependent and subject nations and the oppressing, exploiting and sovereign nations.’ [44] (iii) Communist parties must aid revolutionary movements among dependent and ‘underprivileged nations’ (American Negroes were seen as an underprivileged nation), and in the colonies. (iv) Proletarian struggle within a country should be subordinated to the interests of proletarian struggle internationally. [45] (v) On the colonial question Lenin’s views were modulated by the influence of M.N. Roy’s warnings about the duplicities of the indigenous bourgeoisie which could well collaborate with the imperialist bourgeoisie against the revolutionary classes. So Lenin, while arguing that Communist parties should have a temporary alliance with the bourgeois-led national liberation movement, made this conditional on being able to retain its organizational independence and having the freedom to propagate its ideology. (vi) Lenin emphasized the danger of, and therefore opposition to, big nation chauvinism vis-à-vis smaller and weaker nationalities. Indeed, true equality among nationalities to be more than just formal would require the big nation to have greater sensitivity and to ‘bend over backwards’ in unequally giving favours without return to smaller nations/nationalities.

Three guiding principles thereby emerged. There should be a unity of the working class across all nations. Recognize the equality of all nations and cultures so an important degree of autonomy within a state, is required. [46] It is necessary to raise the slogan of respecting the ‘right to self-determination’ provided there was a national movement taking place among that nation/nationality which was also an oppressed one. After Lenin, what Marxists had called the National Question that now needed to be resolved in a just manner that would advance the democratic and socialist cause, was extended beyond the issue of national unity and consolidation for capitalist functionality to a) the legitimacy or otherwise of annexations by one state of another; b) dealing with the issue of secessionist pressures; c) matters concerning national minorities within a state; d) matters regarding support to anti-colonial struggles.

On the issue of supporting the right to self-determination up to and including secession, two normative questions arise. Should a minority community wishing to be politically distinct from a majority community have the democratic right to do so? Are nationalist forms of autonomy or separation politically desirable? Liberals would use as their guideline the principle that the ‘right

has priority over the good'. Liberal Communitarians and Republicans, Marxists and Anarchists believing in the need for establishing a 'common and collective good' would more strongly emphasize the importance of the latter. Without addressing the normative issues directly, Lenin's formula is still the best thing going politically, seeking to respect and combine the pursuit of both. A socialist inspired territorial unity in which the working classes and revolutionaries of both the oppressor and oppressed nations come together to overthrow the state rule of their common oppressors would be ideal, but any such territorial unity must be voluntary. Revolutionaries in the oppressor nationality must therefore criticize that national oppression and uphold the banner of respecting the right to self-determination for the oppressed nationality; while revolutionaries in the oppressed nationality should emphasize the value of a collective and united socialist struggle to overthrow common class oppressors. One side emphasizes the 'right to secede', the other side the 'right to unite'. This remains the best political way to deal with the tension between democratic right and common good.

### **Stalin and the Subsequent Soviet Experience [47]**

One year before Lenin's 1914 article on 'The Right to Self-Determination', Stalin had written his 'Marxism and the National Question' which had been unduly praised by many including Lenin, thereby giving it a status it didn't deserve. In this tract Stalin presented a strict objective definition of the nation or nationality which would create more problems than solutions. For Stalin a 'nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture' [48]. So, multi-lingual entities were not to be seen as nations. Switzerland was a state not a nation. Going by Stalin's definition a national minority was a non-nation which could not grow into becoming a nation and would be assimilated by the process of capitalist internationalization. He talked of national minorities or non-nations being absorbed in the 'melting pot' of the host nationality. National cultural autonomy was not something to admire or endorse. Only later did Stalin come around to accepting that such minorities could get partial autonomy. Similarly, though in his tract he made no distinction between oppressor and oppressed nationalities he would come around later to a formal acceptance of Lenin's distinction, though in letter and spirit as his subsequent record would show, he diverged fundamentally from the perspectives Lenin held [49].

In 1913 Lenin had argued for a centralized socialist regime but by 1918 he came to accept the principle of national republics. 'The Soviet Russian Republic is established on the basis of a free union of free nations as a federation of Soviet national republics.' [50] In fact, the Russian Revolution of 1917 was remarkable not just for being the first 'revolution against capital' but it was also a 'revolution against the order of nations'. To this day, the only country whose very name bore no reference to a people or a territory was that of the USSR - the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics! Insofar as the Soviet Constitution would carry this commitment to Lenin's self-determination principle, this was both a time-bomb and a pragmatic way of maintaining cohesion. Everything would of course depend on actual Soviet practice. [51] That experience turned out to be very mixed.

The democratic revolution of February 1917 caused a considerable disintegration of the Empire and an upsurge in nationalist movements in the border areas. After the October revolution of that year and in the following year the independence of Finland and of the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were recognized and accepted [52]. Non-Russian peoples in the Tsarist periphery were generally sympathetic to the Bolshevik government but Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine had national movements which required careful handling (in Ukraine public influence was divided between the larger nationalists and the Ukraine Communists), elsewhere absent such

movements, autonomy rather than separation was on the agenda. How the Bolsheviks would handle the situation would decide the balance between persuasion and force in establishing the Soviet Union. Thus in the Central Asian republics early and promising prospects of working with Muslim communists led by Sultan Galiev who wanted to establish a larger Muslim dominated republic within the USSR motivated partly by his concern about Great Russian chauvinism, foundered on the rocks of mutual distrust between himself and Stalin and other Bolshevik leaders. He fell prey to Stalin's purge in 1928, being sentenced to death then exiled then arrested again in 1937 and finally shot in 1940.

The fact is that the establishment of the USSR was not based only on voluntary union. Force was also used in many cases often as a short-cut rather than working patiently to win over local populations to the merits of a unity that would also respect the principle of an internal equality between all nationalities which above all meant making sure that there would be no excuse for any complaints about Great Russian chauvinism. Lenin's last battles against Stalin and others who supported him within the party was precisely his anger at such chauvinist behaviour and centralizing excesses in the cases of Ukraine and Georgia. Certainly there was a qualitative difference between Lenin and Stalin in their respective understandings of the national question, their political sensitivities and therefore in their policy perspectives and behaviour. But even for Lenin there was a fundamental dilemma he could not overcome. He had thought that there would be no serious tension or contradiction between the pursuit of socialist unity (all the more necessary in a context where internal and external forces had sought to crush the new Soviet regime) and the defence of democratic rights and principles. But there was this tension! And it pushed the Bolshevik leadership as a whole to prioritize the principle of unity. The 'right to unite' would increasingly override the 'right to secede'.

Under Stalin's rule, 15 Union Republics were established that were nominally equal but much greater power was given to the federal government to ensure a centralized structure of power. Some 16 'autonomous republics', 9 'autonomous regions' and 10 'autonomous units' were established. Great Russians made up 55% of the population, Ukrainians were 18% and Belorussians were 4% — all Eastern Slavs. Given the weight of Russians in the overall population it is not surprising that Stalin would push a 'Great Russian Patriotism' to act as some kind of social glue even rehabilitating Ivan the Terrible and glorifying an older history of Russian expansionism. In his great purge of 1937-38, Stalin liquidated in part or whole the governments of 30 republics for 'national deviation', while in WWII he exiled whole populations - Crimean Tartars, Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Chechens and other Caucasian peoples for fear of their possible disloyalty to Russian dominated Moscow [53]. Yet these contingent acts were one part of the bigger story.

Article 17 of the Soviet Constitution gave the right to secede to every Union Republic but final decision would still lie in the hands of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) which itself was monolithic with no 'national federated' and 'autonomous' units. But proportionality in filling up local party and administrative positions was seriously pursued. Thus a 'whole stratum was built up of minor officials who had a stake in the regime.....' [54] Stalin's rule also promoted ethnic and national consciousness in the non-Russian republics through recognizing cultures and languages. Though there was a disproportionate influence of Russians at the centre this was meliorated by propping up non-Russian elites whose access to power relied not just on their alignment to this centre but in their being seen as genuine representatives of specific ethnicities. So during Stalin's time and in the post-war decades after, ethnic identity ironically, was made more important than class identity while the ruling bureaucracy and the *Nomenklatura* were made more stable for being ethnically diversified. If the flow of resources from the centre to the non-Russian republics further helped to stabilize the rule of the Communist party throughout the USSR, it is also true that in civil society in the various republics, a nationalist rather than socialist idiom would become more dominant [55].

With the arrival of Gorbachev's glasnost or democratization efforts, nationalist stirrings would grow in some cases e.g., in the Baltic Republics and to a lesser extent in Georgia and Armenia. But most others would have preferred to stay together in a more truncated Union if a genuine federalism could emerge with restored rights for the smaller oppressed minorities such as Tartars, Ingush, Chechens, Kalmyks, etc. *Perestroika*'s shift to marketization worsened matters economically for the majority of people, creating stronger centrifugal pressures for a more substantial break-up than might otherwise have taken place. [56] However, to make the nationalities issue central to explaining the break-up of the Soviet Union would be a serious error. This was more the result of the break-up than the cause. Despite growing disillusionment with the Soviet experiment because of the democratic unhappiness with one-party rule and the widespread public sense of economic failures associated with the top-down command system of organizing development, no previous 'empire' ever collapsed so quickly, so comprehensively, and, relatively speaking, with so little bloodshed – only around 3000 died. The USSR had covered one-third of the world's surface, had 300 million people and contained some forty significant nationalities or national minorities. It was not rebellion from below but disillusionment at the top that paved the way for the break-up. Those who most benefited from the earlier system had themselves lost hope and belief in the system and thought to better advance their own interests through a break-up. Boris Yeltsin's own ambitions and the role he played in discarding any effort to retain even a truncated USSR rather than a Russian Federation of which he would be the first President, was basically a reflection of the wider and deeper inter-play of power between Russian nationalists out to secure their rule at the expense of the conservative old-timer Communists of the former Soviet *Nomenklatura*.

## **Today's World: Capitalism and the Nation-State System**

Historically, Marxists were among those who believed that the nation-state would soon enough turn out to be an anachronism buffeted by two forces, first by capitalist expansionism, and then by the advance of the socialist revolution. Worldwide developments since the late 1970s have forced a re-evaluation of this early optimism more so with regard to the prospects of socialism, partially so with respect to the issue of nationalism. If future prospects for the nation-state system are considered to be not that bright, responsibility for this is now sought to be laid at the door of capitalism in its latest phase of 'globalization' and with the growing power and importance of transnational corporations (TNCs) as economic actors. In some sections of the Left this has given rise to talk of both the decline of the nation-state and the emergence of a 'transnational capitalist class.' [57]

This is not the perspective upheld here. In fact, in the very period when global movements of capital, money, goods and services has become greater than ever before while movement of labour across borders has also been considerable, the number of nation-states has actually increased. This reality could be dismissed as the contingent result of the break-ups of the former USSR and Yugoslavia but elsewhere in one or other part of the world there continue to be nationalist tensions carrying popular aspirations to possible separate nationhood in Spain (Basque region and Catalonia), UK (Scotland and the Irish question), Canada (Quebec), South Asia (Kashmir), the Middle East (Palestine and Kurdistan), China (Xinjiang and Taiwan), Russia (Chechnya) while the Republic of South Sudan and Kosovo are recent newcomers to the comity of nations. There are, in short, no signs that might justify prognostications of the steady decay in the medium, let alone short term of the nation-state system. The question raised on the Left then, is whether we need to assess once more, the nature of the relationship between the capitalism of our times and the nation-state system [58].

Since for Marxists the *nation*-state (not the state in general) owes its emergence to the rise of capitalist modernity what reason is there to think that the nation-state will disappear short of the



disappearance of capitalism? Indeed, the trans-nationalization of social relations and the consolidation and juridical sharpening of territorialized sovereignty went together [59]. For the foreseeable future we will see both the continuing logic of capitalist accumulation on a world scale and a multiple nation-states system. The two have now co-existed and connected for a sufficiently long period of time that we must accept that there exists a strong functional relationship between capitalism and the nation-states system. But how powerful a factor is this in maintaining this 'duality within a totality'? Since capitalism was born in an already existing multiple states system, could this multiplicity have imposed its logic on capitalism and therefore been a key factor in securing the contemporary order?

One view is that had capitalism been born in a context where there existed a world empire there is no reason to think that the logic of capitalist accumulation would have required a territorial break-up of this 'inheritance'. That is to say, capitalist competition or the fact of 'many capitals' does not promote, nor in itself require that there be 'many states'. There is no strong functionalism between the two contemporary realities [60]. More persuasive is the contrasting view of those who insist on an important functionalism and also on the fact that the separation of the economic and political in the capitalist mode of production does create a practical dynamic in favour of there being many states which (for reasons already enunciated in the first part of this text) are nation states legitimized in the name of nationalism [61]. Capitalism's intrinsic nature only requires trans-nationalization of economic relations plus a mechanism for global stabilization for capital accumulation which can be provided in flexible ways in a capitalist inter-state system. Moreover, the separation of the economic and political creates a 'privatized' sphere of surplus value accumulation and extraction, and another sphere of the exercise of political power by a 'public' authority. There are now capitalists and state managers, each having different functions, interests and motivations. Given this separation of functions, capitalists do not have the time, compulsion or interest in organizing the political terrain even at the level of the domestic, let alone at the international level. Competition between capitalists means the class as a whole cannot be the governing category. In fact, the capitalist ruling class is the first such class that does not itself rule! [62]

This governing group (state managers) of course must be connected to and structurally biased towards capitalists and capitalism but must also supply mechanisms for cooperation between capitals, provide rules and norms for stable competition, and arbitrate in intra-capitalist conflicts. This is the first of the internal functions of the state. The second is that the state must control class conflict in favour of the capitalist class as a whole which may well require it from time to time to act against this or that section of capitalists depending on the strength of resistance from below. A third function is the role of the state in dealing with crisis situations both economic (through Keynesian-type measures and bailouts of those firms that are 'too big to fail' as in the recent 2007/8-2012 Great Recession) and socio-political.

Then there is the external function. All capitals benefit from an expansion of space in which they can operate to secure more profits. But the world is too large a space to ensure the broad regularity and predictability that capital needs for its dynamic and constant pursuit of expanded reproduction. Furthermore, competition between capitals on this expanded scale means there will always be losers as well as winners and the former, especially when they are sizeable TNCs, will not simply sit back and quietly accept this. [63] They often look for and get 'protection' from their home state. Nor is it a surprise that the shifting geography of the competition for surplus value will often bring into play 'conflicts of interests' between states themselves.

Intrinsic to capital is the principle of competition. The market is supposed to embody the principle of coordination - the broom of efficiency - that determines the distribution of success and failure. However, these very market operations also cause tensions and instabilities between capitals which to some degree or the other do transmute into tensions between states; tensions which are quite

separate from and in addition to other historically constituted geo-political problems that may exist among states. But the principle that is external to both capital and the market and yet is necessary for capital to function properly is the mechanism for providing global stabilization. If the individual nation-state seeks to provide this stability at the domestic level, and the nation-states system to try and do the same at the global level, who or what will stabilize the nation-states system?

This is where thought-frames within Marxism and within the Liberal Realist tradition of thinking on international relations tend to converge. If the latter will talk of the 'international public good' that is provided by 'hegemonic stability', the former will point to a sub-set of the most powerful imperialist powers who must take up this stabilizing role to guarantee the continuity of capitalist exploitation and oppression on a world scale. And does this sub-set itself need a key coordinator-stabilizer to handle tensions within? Here is where there is again something of a Marxist replay of the issue whether we should nonetheless be highlighting the importance of a single hegemon; or can this stabilization, in our current post-Communist times, become the shared responsibility of a small collective of Great Powers, all capitalist? This is where the questions concerning the status of US power, relative and absolute, come centre-stage. Could the establishment of this current phase of neoliberal capitalist globalization that emerged from the late 1970s onwards have even taken place without the crucial exercise of American power at various levels? What will happen now with the rise of China and other emergent or emerging capitalist powers? Can there be a substitute, single or collective, for the global role hitherto played by the US? What are the implications of failure in this regard? How will the future 'dialectic between the national and the international' unfold? [64]

These are large questions that cannot be addressed here. But there is an additional argument provided for why a multiple states system has so far endured. This has to do with the character of the state rather than with capitalism. Simon Bromley says that while mainstream International Relations focuses on the consequences of a multiple inter-state system, and Marxists on the relationship between the states system and societies (capitalist or otherwise). But neither says Bromley, pay proper attention to the issue of politics and the political order where the question of the 'use of force' comes in [65]. *Politics can be understood as that dimension of the social life concerned with arriving at and giving effect to collectively binding decisions and rules.* People are social beings whose agency can be erased by force, hence the need for individual and collective security which has to be a key aspect of installing public order. For there to be such order there have to be rules and institutions but given conflicts of interest between individuals and groups, the possibility of coercion exercised by a public authority is unavoidable. But while there are different forms of coercion that can restrict or curtail the free exercise of agency, force is still different from coercion in that it attacks agency itself. [66] For the exercise of force there has to be what Bromley calls 'physical co-presence' which in turn requires 'territorial proximity.' Political order then for him can only be for a segment of the human population and for a segment of the planet's territorial space. Political life means there will be 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Or as Bromley puts it, 'We live together politically if we live under a political order at all, in a qualitatively different way to the ways in which we might live together economically or culturally. The corollary of this is that we also live *apart* politically in ways that are different to our economic and cultural differences.' [67]

The transcendence of capitalism on a world scale may or may not eradicate an inter-state system completely. But it is only conceivable on the basis of a much deeper and widespread understanding and acceptance of an internationalism that by its very nature replaces the pull of nationalism even if for part of the journey an increasingly progressive internationalism will have to go along with the pursuit of more progressive nationalisms. But given that we are now faced for the first time in human history with three great and universal evils that are intimately connected to a globalizing capitalism, the need for transcending it should be deemed incontestable. The human species itself is threatened by possible mass devastation through dangers humanly created. Now more than ever is

there a need for a response that subordinates our national differences to what we collectively share as global dilemmas. 1) Even as there is the most obscene and historically unmatched levels of wealth concentration and inequality, 'Basic Needs' (which now go well beyond the eradication of malnutrition to include health, education, leisure, respect and personal dignity, freedom from fear) for so much of the world's population are and will remain unmet. This is not because of scarcity of resources but in spite of the fact that for some time now the age of such scarcity globally is finally over! 2) Ecological limits of various kinds are in the process of being crossed with profound negative consequences for the delicate metabolism that connects humans with nature. 3) The cloud of a nuclear conflagration and nuclear winter looms constantly over us even as it shifts its geographical positioning.

## **The Imperialism of Human Rights**

In the post-Cold War era it bears reminding ourselves that in contrast to the sacralised and personalized states of the pre-modern past the advent of nationalism and of the nation-state was an important democratic advance because of the principle inherent in it of popular sovereignty i.e., rule in the name of the collective interest of the 'people' constituted as the nation. Moreover, if one were asked to identify what on the world scale constituted *the single greatest democratic advance* in the second half of the twentieth century the answer should be both obvious and incontestable. It was decolonization, even where a local dictatorship replaced foreign colonial rule. One of the crucial background conditions, objectively speaking, that greatly facilitated rapid decolonization was the presence of a socialist bloc of countries that supported decolonization and in opposition to Western powers provided (however selective and half-hearted at times) material and political-diplomatic support to anti-colonial movements and struggles, and vied with the West for influence in these newly independent countries. The legal-political reflection of the reality of decolonization at the international level was the institutionalization of the principle of formal equality and national self-determination of all nation-states. Thus the supremacy of state sovereignty was declared in Article 2(1) in the UN Charter; that of non-interference and the ban on armed force from outside is embodied in Article 2(7) of the UN Charter with the only exception allowed being the 'right to self-defence' in Article 2(4) of the same Charter. Chapter VII of the Charter says that if a state threatens a 'breach of international peace' then as a last resort measure (when all other steps have been tried and failed) armed action can be sanctioned by the Security Council (SC) against that state [68].

It is not a coincidence that with the collapse of the socialist bloc of countries, the UN has been much more easily suborned by the US and that external military intervention in the name of 'humanitarian intervention' and 'regime change in the name of democracy' became the new ideological banners in which the West led by the US dramatically escalated their selective interventions in the developing world. Selective in that this is not directed against allies no matter how authoritarian they are or when they carry out a 'breach of the international peace' by their illegal military acts e.g., those by Israel over the years both inside and outside the Occupied Territories, and by Saudi Arabia more recently in Bahrain and Yemen. [69] This has rightly been called the 'imperialism of human rights' and is invariably justified in the name of national interest(s) by the external intervening power(s). Never absent though are claims about the more universal or international political-cum-normative virtues of taking such a course. It is this political-cum-normative claim that needs to be investigated here.

The issue is not external intervention *per se* but about *forcible* i.e., military intervention for humanitarian reasons which is a category of action qualitatively distinct from the application of international sanctions against the government in question and even from external supply of arms to a particular combatant in an internal civil war situation. There are three stances or positions one can

take. The first is to rule out all and any exceptions to what is already laid down in international law and the UN Charter. The five main arguments for why an unqualified rejection of any such military intervention taking place are as follows. 1) Do not ignore the issue of the motives of the intervener(s). States don't intervene for humanitarian but for politically self-interested reasons and purposes. 2) State sovereignty is supreme. Citizens are the exclusive responsibility of their state and their state is entirely their business. 3) Don't promote the further possibility and likelihood of abuse by adding another 'exception' in the name of human rights to what already exists by way of exception in the UN Charter. 4) There will always be selective application of the principle of forcible humanitarian intervention. Therefore, there will always be inconsistency in this policy. 5) There is no agreed consensus among the states of the world on what should be the principles on which forcible humanitarian intervention would be justified. It is better for the world that the order, currently provided by upholding the principle of non-intervention that already legally exists (and is near universally accepted), be re-affirmed than to allow the internal disorder that would result from accepting periodic violations of this principle in the name of human rights.

The second stance is to insist on forcible humanitarian intervention; and here the basic arguments are as follows. 1) Promotion of human rights is at least as important, if not more so, than international peace and security. Articles 1(3), 55 and 56 of the UN are, or should be, as or more important than the exception provided by 2(4). [70] 2) Legally these articles cannot be said to override the existing injunctions concerning external military intervention. But it is argued that whatever the legal position this is not the same as the moral position. Morality may require in certain cases forcible humanitarian intervention to end slaughter. The existence of a legal right *enables* action but does not *determine* it. 3) It is outcomes not motives that are paramount. Also outcomes are both short-term/immediate and longer-term. The short-term considerations are met by intervention to stop the human suffering. But there are also longer-term considerations to be met so intervention can and should in certain cases be prolonged to ensure proper economic, social political reconstruction. How long will be the period of 'prolonged' intervention, will of course be decided by the intervener [71].

There is a third 'qualified intervention' position to which I subscribe. This is closer to the first than to the second stance. It states that for the most part forcible humanitarian intervention is not justified because one must respect the right of a people to overthrow their own tyrant. That is to say, the suffering people must themselves be seen as the primary agency of their own future. This is a normative stance of respecting a collective's 'freedom of agency' which cannot be substituted for by an external agency. So a colonial oppressor and the end of colonial rule must be carried out by the colonized themselves with whatever help (including military) from outside; but it cannot be delivered by an external military intervention. The same applied to the case of the South African apartheid regime and, for another example, the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. The only qualifications to this principle when one would support an external forcible intervention is first when one side in a domestic conflict or civil war situation calls for, and gets, external military intervention on its side. Then the other side could be justified in calling and getting the same. This is what happened in southern Africa in the cases of Angola and Namibia in the 1970s/80s when South African forces under an apartheid government intervened and were countered and defeated by invited Cuban troops.

The second case would be when the situation is so grave that the very existence of a 'people' in substantial part or whole is threatened. Here outcomes not motives do become more important. After all, respect for the right of a people to overthrow their own tyrant must presume the existence of the people. Ethnic cleansing i.e., expulsion but not massacre of a very substantial section of the population would not justify forcible intervention for they still exist. There is, however, an unavoidable ambiguity in this respect. There can be no definitive answer to the question of how

large-scale a massacre would have to take place or is likely to take place, in order for one to arrive at a judgement that a people's existence is being threatened and therefore the necessity of carrying out an immediate intervention since this judgement is also connected to the absolute size of the overall population. Thus, on one hand, the massacre of around 500,000 civilians during Bangladesh's war of liberation — given the overall size of the population and the fact that the Mukti Bahini actually fighting the armed struggle within Bangladesh (for all their appreciation of Indian material support) were adamant that liberation should be the task of Bangladeshis themselves – would not have justified India's military intervention. [72] On the other hand, the massacre by Indonesia of 300,000 or one-third of East Timor's population would have justified an external humanitarian intervention to stop this but did not get it. A similar case was that of Rwanda in 1994 when some 800,000 or 70% of Tutsis in the country were being slaughtered over a 100 day period. What made matters even more shocking was that while Romeo Dallaire, the then head of the UN peacekeeping forces already posted there, was pleading to the Security Council for more military support, the US acted to discourage a robust UN support until too late.

The UN definition of genocide is of no help since it talks of not just the whole of a population being threatened but also of an unspecified 'part' of the population and therefore lends itself to labelling even small-scale killings as genocide. The claim of genocide having taken place was then unjustifiably used to endorse NATO intervention in the Balkan conflicts after the collapse of Yugoslavia. By this third standard of 'qualified intervention' where external military interventions by any force or concert of powers whether UN sponsored or not, should have taken place, these did not happen. Here the examples of East Timor in 1975 and Rwanda in 1994 stand out. A necessary act of intervention that did take place, though the motive was not principally humanitarian but nevertheless deserved to be supported, was actually condemned by most Western democracies – namely, the intervention by Vietnam in Kampuchea to overthrow the Pol Pot regime which in proportionate terms outdid the horrific massacres carried out by Hitler of Jews, gypsies and other designated 'enemies' of the Third Reich [73].

In the post-Cold War era, the masks of humanitarian and moral concern has been more frequently donned mainly but not solely by the West (one must not let off Russia, China and a host of 'emerging powers' that include the likes of India and Turkey) to cover their imperialist behaviour. This is all the more reason, then, to recognize and oppose the 'imperialism of human rights'!

## **Competing Nationalisms in India**

Currently there is an ongoing battle for how one should understand Indian nationalism. The very fact that we have a BJP government in power headed by a man with a hardcore Hindutva mind set, is a clear indication of the significant strides that have been already made by the Sangh Parivar to impose their vision of India and its nationalism. There are those on the Left who believe the era of the nation-state and therefore of the ideology they associate with it —namely nationalism — is basically coming to an end and it is the pursuit of global democratic governance that should be the priority. They differ from liberal cosmopolitans in that the sought for global order must not be capitalist. Given the problems (some of which have been highlighted earlier) that must now be tackled globally the terrain of anti-capitalist struggles must, they say, now be shifted to the extra-national and global terrains. Here, the basic orientation to nationalism is to see it as a basically negative phenomenon possessing little or no virtue. The global and the national are seen as conflicting principles of organization. Therefore, insofar as one will have to fight against the forces of Hindutva in India this should be done in the name of democracy and internationalism but not in the name of an alternative conception of nationalism to that being promoted by the Sangh Parivar.



However, for reasons that have to do with the continued importance of the nation-states system for capitalism, whether operating within or across countries, and because of nationalism's powerful appeal to popular loyalties, we cannot escape political engagement at the level of the national. Marx, who in his *Manifesto* showed that he was really the first theorist of globalization (though not of imperialism) nevertheless also recognized that the working class to eradicate capitalism worldwide, would still first have to settle accounts with it at many a national level. The struggle for generating a progressive internationalism will require struggles to promote a progressive nationalism. In India, given the project and determination of the forces of Hindutva, this issue cannot be dodged. We do have to counter pose another kind of nationalist vision even as this 'battle for the soul of Indian nationalism' as it were, must include wider struggles for democracy and socialist transformation.

In one of his numerous writings the late Benedict Anderson suggested that nationalism can be seen in two ways. It can be seen as something belonging to the past, an inheritance of some sort. In which case there is likely to be endless disputes about what the proper inheritance is and who are the proper inheritors? In India two competing versions of this 'cultural nationalism' (as the supposed essence of Indian political nationalism) are the respective historical legacies of 'Hindu religion and culture' (described in variant ways) and the notion of a 'composite culture' to which many plural cultural and religious currents are said to have contributed. But the latter is not a serious counter to the former. For the question then arises of what particular ingredient plays the biggest role in helping to 'compose' this plural cultural admixture, that is supposed to lie at the heart of Indian nationalism? And here the candidate for the status as key composer that gets the most applause from various circles including those perceiving themselves as highly secular, is Hinduism. Moreover, both perspectives subscribe to the myth that a unique characteristic of India through the ages that has shaped its nationalism is its socio-culture tolerance. Here cultural plurality, co-existence, and diversity are being misread as meaning tolerance. However, any modern, as distinguished from any pre-modern, notion of tolerance is umbilically tied to a political culture of rights, individual and collective, which itself is a post-Enlightenment, modern development. No equivalent 'culture of rights' as ever existed anywhere in the past.

This 'inheritance' approach to nationalism in the hands of Hindutva acolytes insists on there being a cultural essence – in this case 'Hinduness' as interpreted by them — which must then be recognized, appreciated and strengthened. For it is on this foundation of 'cultural strength' that a strong nation can be erected. And for this the unity of Hindus is paramount. Furthermore, as Savarkar sloganized during World War II, 'Hinduize all politics and militarize Hindudom'. [74] But one can try and unite Hindus in only two ways. One way is to try and find a principle of ideological unity internal to Hinduism and organize around that. The only possible candidate for this is a loose and accommodating Brahminism. But given the cultural-emotional-material ballasts that Brahminism provides to the caste system, one can only go so far in this desired unification process. Greater prospects of success in this project of creating Hindu unity are deemed to come from finding and then organizing around a principle of unification that is external to Hinduism, i.e., to postulate a 'common enemy for *all* Hindus'. Here the 'best' candidate for villainy, given the Hindutva construction of Indian history, is Muslims and Islam.

Thus the political project of Hindutva is by its very nature anti-secular, anti-democratic and viciously communal. The cultivation of deliberately constructed grievances so as to arouse collective Hindu anger, fear and even hatred then requires militant and aggressive posturing and mobilizing around a) presumed iniquities of the historical past requiring rectification, symbolic or otherwise e.g., the Babri-Masjid – Ram Janamabhoomi issue; b) contemporary issues of presumed 'bias/partiality/favouritism' by the state e.g., Article 370 or Muslim Personal Law; c) presumed threats to the existence of the Hindu family and ways of life e.g., 'love jihads' by young Muslim males; d) mortal dangers represented by Indian Muslims who are guilty by virtue of mere religious

identity of sympathy for or association with Pakistan based terrorists, and are constituted as an actual or potential fifth column for them, and the Pakistan state.

Minority communalist politics and projects are morally speaking, equally reprehensible and must be opposed and fought against. But one must be clear that majority communalism is always more dangerous. One does not merely have in mind the disproportion in terms of deaths and casualties caused in communal riots by whomsoever are responsible – the overwhelming majority of riot victims throughout the history of communal outbreaks in India since independence are Muslims. But it must be understood that the ultimate political logic of minority communalisms is a movement towards separate nationhood while only majority communalism can hope to disguise itself as a form of nationalism and by doing so help to transform Indian society *as a whole* in a much more authoritarian fashion. Given the feedback relationships between all communalism, they all have to be fought against concurrently and with maximum vigour. But the distinctive and more powerful danger represented by Hindu communalism in India must never be minimized.

The second way of understanding nationalism is to see it as an ongoing political project that belongs to the present and future. That is to say, nationalism is what we will make of it! And in a multilingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic society like India, that nationalism must not only be secular but democratic; where secularism is the necessary but not sufficient condition for having a democratic state. So more important than Indian nationalism being secular it has to be democratic. And this means that all the citizens of the country should be able to feel a loyalty to that country and state that is not coerced but freely given. Not, as pointed out earlier, a nationalism that is constructed by supposed descent but by *consent* willingly given. That is to say, there must be *different ways* (and not one uniform or laid down or ‘essential’ way) of being and feeling Indian! This in turn is only possible if all the diverse communities that make up India feel that their respective cultures, languages, religions, etc. are respected; and that their secular needs and interests (as individuals and groups) are addressed with impartiality and fairness. This is why the construction of a truly progressive *secular-democratic nationalism* in India cannot be separated from the larger issue of carrying out a wider transformation of the Indian polity, economy and society.

This unavoidably brings in the issue of capitalism, of its capacities as revealed by the very process of time and what it has and has not achieved nationally and globally. At the heart of this text lies a simple enough, though difficult to achieve, injunction — that the pursuit of a capitalist transcending socialism is now more necessary than ever before! Rosa Luxemburg had it right all along when she declared that the choice before us was ‘Socialism or Barbarism’. And by barbarism she meant, not the collapse, but the continuity of capitalism itself!

**Achin Vanaik**

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## Footnotes

[1] Perennialist – Joshua Fishman, *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays*, Rowley, MA, 1972. Primordialist – Steven Grosby, *Nationalism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2005. Ethno-Symbolist – Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism*, Oxford, 2001; and *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalisms*, London, 1998.

[2] Organic nationalism sees the nation as an organism stamped by a fixed and indelible character because of some decisive cultural attribute that permanently marks its members by

birth into that nation, for example, a unique German Volk spirit or the essential Hindu-ness of India. Philosophically, this understanding emerged really from the German Romantic tradition. According to this approach, nations are a) natural entities; b) each having a distinctive cultural essence; c) of ancient origin; d) the members of the nation may for various reasons lose consciousness of this uniqueness or have 'slumbered' for too long and need to be 're-awakened'; e) the bonds binding the members are primordial and present for all even if in variable degrees of awareness and strength and these very bonds — formed by religion, language, custom, conventions, blood, extended kinship, common beliefs and values, etc. among all — is what makes that nation what it is.

[3] Grosby, *Nationalism*, p.14.

[4] Ibid, p.10.

[5] Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.6.

[6] Bernard Yack, *Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of Community*, Chicago, 2012; pp.69 and 91

[7] Zygmunt Bauman, *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, Oxford, 1992; p.4.

[8] Yack (*Nationalism and the Moral Psychology*) tries to defend the claim that the nation, like the ethnie, is above all a cultural entity of old, by separating the notion of the 'people' from the nation. The former is said to be connected to the state as a political entity while the nation need not be. So popular sovereignty or the 'people as being sovereign' is a modern development certainly, but is an attribute of the state only. Not only is this unconvincing in its own right, it cannot also help explain why even as a cultural entity, nationalism and national loyalty is so much more powerful (because of this political dimension) than other cultural group loyalties. Furthermore, Yack's cultural bias would make every multi-ethnic or poly-ethnic society e.g., the US, Australia, Canada and many European countries undergoing ethnic re-composition through migration, a multi-national society

[9] See Neil Davidson, *Nation-States, Consciousness and Competition*, Chicago, 2016; p.4.

[10] See Charles Taylor, 'Nationalism and Modernity' in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York, 1999.

[11] John Breuilly, 'Reflections on Nationalism' in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol.15, 1985; pp.74 and 75.

[12] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge, 1990. Hobsbawm, unlike Ben Anderson, did not wish to make the subjective dimension his starting point because of his unease with endorsing a voluntarism whereby if enough people in say, an island, want to form a nation they could. Nationalism which precedes the nation should be put under the microscope and anyway belonged to the era of the rising bourgeoisie. Nationalisms emerging in the last quarter of the twentieth century were atavisms - the breakup of ex-USSR and of ex-Yugoslavia — were not welcomed by him as representing progressive advances. Hobsbawm never abandoned his critical loyalty but loyalty nonetheless to the Soviet Union nor did he ever come to proper terms with Stalinism and was insufficiently critical of the Soviet experience even with respect to the nationalities question. After the collapse of the USSR he gave up on the possibility of a capitalist transcending socialism, or in his words 'I am not surprised to find myself once again

among a generation that distrusts capitalism, though it no longer believes in our alternative to it.' E. Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life*, London, 2002; p.414.

[13] Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism*, London, 1997.

[14] Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p.5.

[15] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London, 1960, and his *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, London, 1971.

[16] Breuilly, 'Approaches to Nationalism' in G. Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, London, 1996; p.154. In a more recent piece (Breuilly, 'Nationalism as Global History' in Dapne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou, *Nationalism and Globalisation: Conflicting or Complementary?* London, 2011) he argues that globalization came first then nationalism whose emergence was shaped by prior globalization. Given his view that nationalism is above all political, he naturally sees the spread of nationalism as taking place in five periods each having a distinct political character, namely the period of Anglo-French conflict 1750-1815; British hegemony 1815-1889; global imperial conflict 1880-1914; Cold War; Post-1990. For a very different and much more convincing characterization of the different waves of nation-state formation, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1991 where there is first the creole or settler nationalisms of the Americas, the linguistic nationalisms of Europe, then those following the break-up of the Austro-Hapsburg, Ottoman and Tsarist empires, then the anti-colonial nationalisms of the 'third world'. Moreover Anderson was prescient in suggesting that national rivalries between 'socialist regimes' could break the socialist bloc along nationalist lines.

[17] Kai Nielsen, 'Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic' in Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York, 1999; p.127.

[18] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1991, p.6.

[19] If not in these word, this was nonetheless the gravamen of the argument put forward by Hans Kohn in his *The Idea of Nationalism*, New York, 1944; pp.15-19.

[20] Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth*, Cambridge Mass. 2003 and her *Nationalism and the Mind*, Oxford, 2006.

[21] Neil Davidson, *Nation-States: Consciousness and Competition*, Chicago, 2016.

[22] See Chapter 4 on 'Modern Social Imaginaries' in C. Taylor's, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge Mass. 2007.

[23] Taylor, 'Nationalism and Modernity', pp. 236 and 237.

[24] Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism*, p. 24.

[25] Greenfeld, *Nationalism and the Mind*, p.94.

[26] *Ibid*, p.214.

[27] *Ibid*, p.213.

[28] Ibid, p.222

[29] Ibid, pp. 215 and 216. Also, see Taylor, the chapter on 'The Malaises of Modernity' in *A Secular Age*, 2007.

[30] For a more detailed treatment of the issue of social order and its possible sources which is also critical of what can be called the 'cultural programming of society' see Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity, Secularization*, London, 1997 especially the sub-section on 'Culture and Society: The Problem of Order', pp.82-94.

[31] Mike Davis, 'Marx's Lost Theory' in *New Left Review* II/93, May-June 2015; p.46.

[32] See Gopal Balakrishnan, *Antagonistics*, London, 2009; pp.170-176, where he says Anderson underestimates the importance of the fact that national preservation requires willingness and preparations for the possibility of war, making the nation a community of destiny or fate for its members who will be called upon when necessary for their ultimate self-sacrifice. Breuilly suggests that most theories of nationalism are too 'internalist' ignoring that globalization comes first, then nationalism ((see footnote 16). Actually, it is capitalism which promotes both globalization and nationalism but connecting nationalism to the transnational order is necessary. Perry Anderson, the elder brother of Benedict, provides an acute survey of the changing forms of the couplet of nationalism-internationalism over seven phases of modern history, i.e., the last 275 years. See P. Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary' in *New Left Review* II/14, March-April 2002

[33] See T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philpin, *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Delhi, 2005 and Ellen Meiksens Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*, London, 2002

[34] Davidson, *Nation-States*, Preface, p.xi.

[35] Marx — 'National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing.....supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still further.' Marx and Engels, *Collected Works: 1845-48*, vol.6, London, 1976; p.503. Engels – 'The great mass of proletarians are, by their very nature, free from national prejudices....' Ibid. P.6.

[36] According to Roman Rosdolsky, this M & E view of historically immutable peoples was reflective of the continuing influence of Hegelian thinking where this German philosopher believed that world history progressed through a 'dialectic of several national minds' where some nations/nationalities which had already established powerful states had developed the necessary intellectual and spiritual capacities to progress as contrasted to other nations/nationalities that were doomed to disappear. R. Rosdolsky, 'Engels and the Nonhistoric Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848' in *Critique* 18-19, 1986; p.130.

[37] Most Marxists of the past and present treat the nation and nationality as synonymous terms. Classical Marxists of the past treated the nation or nationality as a culturally given entity abstracting from its political character. Of course in more recent times especially from the mid-twentieth century onwards, nationality has also developed a legal status and means that one is a citizen belonging to a particular state and therefore has the rights afforded by that state to its citizens. But nation and nationality are still treated as equivalent terms when it comes to identifying a distinct cultural-political entity.

[38] To Lenin belongs the honour of decisively aligning the socialist cause to the anti-colonial



cause

[39] See Mike Davis's, 'Marx's Lost Theory', 2015. This idea of the worker-peasant alliance being a revolutionary force if under working class leadership would later be taken up by Lenin in his pre-1917 argument for carrying out the bourgeois stage of revolution in Russia; and by Trotsky for carrying out the permanent revolution i.e., making the socialist revolution in Russia.

[40] Bauer - 'The nation is the totality of men bound together through a common destiny into a community of character.' See Ronaldo Munck, *The Difficult Dialogue: Marxism and Nationalism*, Delhi, 1986; p.39.

[41] Both with respect to nationalism and normative questions, later Marxists would learn from the Liberal tradition. There obviously are absolute or near-absolute rights because there are moral universals and there is moral learning across cultures and societies, e.g., no torture of children!

[42] After the Russian Revolution when it came to the demands of some of the nationalities to self-determination Lenin behaved ambivalently and prioritized 'socialist unity' over democratic rights

[43] See his a) 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination', June 1914 in Lenin: *Selected Works*, Vol.1, Moscow, 1975 (Revised); pp.567-618. b) 'Preliminary Draft Thesis on the National Question for Second Congress of the Communist International', June 14, 1920 in Lenin: *Selected Works*, Vol.3, Moscow, 1975 (Revised); pp.372-378. c) 'Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions', August 7, 1920 in *Ibid*, pp.405-409. d) 'The Question of Nationalities or "Autonomization"', December 31, 1922 in *Ibid*, pp.687-692.

[44] Lenin: *Selected Works*, Vol.3; p.373.

[45] Lenin was against pan-Islamism which he said, combined national liberation with promoting mullahs, landowners and other sections of the oppressing classes.

[46] In practice this would mean non-discrimination and having vernacular schools and courts.

[47] For two useful surveys of the differences between Lenin and Stalin, and of the post-1917 Soviet experience with regard to the nationalities question, see Horace B. Davis, *Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism*, New York/London, 1978, chapters 3 and 4; and R. Munck, *The Difficult Dialogue*, chapters 4 and 7

[48] See Vasant Kaiwar, 'The Aryan Model of History and the Oriental Renaissance' in Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar (eds.), *Antinomies of History: Essays on Race, Orient, Nation*, Durham/London, 2003; p.46.

[49] Joseph Stalin, 'Marxism and the National Question' - Marxists Internet Archive; [www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm)

[50] Munck, *The Difficult Dialogue*, p.81.

[51] Ronald Suny, 'Incomplete Revolution: National Movements and the Collapse of the Soviet Empire' in *New Left Review* 189, Sept.-Oct. 1991

[52] After the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, these Baltic republics were forcibly brought into the fold of the USSR in 1940 and would remain so until the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 when they once again became independent countries

[53] Munck, *The Difficult Dialogue*, p.127.

[54] See Davis, *Towards a Marxist Theory of Nationalism*, pp.91-92.

[55] Suny, 'Incomplete Revolution'.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] One of the foremost proponents of the emergence of a 'transnational capitalist class' (TCC) is William J. Robinson. See his *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class and State in a Transnational World*, Baltimore, 2004; 'Beyond the theory of imperialism: global capitalism and the transnational state' in Alexander Anievas (ed.) *Marxism and World Politics: Contesting Global Capitalism*, London/New York, 2010.

[58] Two valuable surveys about the debate among Marxists on this score are Anievas, *Marxism and World Politics* and chapter 7 on 'The Necessity of Multiple Nation-States for Capital' in Davidson, *Nation-States*; pp.187-246.

The clearest exposition of this 'connected duality' appears in Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations*, London, 1994.

[59] The clearest exposition of this 'connected duality' appears in Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations*, London, 1994.

[60] The foremost Marxist advocates for this view are Benno Teschke and Hannes Lacher. See their 'The changing "logic" of capitalist competition' in Anievas, *Marxism and World Politics*.

[61] Reference has already been made in Section 1 on Nations and Nationalism about how, in the context of an historical decline in other kinds of social adhesives, nationalism has stepped in to try and provide psychic compensation, social cohesion, and to mobilize ground support for 'our' rulers against 'theirs' – a triple salve as it were.

[62] Fred Block, 'The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State' in his *Revising State Theory: Essays in Politics and Postindustrialization*, Philadelphia, 1987

[63] The overwhelming majority of today's TNCs are not multi-national in their ownership patterns; and they generally have their key departments of financial and overall control and R& D located in their home rather than host countries.

[64] See once again, Perry Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary', 2002.

[65] Simon Bromley, 'Politics and the international' in Anievas, *Marxism and World Politics*.

[66] Foucauldians ignore the fact that force is a special kind of power and therefore that the state is a very special and concentrated source of power because they don't sufficiently distinguish force from coercion.

[67] *Ibid.*, p.234.

[68] Achieving such a sanction from the SC does not automatically mean the military intervention is morally or politically justified. One of the five permanent members (most usually the US) can in pursuit of its national interest secure such a sanction for intervention through manipulation of SC voting members through use of the stick and carrot

[69] For a detailed account of the construction of post-Cold War ideological banners and the cover they have provided for Western intervention abroad, see Achin Vanaik (ed.), *Masks of Empire*, New Delhi, 2007. The overarching ideological banner of the Cold War era under which Western powers justified their imperialist behavior, was 'Protecting the Free World from the Communist Threat'. Soviet and Chinese expansionism was by contrast much less but also to be condemned. The new banners after the Collapse of Communism are a) Humanitarian Intervention; b) Regime Change in the Name of Democracy; c) Global War on Terror; d) WMDs in the 'Wrong Hands'; e) Failed States; f) War on Drugs. Each of these has been given separate chapter treatments. For how the UN itself has been suborned in various ways including introducing the new doctrine of 'Responsibility to Protect' see the chapter by Marianno Aguirre, 'Humanitarian Intervention and US Hegemony: A Reconceptualization'. See also the indictment of the general history of the UN's political system - the SC and UNGA - and of the record of Kofi Annan in particular, by Perry Anderson's, 'Our Man' in the *London Review of Books*, 10 May 2007.

[70] The purposes of the UN as identified in Article 1(3) is 'To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.' Article 55 - The UN shall promote 'universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.' Article 56 is a supplement enjoining UN members to cooperate in securing the aims of Article 55

[71] Michael Walzer has argued for what he calls 'justice in endings' i.e., that a case can be made for an intervener to stay on after the war to ensure justice i.e., that there can and should be 'regime change in the name of democracy' even if the original intervention against an authoritarian regime e.g., as in Iraq in 2003 might be deemed unjustified. See, M. Walzer, 'the Aftermath of War' in Eric Patterson (ed.), *Ethics Beyond War's End*, Georgetown, 2012.

[72] In this regard see the classic study by Lawrence Lifschultz, *Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution*, London 1979 which uncovers the hidden stories of not just Pakistani but also of US and Indian machinations behind the scenes.

[73] Additional reservations might refer to the need to set up a truly international and impartial body not beholden to any country or group of countries, nor acting on their behalf or behest, nor under their control but acting on truly humanitarian grounds. If such a body was ever set up (the UN given its decision-making structure where the SC rather than the General Assembly is more important, certainly does not qualify for being or ever becoming such a body) then forcible humanitarian intervention would gain wider and greater acceptance among states and peoples. But the principle of respecting the freedom of agency of a people still remains crucial

[74] See Vasant Kaiwar, 'The Aryan Model of History and the Oriental Renaissance' in Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar (eds.), *Antinomies of History: Essays on Race, Orient, Nation*, Durham/London, 2003; p.46.