

# Benedict Anderson on 'mapping the terrain' of nationalism

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**"Nationalism has been 'around' on the face of the globe for, at the very least, two centuries. Long enough, one might think, for it to be reliably and generally understood. But it is hard to think of any political phenomenon which remains so puzzling and about which there is less analytic consensus" – in this essay, taken from the Introduction to [Mapping the Nation](#), Benedict Anderson makes sense of some of the difficulties in 'mapping the terrain' of nationalism, as well as looking at theorists (including feminist scholarship) who have brought new meaning to this important area of political study.**

*Benedict Anderson's ground-breaking study of nationalism, [Imagined Communities](#), is out this week in a new edition, and available at a [40% discount through Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>](#).*

There is no disagreement that nationalism has been 'around' on the face of the globe for, at the very least, two centuries. Long enough, one might think, for it to be reliably and generally understood. But it is hard to think of any political phenomenon which remains so puzzling and about which there is less analytic consensus. No widely accepted definition exists. No one has been able to demonstrate decisively either its modernity or its antiquity. Disagreement over its origins is matched by uncertainty about its future. Its global spread is read through the malignant metaphor of metastasis as well as under the smiling signs of identity and emancipation; and where did these processes begin – in the New World or the Old? Today, it is possible to ask a new kind of question – 'how masculine is it?' – without there being any obvious best answer. How is its universality to be reconciled with its necessary concrete particularity? What discipline helps inquiry the most profoundly: history, psychology, political economy, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, literary criticism, or . . .? To add to the unease: given what seems today the vast role that nationalism has played over two centuries of world-politics, why have so many seminal thinkers of modernity – Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Durkheim, Benjamin, Freud, Levi-Strauss, Keynes, Gramsci, Foucault – had so little to say about it?

All these uncertainties mean that any anthology 'mapping the terrain' of nationalism finds the authors more often with their backs to one another, staring out at different, obscure horizons, than engaged in orderly hand-to-hand combat. Hence any brief introduction can only adumbrate some general contours.

The philosophical difficulties have been there all along. The Herder who famously wrote that 'Denn jedes Volk ist Volk; es hat seine National Bildung wie seine Sprache' was positioned to insist on the uniqueness of every people/Volk only as the author of a vast four-volume universal history entitled *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. From the Enlightenment on up to very recent times the axiomatic frames in which the great European thinkers thought were universal – so to speak, *Menschheit* and/or *Weltgeschichte*. Hegel spent his whole industrious life along the little 500-mile axis between Stuttgart and Berlin, but three and a half centuries of print-capitalism in the post-Renaissance age of European expansion seemed quite naturally to bring all antiquities and all

contemporary societies into his library for perusal, reflection and theoretical synthesis. In the age that was launched with the (not yet French) Revolution, all the key concepts were understood globally -progress, liberalism, socialism, republicanism, democracy, even conservatism, legitimacy and later fascism. Curiously enough, nationalism too, so that when the time was ripe no one thought there was anything strange about a 'League of Nations', and Lloyd George could nonchalantly describe Mazzini as the Father of this international organization. Nor did this kind of thinking stay confined to Europe. When, at the end of the 1980s, the great contemporary Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer published his vast historical tetralogy on the origins of Indonesian nationalism, he could happily describe his hero as *anak semua bangsa* - child of all nations. Meanwhile, in the intervening half-century, across the globe, millions of people had sacrificed their lives for their nations' sakes. It was gradually becoming clear that it was impossible to think about nationalism except comparatively and globally: but it was also very difficult to feel it, and act politically on it, in any but particular terms.

This disjuncture, and the theoretical stumble that it causes, helps to explain some of the history of serious thinking about nationalism, its hiatuses and bursts of energy. During the long century of conservative intra-European peace (1815-1914) only occasionally, and to a few, did nationalism give much theoretical anxiety and the occasions are instructive. The present collection opens with two of the most intelligent of these interventions.

In the 1860s, at the height of British imperial power - but also after the Europe-wide upheaval of 1848, the revolutions led by Mazzini and Garibaldi against the Papacy and the Kingdom of Naples, the rise of the Fenians in Ireland and America, and the nationalist Juárez's successful checkmating of Archduke Maximilian's attempt to establish a Habsburg dynasty in Mexico City - the Naples-born Lord Acton (subsequently the first Catholic Regius Professor of History at Oxford), sounded the alarm bells. Enlightened defender of the universal principle of Legitimacy, he observed that what he called 'nationality' was of three subversive modern ideas the one 'most attractive at the present time, and the richest in promise of future power.' [1] In his view, 'those states are substantially the most perfect which, like the British and Austrian empires, include various distinct nationalities without oppressing them', because 'inferior races are raised by living in political union with races intellectually superior' and '[e]xhausted and decaying nations are revived by the contact of a younger vitality'. Against John Stuart Mill's claim in *Considerations on Representative Government* that 'it is, in general, a necessary condition of free institutions, that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities', Acton argued that this conception was a pernicious residue of the French Revolution, a variant on the general 'modern' tendency to found the State on speculative, abstract, monistic ideas (including, he noted sarcastically, the greatest happiness of the greatest number). Any such tendency inevitably led to revolutionary and absolutist politics and destroyed limited government and the pluralistic bases of true liberty. One can scarcely doubt that Acton would have regarded the murderous demise of former Yugoslavia in the name of 'ethnic cleansing' as confirmation of his worst forebodings, and that he would have looked with prophetic satisfaction at the emergence of the conservative European Community.

As the Great War loomed on the horizon, Otto Bauer, defender of universal socialism, and regular lecturer at Vienna's *Arbeiterschule*, penned a huge comparative tome which sought to show theoretically that, rightly understood, socialism and nationalism were perfectly compatible, and, practically, that the nationalist conflicts threatening the existence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire could be productively transcended in a projected supranational, socialist, *Vereinigten Staaten von Gross-Oesterreich* (VSGO) [2] (It is astonishing that in the ninety years that have passed since its initial publication, his influential magnum opus, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, has never been translated into English; hence the special importance to be attached to the substantial excerpts included in the present collection.) Against all reactionary ideas of the 'eternal

*Volksgeist*' type - which, for example, had encouraged the nineteenth-century transformation of Tacitus' virtuous hero Arminius into the grotesque, gigantic 'Hermann'-*denkmal* in the Black Forest - he argued that nations were products of history, and built on centuries of social and sexual intermingling of different groups. Germans were a random mix of Slavs, Celts and Teutons, and early-twentieth-century Germans had far more in common with, and much more to learn from, contemporary French and Italians than they did with and from the subjects of the Holy Roman Empire. He went on, in a vein which partly foreshadowed the ideas of Ernest Gellner (see below), that the nation was a product of the Great Transformation, which dissolved all ancient, isolated communities into modern industrial societies, which require a solidarity based on an abstract, literacy-based high culture. Writing passionately on the basis of his experience at the *Arbeiterschule*, he argued that the brutality of capitalism had not only torn workers from their local peasant cultures, but had also deprived them of entry into these largely upper- and middle-class-created national cultures, through the exhausted, immiserated ignorance to which the factory system kept them chained. It was thus socialism's historic task to help them break out of this darkness into Enlightenment. At the same time, Bauer contested the idea, then held by many on the Left, that the victory of socialism would create a sort of flat, uniform cosmopolitanism. Distinguishing sharply between commonality and similarity, he stated that all modern nations experienced, for example, industrial capitalism in similar ways, but they did not experience it in common. Commonality, cutting across class lines, linked specific groups by what he called 'community of destiny', read not quasi-metaphysically as ancient doom, but as shared will towards the future. This will, subject to constant change in the real struggle for life, was precipitated through shared language and habits of everyday life, shared culture, and, eventually, shared political institutions, into what he called national character. [3]

Nothing could be more striking than Bauer's position in relation to Acton's and to the theses so forcefully propounded by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* half a century earlier. Both Acton and Bauer wished to disconnect nationality from the state. The conservative Neapolitan Englishman saw nations (ahistorically and largely a-culturally) as 'merely natural', and thus requiring the imposition of an ethical Legitimist state above them; Habsburg rule was thus the threatened dike against the nihilist forces of modernity. Bauer, on the other hand, understood both nations and states as historically formed, but with national character and culture rather than the state as sources of value. The importance of the Habsburg Empire was thus that it formed a contingent historical shell of practices and institutions out of which a socialist federation of nationalities would emerge - on the road towards the eventual withering away of all states. Conversely, against the *Manifesto*'s view of the capitalist world market dissolving all national cultures, Bauer believed that progressive social development was increasing the density of contact between members of particular cultures, raising the level of those cultures, and promoting differentiation of human personalities; the function of socialism was not to counteract these tendencies but to spread the standardization of material life at the most advanced levels which capitalism had originally set in motion. (Thus only the bourgeois saw the nation under the sign of State Power.)

After 1918, everything seemed to change abruptly. The collapse of the Hohenzollern, Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires ended the legitimacy of Legitimacy, and put paid to the dream of a United States of Greater Austria. Out of the peripheral debris emerged a welter of small, weak, mostly agrarian national states in Central and Eastern Europe, and a congeries of colonies and protectorates in the Near East. Even the victorious United Kingdom soon lost most of Ireland, while its German royal family naturalized itself as Windsors. The formation of the League of Nations, at which even the remaining imperial powers masqueraded as simple nations, seemed to create a new universal legitimacy.

But the truly decisive event was the ascent of the Bolsheviks to power in Petrograd, and their astonishing success in creating a stable anticapitalist order over much of tsardom's former domains. For although it eventually joined the League, the young, solitary Soviet Union did not regard itself as a nation-state, nor, on the whole, did its many enemies think of it as such. In the eyes of many, it seemed to have achieved something like Bauer's dream, transcending the problem of nationalism by formal recognition of the terrains and cultures of its major nationalities while subordinating them fully to a universal project. It was precisely this project that attracted the loyalties of millions of people scattered over most parts of the globe. Against Bolshevism were raised two rivalrous, countervailing universalisms: capitalist democracy/the 'West' on the one hand, and fascism on the other. While there is no denying that at the local level fascism exploited nationalism, it is essential to recognize its world-wide appeal as a supranational force against 'world-wide' Jewry, Bolshevism, liberalism, and so forth. Hence it was that the most important studies of nationalism in the interwar years, done by Hans Kohn, Carlton Hayes and their students, were structured by the binary, universal opposition between 'good' (Western/democratic) and 'bad' (Eastern/authoritarian/fascist). [4] No matter that the good European capital cities of London, Paris and The Hague were the centres of vast extra-European imperial autocracies.

The destruction of Europe's fascist regimes, as well as that of militarist Japan, did not profoundly change the post-1918 picture. In spite of the fact that the Soviet Union became a part of the United Nations, which the United States now also joined, world-politics in the Cold War era were widely understood in supranational terms. True, Stalin decided against incorporating the parts of East and Central Europe he controlled into the Soviet Union, so that for the first time communist states appeared which were explicitly national in status; but these states were small and weak, and understood as minor, subordinate allies of the core. [5] (Until the late 1950s even vast China was widely thought of in this way.) On the other hand, the United States, which completely dominated Western Europe, was also seen, world-historically, less as a nation-state than as the domineering centre of a global anti-communist coalition. The emancipation of the European colonies in Asia and Africa, between 1945 and 1975, did not for a considerable time alter these conditions, as these new nation-states were, like the new European nation-states of the interwar years, mostly weak, poor, agrarian, and rent by internal conflicts, many of which were read and manipulated along the prevailing world-axis.

The era in which we now live probably begins, at least symbolically, in the 1960s, signalled by the global reverberations of nationalism in two small, poor and peripheral states. Tiny Vietnam's heroic struggle against the colossal United States, graphically pictured round the world through the new medium of television, helped precipitate, as no other 'peripheral' nationalism had done, convulsions not only in America, but in France, Germany, Japan, and elsewhere, making 1968 a sort of 1848-style *annus mirabilis*. At the same time, Brezhnev's tanks brutally destroyed the nationalist Spring in communist-ruled Czechoslovakia, with comparable long-term consequences for the Soviet project. The same decade saw the rise in the United States: first of the Civil Rights movement, followed by a Black Nationalism which soon crossed national boundaries; the beginnings of a new-style feminist movement with increasingly global reach; the Stonewall Riot, which began the first-ever transcontinental movement for the emancipation of gays and lesbians - Queer Nation, for the nonce. In Old Europe too, the development of the supranational Community went hand in hand with the emergence of militant nationalisms against established nation-states - Northern Ireland, Scotland, Belgium, Catalonia, the Basque lands, and so on. [6] By the second half of the 1980s the Soviet Union was on its last legs, leaving what remains of twentieth-century communism to the rattled heirs of Deng Xiaoping. Meanwhile Japan, representing neither to itself nor to the outside world any universal project, had become the planet's second most powerful national economy - if it makes sense any longer to speak in such terms. It is hard to think of any previous era when so much changed politically, so rapidly, and in so many places; or in which there was so much uncertainty

about the future.

But there is another transformation taking place, more quietly, but with enormous implications for what may be to come. Living, on the whole, the quiet life in eighteenth-century Königsberg, Kant could imagine commerce as the benign global force that would one day lead to Perpetual Peace among the Nations. (Meanwhile, that same 'commerce' was hauling millions of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic.) He could do so because industrial capitalism was only just beginning to appear on his horizon, the huge westward migrations from continental Europe had yet seriously to commence, and the railway was as yet undreamed of. Hegel, younger, more familiar with the work of Adam Smith, and with better prophetic instincts, was alarmed early on by the social and political implications of the economic revolution getting under way, and among the purposes of his modern state were precisely the containment and domestication of the anomic forces that the market was beginning to unleash. By the next generation, List was thinking seriously about the kind of political changes that would be needed consciously to realign early capitalism with the modern state, in the form of national economies large enough to create enough power to sustain and police their frontiers. Even Marx, who understood better than anyone else the revolutionary global dynamic of capitalism, was not entirely immune to Listian assumptions. In the famous claim that 'The proletariat of each country, must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie', we can be sure that these 'countries' were of the Listian type, rather than little Switzerland, Belgium or Portugal.

As late at least as the founding of the League of Nations, the conception of 'national economy' was generally accepted, and certainly underlay the whole doctrine of self-determination; it received its first undeniably deadly blow only with the World Depression, which struck all nations simultaneously, and which no raising of tariff walls seriously alleviated. National economy, however, also implied a certain geographical immobility of labour, and a certain boundedness to the communications systems underpinning it. (It is striking that the huge labour flows organized outside Europe within the colonial empires were then paid scant theoretical attention.) The very idea that the map of Europe could and should be drastically redrawn to provide more self-determination assumed that, say, Poles would henceforth stay put in Poland, reading Polish newspapers, participating in Polish politics, and building a Polish economy. Large sections of the organized Left accepted this frame of reference, not least because, the infant Soviet Union aside, experience seemed to have shown that the most significant long-term gains for the working class were achieved less on the factory floor than in *national* parliaments and through parliamentary legislation. Hence it was that, quite innocently and even unselfconsciously, the term '*national*-ization' was widely used to describe the actual or planned removal of sectors of the economy from the control of private property: it was, so to speak, a synonym of socialization. By then, however, the age of Ford, the automobile, radio and even aviation had arrived.

After the colossal devastation caused by the Second World War, it took a little time for these forces to make themselves fully manifest. The military successes of the Red Army brought Soviet power deep into the centre of Europe, and in Asia the most populous country on the planet, in Chinese Communist Party (CCP) hands, passed out of the reach of the market. For political reasons, too, the state economies of the two communist-ruled giants resolutely prohibited the movement of labour outside their productive spheres. Capitalist Western Europe found it impossible to retain its extra-European empires. Common political and economic weaknesses did for it something of what they had done for the small German and Italian statelets in the mid nineteenth century. In this light one can read the subsequent formation of the European Community as Listianism updated for the era of late capitalism. In the newly independent ex-colonies of Asia and, later, Africa, the assumptions of 1918 came into their own under the sign, among others, of 'nationalization'.

But by the 1970s and early 1980s, the dikes against the full force of late capitalism seemed to be crumbling through processes with which we are all familiar. Huge migrations from impoverished ex-

colonial states into the rich capitalist cores got under way, first into Western Europe, the United States, and the former Dominions, at first, more recently into Japan, the oil-rich Middle East, and the newly industrialized countries (NICs) of East and South-East Asia. Stalin's and Mao's 'Continental System' began leaking badly, and eventually collapsed. The electronic revolution created communications systems that escaped the control even of the most powerful national states, permitting movement of finance capital on a scale and at a speed unimaginable even thirty years earlier. Transnational systems of production came into increasing dominance, and old-style Fordism began to give way to decentralized, out-of-country production systems and sophisticated, highly flexible niche-marketing. (One of the melancholy early indications of this was the global drug-business which burst on the scene in the 1960s and seems still uncontrollable.) Cheap and fast transportation made completely unprecedented world-wide population movements possible, no matter what late-century labour-*Zollverein* systems were conceived.

As a result of these transformations, nationalism now appears in at least two new guises, and with consequences of which no one can be sure. The first is, of course, the creation of a congeries of weak, economically fragile nation-states out of the debris of the Soviet system, some entirely new, others residues of the settlement of 1918; in either case, from many points of view, three-quarters of a century late. (But it can be argued that these nationalisms are regional-specific and are unlikely to disturb global trends.) The second is the impending crisis of the hyphen that for two hundred years yoked state and nation. In the heyday of this hyphen, when nationalist movements dreamed of achieving their own states, these states were believed capable of providing prosperity, welfare and security, as well as pride and international recognition. On the other hand, these states were hypothetically guaranteed the obedience and undivided loyalty of most of those viewing themselves as members of the nation. Nothing can be less certain than the long-term survival of these assumptions. Portable nationality, read under the sign of 'identity', is on the rapid rise as people everywhere are on the move.

Up until the eve of the Second World War, the rate of change in military technology was sufficiently ambling, and the costs of militaries were sufficiently modest that a reasonable number of nation-states felt they could be, even had to be, at some level competitive. (It was then still possible for Japan to come out of feudal nowhere to build a better fighter-plane than Ford's United States.) The great institutional innovation of the French revolutionaries and their Prussian antagonists - the mass conscript army - was still normal. Mass (male) citizen participation in national defence was a vital element in keeping the hyphen steadily in place. Almost all of this is now gone. Serious military innovation is affordable by only a tiny percentage of the world's two hundred or so nation-states, and the others tag along as small-game pirates, oligopolized consumers, or scavengers on the disorderly bargain-basement world-market. (It is reported, for example, that there are significant areas in the far west of China where the People's Liberation Army (PLA) cannot operate freely in the face of local warlords heavily armed with ex-Soviet munitions.) Technology has made the conscript army obsolete. States incapable of militarily defending their citizens, and hard put to ensure them employment and ever-better life-chances, may busy themselves with policing women's bodies and schoolchildren's curricula, but is this kind of thing enough over the long term to sustain the grand demands of sovereignty?

A final contextual consideration: up until 1945, political, social and economic conflicts, no matter how arduous, took place within a framework that one could only half-ruefully call utopian. On the Left it was possible, of course, to imagine a day when capitalism would be overcome and superseded. But even on the Right, destroying Bolshevism, or Jewry, had a plausible allure. The opening of the atomic age really ended this era. One might put it this way: by the 1960s, Washington really had the possibility of destroying Bolshevism in a few hours, and Moscow really had the capability of eliminating existing capitalism just as quickly. The negative millennium had for the first

historical moment come into view. In the intervening years, to planetary atomic death have been added other kinds of global *memento mori* – depletion of the ozone layer, declining biodiversity, steepening demographic immiseration, epidemics such as AIDS.

If one recalls the political circumstances of Acton's and Bauer's historic interventions, one should not be too surprised that the post-1960s period has seen an explosion of sophisticated writing about nationalism. This is one reason why, after theirs, all the texts in this volume were composed in the last decade, and why they represent very different standpoints and concerns. Virtually all the authors are, or were, distinguished intellectuals, whose works are widely admired, so that it would be presumptuous to claim to 'introduce' them. But it may be useful to situate them against the landscape that I have sketched out above.

It could be said, without stretching the point too far, that the detonators were two Czechs of the generation born before the Second World War and the atomic age, one working in Prague and the other, for much of the time, in London. The greatly missed Ernest Gellner already in the middle 1960s began the elaboration of his influential and iconoclastic theory that nationalism is at bottom nothing more (or less) than a necessary and thoroughly functional response to the Great Transformation from static agrarian society to the world of industry and mechanical communication. It involved the spread of standardized 'high cultures' (masquerading as ur-national), instituted through vast state-arranged and state-financed educational systems to prepare people to survive under conditions in which the division of labour and social mobility were highly advanced. In the Euro-cosmopolitan spirit of the Enlightenment, Gellner understood nationalism globally, sociologically, from on high, and had little public time for the 'sentimentalities' associated with 'national cultures' (though he was known occasionally to turn to Czech folksongs when in private need of solace). Meanwhile, in Prague, Miroslav Hroch, teaching at Prague's ancient Charles University, published his pathbreaking historical-sociological comparative study of a very particular set of small-country nationalist movements in Central and Eastern Europe – in the era of Dubček's 'communism with a human face', and the violent response to it from Moscow. Perhaps characteristically, given the circumstances, Hroch stressed exactly what Gellner brushed aside – the variability of world-timing among these nationalist movements, as well as their very different social bases and economic circumstances. Furthermore, he insisted, contra Gellner, that nations are real anthropological formations, and that the connections between the rise of nationalism and modern industrial society have been weak and uncertain. We are fortunate in this volume to include not only a trenchant restatement of Hroch's general theses (and some pessimistic thoughts on Eastern Europe's future) but also Gellner's critical response and defence of his own position.

In the early 1970s, the time when Western Europe began to experience, against most previous expectations, nationalist 'revivals' – in Scotland, Belgium, the Basque lands, and perhaps especially in Ireland – Anthony Smith began writing, in a putatively post-imperial London, a long series of increasingly complex works on nationalism and nationality, also in a contra-Gellnerian spirit. While fully conceding that in some important respects nationalism is a modern phenomenon, he insisted that its appeal could not seriously be understood if it was treated functionally, and as arising *ex nihilo*. We include, therefore, a fine brief account of his historically considered argument that nationalism necessarily, and naturally, builds on much older ethnic communities, of which, perhaps not unfortuitously, the prime exemplars are the Armenians and the Jews.

By the 1980s, this cluster of positions came under critical review from a number of directions. We include here two important and contrasting contributions, so to speak, from Manchester and Calcutta. John Breuilly attacked both the sociologism of Gellner and the continuism of Smith by stressing the essentially political character of nationalism. He argued in effect that Gellner could not easily explain how the transition to nationalism actually occurred in 'late agrarian' society, and that Smith had no simple response to the question of why some ethnic communities 'went nationalist'

while others did not, and under precisely what historical circumstances. He therefore laid great stress on the importance of political entrepreneurs, and on the concrete political interests expressed through them in contrasting institutional and geopolitical settings.

On the other hand, Partha Chatterjee, a member of the influential Subaltern Studies collective, attacked Gellner (and many others) by frontally raising the basic question of imperialism and colonial domination. The same 'Enlightened' industrial modernity which in Gellner's view had created nationalism was the basis for Europe's domination of the rest of the globe in the century and a half following the French Revolution. Nationalism had therefore to be understood as part and parcel of that domination. Its appearance in the late colonial world, and afterward, had to be read under the sign of inauthenticity, no matter how local leaders of the type of Nehru, Sukarno, and Nkrumah insisted on its integrity and autonomy. Nationalism was, outside Europe, necessarily a 'derivative discourse', blocking the way for authentic self-generated, autonomous development among communities which remained dominated by self-seeking, ultimately collaborationist 'nationalist' politicians, intellectuals, bureaucrats and capitalists. We include here a recent reformulation of his position, in which the prime target has shifted from Gellner to my book *Imagined Communities*, and in which elite nationalism in Asia and Africa receives a somewhat warmer evaluation than in his previous writing.

If the contributors briefly discussed above were basically concerned with the historical nature, the origins, and the rise, of nationalism, and thus belong in spirit to the era before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the remainder of our texts can be said to face towards the future of nationalism in the new world conjuncture.

The young scholar Gopal Balakrishnan, generationally Gellner's grandson, provides a pivotal linking contribution which begins with observations on the difficulties which Hegel and Marx faced in determining the role played by *particular peoples* in History conceived as a succession of universal social structures before moving on to a nuanced critique of *Imagined Communities*. His essay ends with some compelling reflections on the complex relations between nation and class, as bases of collective agency, in the politics of the advanced capitalist world.

Up until quite recently theoretical writing on nationalism ignored, overlooked, or marginalized the issue of gender. But over the past fifteen years this 'silence' has been irreversibly ended by a vast new corpus of feminist scholarship and theorizing. Two general features of this writing stand out: one is the emphasis on the ambiguity (to say the least) of women's relationships with nationalist projects, and the nexus of the nation-state with particular gender-regimes; the second is the difference between the experience of advanced capitalist societies in the 'West' (broadly conceived) and that of colonial, semi-colonial, and postcolonial worlds of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Sylvia Walby, author of *Theorizing Patriarchy*, focuses primarily on the Western democracies, and is concerned with the way in which the modern nation-state, based on the principles of universal adult suffrage and formal equality before the law, has been transforming the nature of patriarchy from private to public. Access to nationhood and citizenship has undermined the control of individual male household heads over 'their' women, who are no longer excluded from the public sphere; but it has also encouraged the newer subordination of women, and the appropriation of their labour, by a male-dominated national collective. Out of this transformation have emerged new forms of public conflict over nationally legislated control, or attempted control, over women's fertility, 'family' responsibilities, access to 'national/masculine' spheres of employment such as the military, and so on.

The last four contributions move us back towards the European terrain with which this collection opens. A distinguished American cultural anthropologist specializing in, and suffering through, the



Romania of Ceaușescu and his epigones, Katherine Verdery argues that the symbolism of the nation has been shifting its signification as modern states find it increasingly difficult to fulfil the promises of autonomy and wellbeing bequeathed to them as legitimating missions by the nineteenth century. At the same time, and partly for just this reason, the premium on a deeply interiorized, homogeneous identification between nation and person has been rising. Ethnic and racial stereotyping, xenophobia, sectarian 'multiculturalism' and the more brutal forms of identity politics seem to be the wave of the future; yet there is no escaping this development, since 'being born into something as a natural condition will remain fundamental to human experience.

Verdery's cautious pessimism is here powerfully reinforced by Eric Hobsbawm, the most outstanding of living Anglophone historians. Born in the year of the Bolshevik Revolution, growing up in Vienna as Nazism's dark shadow moved across central Europe, he has lived through state-fascism's destruction, and also the collapse of the Soviet Union which largely made that wrecked triumph possible, and for which over many years he had strong, if critical, sympathies. A cosmopolitan Jewish polymath, who nonetheless remains strongly attached to the polyethnic United Kingdom which gave him refuge, he has been the most outspoken critic of the 'new nationalisms' of Europe, arguing that the Mazzinian age in which nationalism was integrative and emancipatory has long passed. He has even famously written that the extraordinary contemporary flood of sophisticated writing on nationalism is the best sign that his diagnosis is correct: Minerva's owl takes flight only at dusk.

At least since the late 1970s, Hobsbawm has been engaged in a sharp but illuminating debate with Tom Nairn, a fellow-Marxist, but also a Scottish nationalist, and the most penetrating critic of the decrepitude of his interlocutor's beloved United Kingdom. It is therefore fitting that this collection includes some recent reflections of the author of *The Breakup of Britain*. Coming from a very different position than that of Partha Chatterjee, Nairn's long-standing criticisms of the imperious pretensions of intellectual cosmopolitanism nonetheless resonate with some of the latter's themes. Here they are combined with an argument that it has been precisely the large 'integrated' multinational states - the huge dynastic realms of the nineteenth century of which the UK is the last limping survivor, as well as twentieth-century Big Germany, the United States, the Soviet Union, crypto-Ch'ing China, and ex-raj India - that have caused the greatest human destruction in our time. Hence what he regards as the general crumbling of a series of World 'Orders' decided by these political Godzillas is to be read as leading towards a more attractive, and more fruitful, anarchic Disorder, in which high nineteenth-century aspirations for total sovereignty make way for a complex interactive community of genuinely postimperial nationalities. He argues that the prime hope for this transformation is the deepening of democracy, of local political participation, and the institutionalization across the globe of a human rights regime.

No one in recent years has done more than the macrosociologist Michael Mann to provide us with a global-historical comparative understanding of the development of modern institutions, most particularly the State. The core of his contribution here is an elegant, acutely detailed disassembling of the myths, black and rosy-fingered, surrounding the European Community. But his observations are embedded within a wider perspective on the mature nation-state, which, with its attendant notions of political and social citizenship, he views as a twentieth-century phenomenon constructed on the basis of prolonged, if compromised, class struggle. His analysis shows why he can quote with such approval an unnamed Belgian cabinet minister, who during the Gulf War, remarked that the Community is 'an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm'. He notes that 'most national politics concern taxes, income policy, welfare policies, moral issues, and foreign crises. These are not perceived to be, and are not, the province of the EC.' And if supranational forces are in some ways reducing the full sovereignty of the nation-state, that same state, he believes, is steadily increasing its power at the expense of provincial, local, and private institutions and groups. Mann also underlines the fact that, despite the extraordinary international mobility of *financial*

capital today, the vast bulk of the nation's production is destined for domestic markets, while 'transnational' corporations have their headquarters and research institutions in decidedly national spaces.

From this he argues that, far from declining, the nation-state is still 'growing' on the world-stage, and that the poor countries of the world suffer from a lack of effective nation-stateness. This lack it is their rightful ambition to overcome, although success may take arduous decades to achieve. Yet, at the same time, he observes that if even the achievements of Swedish social democracy are seriously threatened by 'transnational fiscal conservatism', socialists must 'lift their gaze from inside their own nation-states to exercise power at the international level. . . . The class movement which historically most strengthened the nation-state should now begin to subvert it.'

Jürgen Habermas is surely the most widely influential political philosopher of our time. If Verdery can be read as a cautious and moderate version of Hobsbawm's pessimism, we might here, for the nonce, take Adorno's (and perhaps, oddly enough, Acton's) heir as expressing a quieter partnership with the optimism of Nairn and Mann. Habermas is fully aware of the destructive aspects of the globalization of financial and labour markets, of the development of quasi-permanent underclasses in late-late capitalist societies, and of the impotence of national states in constructively dealing with the many problems whose scale vastly outstrips their territorial reach. He argues, however, that the political innovations of the nineteenth century – above all, the modern republic, participatory democracy, and constitutional politics (all of which Nairn also emphasizes) – need to be extended upwards towards the supranational sphere, rather than spread downward towards hitherto caged nationalities. The European Community, with all its warts, is thus a step in the right direction, not least because it seems bound to enshrine, at some new level, the principle of multiculturalism – not as a congeries of irritable narcissisms, but as a rational integration of local cultural solidarities within, but sharply distinct from, the supra-ethnocultural 'republican' state-idea that was born from the Enlightenment. [7] This stance permits Habermas to speak about the possibility, emerging from the kinds of international meetings held recently on global issues in Geneva, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo and Beijing, of what he calls 'world domestic politics'.

It remains only to add, by way of appreciative postscript, our collective thanks for the imagination (and, in my own case, the fraternal patience and thoughtful suggestions) of Gopal Balakrishnan and Robin Blackburn, who put this collection intelligently together, and of my brother Perry, who, at somewhat longer distance, guided it towards its ultimate form.

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## **Benedict Anderson**

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## **P.S.**

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## Footnotes

[1] The other two were egalitarianism, aimed at the principle of aristocracy, and communism (he was thinking of Baboeuf rather than Marx), aimed against the principle of private property.

[2] The specification of this United States of Greater Austria can be found in his *Werkausgabe*, Vienna 1975, vol. 1, p. 482.

[3] Note that Bauer was careful not to speak of shared language as something unique to itself. He was quite aware of the many different nations that used Spanish and English as their shared languages, without making any monopoly claims to it. Similarly, he looked with equanimity on the prospect of forms of German being the common language of different European states, including the VSGO, without this involving the suppression of Czech or Hungarian. In all this we can see why, if for completely different reasons, the conservative Acton and the socialist Bauer attached such importance to the huge political realm centred in Vienna.

[4] Kohn (1891-1971), raised in Czech-nationalist Prague under the Dual Monarchy, an activist in the Zionist youth movement, and subsequently a student of Near Eastern nationalist movements from a base in Jerusalem, published his first magnum opus, *Nationalismus*, in 1922. His near-contemporary Carlton Hayes (1882-1964), a long-time professor at Columbia University, published his first major work, *Essays on Nationalism*, in 1926. Oddly enough, he eventually served as Roosevelt's wartime ambassador to Franco's Madrid.

[5] There are more than superficial parallels between the powerful, unanticipated reactions in Central and Eastern Europe to the short-lived, gigantic empires established, across a century and half, by Napoleon and Hitler. One key consequence of the Nazi assault was a fusion of communism and nationalism which would have made postwar incorporation into the Soviet Union far more implausible than it would have seemed between the wars. One can see comparable fusions in those areas of East and South-East Asia ruthlessly seized by Japanese militarism between 1937 and 1945. Mao, Tito, Ho Chi Minh, Kim Il Sung, and Enver Hoxha are exemplary in this regard.

[6] The reasons for this emergence are too complex to explore here. It seems nonetheless plausible to link them with the postwar collapse of the colonial empires, which drastically reduced the prestige and allure of the imperial centres, and removed, so to speak, the safety-valves that sent energetic young members of the 'nationalities' to Angola, Algeria, India, or the Congo. At the same time, membership in the Community made the absolutist claims of existing sovereignties in Western Europe much less convincing than hitherto.

[7] Habermas publicly expressed his misgivings about the Kohlist reunification of Germany; it is hard not to see his appreciation of the Community's potential as a hope for the containment of Big German chauvinism.