

## 6 NATIONALISM

Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.

Ernest Gellner (1964: 169)

—But do you know what a nation means? says John Wyse.

—Yes, says Bloom.

—What is it? says John Wyse.

—A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.

—By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years.

So of course everyone had a laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:

—Or also living in different places.

—That covers my case, says Joe.

James Joyce (1984: 329–30)

### THE RACE TO NATION<sup>1</sup>

For years, anthropological studies of ethnicity concentrated on relationships between groups which were of such a size that they could be studied through our traditional field methods: participant observation, personal interviews and surveys. The empirical focus of anthropological studies was almost by default a local community. If the state was given consideration, it would usually be as a part of the wider context, for instance as an external agent influencing local conditions. Besides, anthropology was traditionally biased towards the study of 'remote others'. As argued earlier, the general shift in terminology from 'tribe' to 'ethnic group' relativises such an Us/Them dichotomy, since ethnic groups, unlike 'tribes', obviously exist among 'ourselves' as well as among the 'others'. The boundary mechanisms that keep ethnic groups more or less discrete have the same formal characteris-

1 The pun is stolen from Brackette Williams' essay 'A class act: anthropology and the race to nation across ethnic terrain' (B. Williams, 1989).

tics in a London suburb as in the New Guinea highlands, and the development of ethnic identity can be studied with largely the same conceptual tools in New Zealand as in Central Europe – although the empirical contexts are distinctive and ultimately unique. This has today been acknowledged in social anthropology, where perhaps a majority of researchers now study complex 'unbounded' systems rather than supposedly isolated communities.

Nationalism is a relatively recent topic for anthropology. The study of nationalism – the ideology of the modern nation-state – was for many years left to political scientists, macrosociologists and historians. Nations and nationalist ideologies are definitely modern large-scale phenomena. However, although the study of nationalism raises methodological problems relating to scale and the impossibility of isolating the unit of study, these problems inevitably arise in relation to other empirical foci as well. Since the beginning of modern fieldwork, social changes have taken place in the heartlands of anthropological research, integrating millions of people into markets and states. Like ourselves, our informants are citizens (while they formerly might have been colonial subjects). Further, 'primitive societies' probably never were as isolated as was formerly held, and they were no more 'pristine' and 'original' than our own societies (Wolf, 1982). Indeed, as Adam Kuper (1988) has shown, the very idea of primitive society was a European invention which emerged under particular historical circumstances.

An early, but largely neglected, venture into the anthropological study of nation-states, was Lloyd Fallers' (1974) research in Uganda and Turkey, where he explicitly tried to link data from both micro and macro levels in his analyses (cf. also Gluckman, 1961; Grønhaug, 1974). However, the study of nationalism has truly become a topic within anthropology only during the 1980s and 1990s.

In the classic terminology of social anthropology, the term 'nation' was used in an inaccurate way to designate large categories of people or societies with more or less uniform culture. In his introductory textbook, I.M. Lewis (1985: 287) states: 'By the term nation, following the best anthropological authority we understand, of course, a culture-unit.' Later, Lewis makes it clear that he sees no reason for distinguishing between 'tribes', 'ethnic groups' and 'nations', since the difference appears to be one of size, not of structural composition or functioning. Comparing groups of several million with smaller segments, he asks: 'Are these smaller segments significantly different? My answer is that they are not: that they are simply smaller units of the same kind ...' (Lewis, 1985: 358).

In this chapter, I shall argue that it can indeed be worthwhile to distinguish nations from ethnic categories because of their relationship to a modern state. It will also be shown that an anthropological perspective is essential for a full understanding of nationalism. An analytical and empirical

focus on nationalism can further be illuminating in research on modernisation and social change, as well as being highly relevant for the wider fields of political anthropology and the study of social identities.

#### WHAT IS NATIONALISM?

Ernest Gellner begins his famous book on nationalism by defining the concept like this:

Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.

Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by sentiment of this kind. (Gellner, 1983: 1; cf. Gellner, 1978: 134)

While this definition at first glance may seem a straightforward one, it turns out to be circular. For what is the 'national unit'? Gellner goes on to explain that he sees it as synonymous with an ethnic group – or at least an ethnic group which the nationalists claim exists: 'In brief, nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones' (Gellner, 1983: 1; cf. also Gellner, 1997). In other words, nationalism, the way the term is used by Gellner and other contemporary social scientists, explicitly or implicitly refers to a peculiar link between ethnicity and the state. Nationalisms are, according to this view, ethnic ideologies which hold that their group should dominate a state. A nation-state, therefore, is a state dominated by an ethnic group, whose markers of identity (such as language or religion) are frequently embedded in its official symbolism and legislation. There is a drive towards the integration and assimilation of citizens, although Gellner concedes that nations may contain 'non-meltable' people, what he calls *entropy-resistant groups*. More of them later.

In another important theoretical study of nationalism, the South-East Asianist and political theorist Benedict Anderson proposes the following definition of the nation: 'it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson, 1991 [1983]: 6). By 'imagined', he does not necessarily mean 'invented', but rather that people who define themselves as members of a nation 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (*ibid.*). Unlike Gellner and many others, who concentrate on the political aspects of nationalism, Anderson is concerned to understand the force and persistence of national identity and sentiment. The fact that people are willing to die for their nation, he notes, indicates its extraordinary force.

Despite these differences in emphasis, Anderson's perspective is largely compatible with Gellner's. Both stress that nations are ideological constructions seeking to forge a link between (self-defined) cultural group and state, and that they create abstract communities of a different order from those dynastic states or kinship-based communities which pre-dated them.

The main task Anderson sets himself is to provide an explanation for what he calls the 'anomaly of nationalism'. According to both Marxist and liberal social theories of modernisation, nationalism should not have been viable in an individualist post-Enlightenment world, referring as it does to 'primordial loyalties' and solidarity based on common origins and culture (cf. Nimni, 1991). In particular, Anderson notes with a certain puzzlement that socialist states tend to be nationalist in character. 'The reality is quite plain,' he writes, 'the "end of the era of nationalism", so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time' (Anderson, 1991 [1983]: 3).

Anthropological research on ethnic boundaries and identity processes could help to illuminate Anderson's *problematic*. Anderson does not himself discuss ethnicity, and some of his main examples – the Philippines and Indonesia – are indeed multiethnic countries fraught with tension. Research on ethnic identity formation and boundary maintenance has indicated that ethnic identities tend to attain their greatest importance in situations of flux, change, resource competition and threats against boundaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that political movements based on cultural identity are strong in societies undergoing modernisation, although this does not account for the fact that these movements become *nationalist* movements.

The remarkable congruence between theories of nationalism and anthropological theory of ethnicity seems unrecognised (or at least unacknowledged) by Gellner and Anderson. Since the two bodies of theory have largely developed independently of each other, I shall point out the main parallels.

Both studies of ethnicity at the local community level and studies of nationalism at the state level stress that ethnic or national identities are constructions; they are not 'natural'. Moreover, the link between a particular identity and the 'culture' it seeks to reify is not a one-to-one relationship. Widespread assumptions of congruence between ethnicity and 'objective culture' are in both cases shown to be cultural constructions themselves. *Talk about culture* and *culture* can here, perhaps, be distinguished in roughly the same way as one distinguishes between the menu and the food. They are social facts of different orders, but the former is no less real than the latter.

When we look at nationalism, the link between ethnic organisation and ethnic identity discussed earlier becomes crystal clear. According to most nationalisms, the political organisation should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group. Conversely, the nation-

state draws an important aspect of its political legitimacy from convincing the popular masses that it really does represent them as a cultural unit.

An emphasis on the duality of meaning and politics, common in ethnicity studies as well as research on nationalism, can also be related to anthropological theory on ritual symbols. In his work on the Ndembu, Victor Turner (1967, 1969) has showed that these symbols are multivocal and that they have an 'instrumental' and a 'sensory' (or meaningful) pole. In a remarkably parallel way, Anderson argues that nationalism derives its force from its combination of political legitimation and emotional power. Abner Cohen (1974b) has argued along similar lines when he states that politics cannot be purely instrumental, but must always involve symbols which have the power of creating loyalty and a feeling of belongingness.

Anthropologists who have written about nationalism have generally seen it as a variant of ethnicity. I shall also do this at the outset; later on, I shall nevertheless raise the question of whether *non-ethnic nationalisms* are imaginable.

### THE NATION AS A CULTURAL COMMUNITY

Both Gellner and Anderson emphasise that although nations tend to imagine themselves as old, they are modern. Nationalist ideology was first developed in Europe and in European diaspora (particularly in the New World; cf. Handler and Segal, 1992) in the period around the French Revolution. Here we must distinguish between *tradition* and *traditionalism*. Nationalism, which is frequently a traditionalistic ideology, may glorify and recodify an ostensibly ancient tradition shared by the ancestors of the members of the nation, but it does not thereby re-create that tradition. It *reifies* it in the same way that the Hurons reified their supposed tradition (see chapter 4).

Since nationalism is a modern phenomenon which has unfolded in the full light of recorded history, the 'ethnogenesis' of nations lends itself more easily to investigation than the history of non-modern peoples. Thus the creation of Norwegian national identity took place throughout the nineteenth century, which was a period of modernisation and urbanisation. The country moved to full independence, leaving the union with Sweden, in 1905.

Early Norwegian nationalism mainly derived its support from the urban middle classes. Members of the city bourgeoisie travelled to remote valleys in search of 'authentic Norwegian culture', brought elements from it back to the city and presented them as the authentic expression of Norwegianness. Folk costumes, painted floral patterns (*rosemaling*), traditional music and peasant food became national symbols even to people who had not grown up with such customs. Actually it was the city dwellers, not the peasants, who decided that reified aspects of peasant culture should be 'the national culture'. A national heroic history was established. The creation of 'national arts', which were markers of uniqueness and sophistication, was also an

important part of the nationalist project in Norway as elsewhere. Typical representatives of this project were the composer Edvard Grieg, who incorporated local folk tunes into his Romantic scores, and the author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (who, unlike Henrik Ibsen, was awarded a Nobel Prize), whose peasant tales were widely read.

Certain aspects of peasant culture were thus reinterpreted and placed into an urban political context as 'evidence' that Norwegian culture was distinctive, that Norwegians were 'a people' and that they therefore ought to have their own state. This national symbolism was efficient in raising ethnic boundaries vis-à-vis Swedes and Danes, and simultaneously it emphasised that urban and rural Norwegians belonged to the same culture and had shared political interests. This idea of urban-rural solidarity, characteristic of nationalism, was, as Gellner has pointed out, a political innovation. Before the age of nationalism, the ruling classes were usually cosmopolitan in character. Anderson writes with a certain glee (1991 [1983]: 83n) that up to the First World War no 'English' dynasty had ruled England since the mid-eleventh century. Furthermore, the idea that the aristocracy belonged to the same culture as the peasants must have seemed abominable to the former and incomprehensible to the latter before nationalism.

Nationalism stresses solidarity between the poor and the rich, between the propertyless and the capitalists. According to nationalist ideology, the sole principle of political exclusion and inclusion follows the boundaries of the nation – that category of people defined as members of the same culture.

Large-scale processes such as industrialisation, the Enlightenment and its Romantic counterreactions, standardised educational systems and the growth of bourgeois elite culture are often mentioned in connection with the development of nationalism. It may therefore be relevant to mention that the nation is not just reproduced through state social engineering and major upheavals such as war, but also through everyday practices. For one thing, *sport* is a ubiquitous presence in most contemporary societies, and it often has a nationalist focus. Moreover, as Michael Billig (1995) has shown, 'small words, rather than grand memorable phrases', make up the stuff of national belonging for a great number of people: coins, stamps, turns of phrase, televised weather reports; in brief, the *banal nationalism* continuously strengthens and reproduces people's sense of national belonging.

### THE POLITICAL USE OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS

The example of Norwegian nationalism indicates the 'inventedness' of the nation. Until the late nineteenth century, Norway's main written language had been Danish. It was partly replaced by a new literary language, *Nynorsk* or 'New Norwegian', based on Norwegian dialects. Vernacularisation is an important aspect of many nationalist movements, since a shared language

can be a powerful symbol of cultural unity as well as a convenient tool in the administration of a nation-state. When it comes to culture, it could be argued that urban Norwegians in Christiania (today's Oslo) and Bergen had more in common with urban Swedes and Danes than with rural Norwegians. Indeed, the spoken language in these cities is still, in the 1990s, closer to standard Danish than to some rural dialects. Further, the selection of symbols to be used in the nation's representation of itself was highly politically motivated. In many cases, the so-called ancient, typically Norwegian customs, folk tales, handicrafts and so on were neither ancient, typical nor Norwegian. The painted floral patterns depict grapevines from the Mediterranean. The Hardanger fiddle music and most of the folk tales had their origin in Central Europe, and many of the 'typical folk costumes' which are worn at public celebrations such as Constitution Day were designed by nationalists early in the twentieth century. Most of the customs depicted as typical came from specific mountain valleys in southern Norway.

When such practices are reified as symbols and transferred to a nationalist discourse, their meaning changes. The use of presumed typical ethnic symbols in nationalism is intended to stimulate reflection on one's own cultural distinctiveness and thereby to create a feeling of nationhood. Nationalism reifies culture in the sense that it enables people to talk about their culture as though it were a constant. In Richard Handler's accurate phrase, nationalist discourses are 'attempts to construct bounded cultural objects' (Handler, 1988: 27). The ethnic boundary mechanisms discussed earlier are evident here, as well as inventive uses of history which create an impression of continuity. When Norway became independent, its first king was recruited from the Danish royal family. He was nevertheless named Haakon VII as a way of stressing the (entirely fictional) continuity with the dynasty of kings that ruled Norway before 1350.

The discrepancy between national ideology (comprising symbols, stereotypes and the like) and social practice is no less apparent in the case of nations than with respect to other ethnic groups. However, as Anderson diplomatically remarks, every community based on wider links than face-to-face contact is imagined, and nations are neither more nor less 'fraudulent' than other communities. We have earlier seen similar identity processes in discussions of other ethnic groups; what is peculiar to nationalism is its relationship to the state. With the help of the powers of the nation-state, nations can be invented where they do not exist, to paraphrase Gellner (1964). Standardisation of language, the creation of national labour markets based on individual labour contracts and compulsory schooling, which presuppose the prior existence of a nation-state, gradually forge nations out of diverse human material. Thus, while it would have been impossible a hundred and fifty years ago to state exactly where Norwegian dialects merged into Swedish dialects, this linguistic boundary is now more

clear-cut and follows the political one. As it is sometimes said: a language is a dialect backed by an army.<sup>2</sup>

The earlier, dynastic states in Europe placed few demands on the majority of their citizens (Birch, 1989), and they did not require cultural uniformity in society. It did not matter that the serfs spoke a different language from that of the rulers, or that the serfs in one region spoke a different language from those in another region. Why is the standardisation of culture so important in modern nation-states?

## NATIONALISM AND INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Gellner, Grillo (1980) and others have argued that nationalist ideology emerged as a reaction to industrialisation and the uprooting of people from their local communities. Industrialisation entailed great geographic mobility, and a vast number of people became participants in the same economic (and later the same political) system. Kinship ideology, feudalism and religion were no longer capable of organising people efficiently.

In addition, the new industrial system of production required the facility to replace workers on a large scale. Thus workers had to have many of the same skills and capabilities. Industrialisation implied the need for a standardisation of skills, a kind of process which can also be described as 'cultural homogenisation'. Mass education is instrumental in this homogenising process. By introducing national consciousness to every nook and cranny of the country, it turns 'peasants into Frenchmen' (Weber, 1976).

In this historical context, a need arises for a new kind of ideology capable of creating cohesion and loyalty among individuals participating in social systems on a huge scale. Nationalism was able to satisfy these requirements. It postulated the existence of an imagined community based on shared culture and embedded in the state, where people's loyalty and attachment should be directed towards the state and the legislative system rather than towards members of their kin group or village. In this way, nationalist ideology is functional for the state. At the same time, it must be remarked, the drive to homogenisation also creates stigmatised others; the external boundaries towards foreigners become frozen, and 'unmelttable' minorities within the country (Jews, Gypsies – but also, say, Bretons, Occitans and immigrants in the case of France) are made to stand out through their 'Otherness' and thereby confirm the integrity of the nation through

2 Swedish, Danish and the two varieties of Norwegian are closely related languages. We owe the fact that they are considered three or four distinctive ones and not variants of a shared Scandinavian language to nationalism – a fact still bemoaned by small, but dedicated groups of Scandinavianists.



dichotomisation. In a period such as the present, when claims to cultural rights challenge hegemonies, this means trouble (see chapters 7–8).

Its political effectiveness is one condition for nationalist ideology to be viable; it must refer to a nation which can be embodied in a nation-state and effectively ruled. An additional condition is popular support. What does nationalism then have to offer? As some of the examples below will suggest, nationalism offers security and perceived stability at a time when life-worlds are fragmented and people are being uprooted. An important aim of nationalist ideology is thus to re-create a sentiment of wholeness and continuity with the past; to transcend that alienation or rupture between individual and society that modernity has brought about.

At the identity level, nationhood is a matter of belief. The nation, that is the *Volk* imagined by nationalists, is a product of nationalist ideology; it is not the other way around. A nation exists from the moment a handful of influential people decide that it should be so, and it starts, in most cases, as an urban elite phenomenon. In order to be an efficient political tool, it must nevertheless eventually achieve mass appeal.

#### COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONHOOD

One important difference between nations and other kinds of community, including many ethnic communities, concerns scale. With a few exceptions (notably mini-states in the Caribbean and the Pacific), nation-states are social systems operating on a vast scale. Tribal societies and other local communities could to a great extent rely on kinship networks and face-to-face interaction for their maintenance as systems and for the loyalty of their members. Even in the great dynastic states, most of the subjects were locally integrated; they were first and foremost members of families and villages. Socialisation and social control were largely handled locally. Armies tended to be professional, unlike in nationalist societies, where it is considered the moral duty of all to fight for their country.

Nations are communities where the citizens are expected to be integrated in respect to culture and self-identity in an abstract, anonymous manner. One of Anderson's most telling illustrations of this abstract character of the moral community of the nation is the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Usually these tombs are left deliberately empty; they signify the universal, abstract character of the nation. 'Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings' (Anderson, 1991 [1983]: 9).

What are the conditions for such an abstract ideology? I have described the economic and political concomitants of nationalism, and here we shall add a technological prerequisite for it, namely communications technology facilitating the standardisation of knowledge or representations

(cf. chapter 5). Anderson strongly emphasises print-capitalism as an important condition for nationalism. Through the spread of the printed word in cheap editions, a potentially unlimited number of persons have access to identical information without direct contact with the originator.

More recently, newspapers, television and radio have played – and still play – a crucial part in standardising representations and language. These media also play an important part in the reproduction and strengthening of nationalist sentiments. During the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982, for example, the British media depicted the war quite consistently as a 'simple opposition between good and evil' (J. Taylor, 1992: 30), whereas the Argentinian media depicted it as a struggle against colonialism (Caistor, 1992). Later commentary on the media in connection with the Gulf War (Walsh, 1995) and the 2001 war in Afghanistan (Chomsky, 2001) arrive at similar conclusions.

Studies of the role of the Internet in influencing identities, language and public discourse are also highly relevant in research on ethnicity and nationalism. Since the Internet is still a quite recent innovation, little is known about its impact, but it is clear that it has not led to a global cultural homogenisation. Although roughly half of the contents on the Web are in English, this nevertheless means that there is an enormous number of web sites in other languages. Just as most Norwegians continue to watch Norwegian TV channels today, as they did before they got cable television with an almost unlimited choice, it may well be the case that most Internet use confirms existing identities rather than transcending them.

A different kind of communications technology might also be considered here, namely modern means of transportation. In the mid-nineteenth century, it could take a week to cross Trinidad; today, the journey takes little more than an hour. Modern transportation technology greatly facilitates the integration of people into larger social systems, increasing the flow of people and goods indefinitely. It creates conditions for the integration of people into nation-states, and in this way it may have important indirect effects at the level of consciousness in making people *feel* that they are members of the nation.

A metaphor appropriate to the political and cultural developments leading to nationalism is the map. Although maps existed before nationalism, the map can be a very concise and potent symbol of the nation. Country maps, present in classrooms all over the world, depict the nation simultaneously as a bounded, observable thing and as an abstraction of something which has a physical reality. Most world maps place Europe at the centre of the world. This is not a politically innocent act!

Most students of nationalism emphasise its modern and abstract aspects. Anthropological perspectives are particularly valuable here, since anthropologists may throw into relief the unique and peculiar character of nationalism and nation-states through comparisons with small-scale

societies. In this perspective, the nation and nationalist ideology appear at least partly as symbolic tools for the ruling classes in societies which would otherwise have been threatened by potential dissolution. Some writers have argued that nationalism and national communities can have profound roots in earlier ethnic communities or *ethnies* (A.D. Smith, 1986), but it would be misleading to claim that there is an unbroken continuity from the pre-modern communities or 'cultures' to the national ones. As the Norwegian example shows, folk costumes and other national symbols take on a different meaning in the modern context from that which they originally had. They become *emblems of distinctiveness* in relation to other nations.

#### NATIONALISM AS RELIGION AND AS METAPHORIC KINSHIP

Nationalism in itself belongs neither on the left nor on the right of the political spectrum. Through an emphasis on equality between citizens, it may be an ideology of the left. By emphasising vertical solidarity and the exclusion of foreigners (and sometimes minorities), it may belong on the right. Anderson suggests that nationalism (as well as other ethnic ideologies) should be classified together with kinship and religion rather than with fascism and liberalism (Anderson, 1991 [1983]: 15). It is an ideology which proclaims that the *Gemeinschaft* threatened by mass society can survive through a concern with roots and cultural continuity. In Josip Llobera's words, 'In modernity, the nationalist sentiment is first of all a reaction against the cosmopolitan pretensions of the Enlightenment' (Llobera, 1994: 221). Llobera, in his book with the telling title *The God of Modernity* (1994), argues strongly in favour of a view of nationalism which sees it as a kind of secular religion.

In an important study of violence and nationalism in Sri Lanka and Australia, Bruce Kapferer (1988; 1989) describes nationalism as an *ontology*; that is a doctrine about the essence of reality. Through his examples from the two very different societies, Kapferer shows how nationalism can instil passions and profound emotions in its followers. It frequently draws on religion and myth for its symbolism, which is often violent in character. (One needs only to think of military parades, which are common in the celebration of Independence Days in many countries.) Like other ethnic ideologies, nationalism lays claim to symbols which have great importance for people, and argues that these symbols represent the nation-state. Death is often important in nationalist symbolism: individuals who have died in war are depicted as martyrs who died in defence of their nation. If the nation is a community that one is willing to die for, reasons Kapferer, then it must be capable of touching very intense emotions. Like Anderson, Kapferer thus stresses the religious aspect of nationalism and its ability to depict the nation as a sacred community.

In his study of nationalism in Québec, Richard Handler suggests that Québécois nationalists imagine the nation as a 'collective individual'. Citing three different informant statements which support this assumption, he concludes:

These images of the nation as a living individual – a tree, a friend, a creature with a soul – convey first of all a sense of wholeness and boundedness. They establish the integral, irreducible nature of the collectivity as an existent entity. (Handler, 1988: 40)

In general, nationalism, like other ethnic ideologies, appropriates symbols and meanings from cultural contexts which are important in people's everyday experience. During the period leading up to the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the US was depicted as an adulterous infidel who raped and mistreated Iran, which was depicted as a woman – as a mother-country (Thaiss, 1978). This kind of symbolism can be extremely powerful in mass politics.

This example also confirms the view of nationalism (and other ethnic ideologies) as a form of metaphoric kinship. Kinship terms are frequently used in nationalist discourse (mother-country, father of the nation, brothers and sisters, and so on), and the abstract community postulated by nationalists may be likened to the kin group. Although principles of kinship vary, the members of every society have some notion of family obligations. Kinship and kin organisation are basic features of social organisation in most societies. Nationalism appeared, and continues to appear, in periods when the social importance of kinship is weakened. One may perhaps go so far as to say that urbanisation and individualism create a social and cultural vacuum in human lives in so far as kinship loses much of its importance. Nationalism promises to satisfy some of the same needs that kinship was formerly responsible for. It offers security and a feeling of continuity, as well as offering career opportunities (through the educational system and the labour market). As a metaphorical *pater familias* nationalism states that the members of the nation are a large family: through the national courts it punishes its disobedient children. It is an abstract version of something concrete which every individual has strong emotions about, and nationalism tries to transfer this emotional power to the state level. In this way, nationalism appears as a metaphoric kinship ideology tailored to fit large-scale modern society – it is the ideology of the nation-state.

#### THE NATION-STATE

Like other ideologies, nationalism must simultaneously justify a particular (real or potential) power structure and satisfy acknowledged needs on the part of a population. Seen from this perspective, a successful nationalism implies the linking of an ethnic ideology with a state apparatus. There are

important differences between the functioning of such a state and other social systems studied by anthropologists.

The nation-state, unlike many other political systems, draws on an ideology proclaiming that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries. Further, the nation-state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and taxation. This double monopoly is its most important source of power. The nation-state has a bureaucratic administration and a written legislation which encompasses all citizens, and it has – at least as an ideal – a uniform educational system and a shared labour market for all its citizens. The great majority of nation-states have a national language used in all official communications; some deny linguistic minorities the right to use their vernacular.

Political leaders in other kinds of society may also monopolise violence and taxation. What is here peculiar to the nation-state is the enormous concentration of power it represents. The difference is apparent between a modern war and a feud among the Yanomamö or Nuer. In the same way as the abstract community of nationalism includes an inconceivable number of people (in Britain more than 60 million) compared with polities based on kinship (the upper limit for a Yanomamö local community is approximately 500 individuals), the modern state can be said to be modelled on social organisations based on kinship.

Having discussed general aspects of nationalist identity, ideology and organisation, we shall now consider some examples which suggest ways in which nationalism can be studied anthropologically.

#### NATIONALISM AGAINST THE STATE

The cultural egalitarianism preached by nationalism in most of its manifestations can inspire counterreactions in situations where a segment of the population does not consider itself to be part of the nation. This is extremely common, as most nation-states contain larger or smaller minorities. In chapters 7 and 8, different minority situations will be considered; here, we shall briefly consider one where a part of the minority reacts through inventing its own nation.

The egalitarian charter of French nationalism and the French Revolution emphasised that every citizen should have equal rights, equal juridical rights and, in principle, equal opportunities (women, however, were only partly included in this imagined community). Eventually all French people were to identify themselves as Frenchpeople and feel loyal towards the new republic. Linguistic standardisation through the spread of the official French language has been an important aspect of this project since the eighteenth century, but linguistic minorities still exist, notably in the south and south-east and

in Brittany, where the majority of the population traditionally spoke Breton, a Celtic language unrelated to French.

Breton ethnic identity is intimately connected with language; there are few other conspicuous markers available for boundary maintenance. This identity has been threatened for centuries by the dominant French language. Particularly during the first half of the twentieth century, the number of Breton speakers declined rapidly. However, as Maryon McDonald (1989) and others have shown, there have been signs of ethnic revitalisation in later years. A plethora of organisations championing the Breton cause have emerged since the Second World War. Lois Kuter (1989) reports that young Bretons have a positive view on learning Breton, explicitly linking it with their ethnic identity. Some radio and TV programmes are now made in Breton, and many learn Breton as a foreign language at evening classes and summer schools. The language, as well as many aspects of imputed Breton custom, have largely had to be revived, since the 'acculturation' process had gone very far.

Why do the survival and revival of the Breton language seem so important to many Bretons? It would be simplistic to say, as an explanation, that their language forms an important part of their cultural identity. After all, language shift has been widespread in Brittany (and elsewhere) for centuries. The militancy concerning language can therefore be seen as an anti-French political strategy. Since the French state chose the French language as the foremost symbol of its nationalism, the most efficient and visible kind of resistance against that nationalism may be a rejection of that language. For many years it was illegal to speak Breton in public. Many Bretons are still bilingual and switch situationally between the languages. By using Breton in public contexts, Bretons signal that they do not acquiesce in French domination. A notion of cultural roots alone would not have been enough: roots were never sufficient to revive a vanishing identity.

An interesting feature of the Breton resistance against French domination is an aspect of what Eric Hobsbawm (1977) has called 'the Shetlands effect', whereby a small periphery allies itself with a major centre against its local dominator. In the case of some Breton leaders, this effect was articulated in taking a pro-German line during the Second World War (McDonald, 1989: 123).

The population of Brittany is divided over the issues of language, identity and political rights. The revitalisation movement is largely an elite or middle-class phenomenon, like many other similar movements (cf. chapter 5 for Indo-Trinidadians). Cost-benefit calculations may be involved here. Had Brittany been the wealthiest part of France, Bretons might, like some Catalans in Spain, have demanded full independence. But on the other hand, there are strong ethnopolitical movements in distinctly disadvantaged regions as well, such as Andalusia in southern Spain.

## NATIONALISM AND THE OTHER

Like other ethnic identities, national identities are constituted in relation to others; the very idea of the nation presupposes that there are other nations, or at least other peoples, who are not members of the nation. Nationalist dichotomisation may take many forms; it could well be argued that the main structural condition for chauvinist nationalism in our day and age is competition between nation-states on the world market. Although there have been many wars between nation-states, such wars have been comparatively rare since 1945. Instead, we may perhaps regard international sports as the most important form of metaphoric war between nation-states – containing, perhaps, most of the identity-building features of warfare and few of the violent, destructive ones (cf. MacClancy, 1996; Archetti, 1999). Nonetheless, boundary maintenance and ethnic dichotomisation may still take violent forms in many parts of the world, and this also holds good for a number of ethnic nationalisms, for example in Sri Lanka.

In his analysis of Sinhalese national symbolism, Kapferer (1988) links state power, nationalist ideology and the Sinhalese–Tamil conflict with the role of Sinhalese myth in cosmology and in everyday life. Important myths, recorded in the ancient Sinhalese chronicle of the *Mahavamsa*, are the Vijaya and Dutugemunu legends. The Vijaya myth, the main Sinhalese myth of origin, tells of a prince who arrives from India and slaughters a great number of demons in order to conquer Sri Lanka. The Dutugemunu myth, set at a later historical period, tells of a Sinhalese leader under whose military guidance the people rids itself of a foreign overlord. Later, he conquers the Tamils.

In Sinhalese political discourse, these myths are frequently 'treated as historical fact or as having foundation in fact' (Kapferer, 1988: 35). Sinhalese dominance in the Sri Lankan state, including dominance over the Tamil minority, is justified by referring to the *Mahavamsa*, which is so interpreted as to state that the Sinhalese and the Tamils have the same origins, but are now two nations, with the Sinhalese as the dominant one. The myths thus form an important element in the justification of Sinhalese nationalism. Tamils produce contradictory interpretations of the myths, which are thus actively used in reconstruction of the past aimed at justifying present political projects.

Kapferer is particularly concerned with violence and the interpenetration of lived experience, myth and state power. When he analyses the ethnic riots of the early 1980s, he finds that 'the demonic passions of the rioting were fuelled in a Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism that involved cosmological arguments similar to those in exorcism, particularly in the rites of sorcery' (Kapferer, 1988: 29). The human–demon dualism and other – frequently

violent – aspects of myth were transferred to a nationalist ideology justifying Sinhalese hegemony and violence against Tamils.

According to many nationalist myths, the nation is born, or arises, from a painful rite of passage where it has to fight its adversaries; the Other or the enemy within. Re-enactment of that violence, as in Sri Lanka, can be justified by referring to such myths, which form part of a 'cosmic logic' or ontology through which the Sinhalese experience the world (Kapferer, 1988: 79). This cosmic logic, where evil plays an important part, is congruent with the current ethnic hostilities and serves as a rationalisation for the use of force.

Kapferer's argument is complex and cannot be reproduced in full here. It may not be correct that violence is a more or less universal feature of nationalist imagery, but his analysis is consistent with the perspective on ethnicity and nationalism developed in this book. He shows the importance of the Other in the formation of ethnic identity and illuminates the mediating role of symbols in ethnic ideologies. They must simultaneously justify a power structure and give profound meaning to people's experience in order to motivate them to give personal sacrifices for the nation. Finally, Kapferer shows how the potential power of ethnic identifications is increased manifold when an ethnic identity is linked with a modern state – when ethnicity becomes nationalism. My descriptions of nationalism as a metaphoric kinship ideology and (from peaceful Québec) the depiction of the nation as a human organism, are perhaps too weak in this context. In relation to Sinhalese nationalism, appropriate metaphors may rather be war, birth and death. However, the peaceful Québécois nationalism and the violent Sinhalese one share certain features: both refer to the past and to assumptions of shared culture in imagining their abstract communities. In other regards, of course, they may not be comparable, since the Québécois are separatist and the Sinhalese are not. In Kapferer's words:

The organizing and integrating potential of ideology, the propensity of certain ideological formations to unify, to embrace persons of varying and perhaps opposed political and social interests, and to engage them in concerted, directed action, may owe much to the logic of an ontology that the ideology inscribes ... Ideology can engage a person in a fundamental and what may be experienced as a 'primordial' way. And so the passions are fired and people may burn. (Kapferer, 1988: 83)

Kapferer's analysis of Sri Lankan nationalism focuses on the enactment of boundary mechanisms at different interrelated levels; symbolic, practical and political. He argues that nationalisms must be studied in a truly comparative spirit, and shows that Sinhalese nationalism is qualitatively different from European nationalisms because the societies differ. Notably, he argues that it is hierarchical in nature and not inherently egalitarian. Nevertheless, Kapferer's study is consistent with the theoretical framework on



ethnic organisation and identity developed in earlier chapters, as well as the theory of nationalism which stresses the link between ethnicity and the state.

### THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY BOUNDARIES

Problems of identity and problems of boundary maintenance have usually been studied in relation to minorities or otherwise 'threatened' or 'weak' groups, or in situations of rapid social change. It seems to have been an implicit assumption that identity processes and the maintenance of identity are unproblematic in dominant groups. 'Majority identities', Diana Forsythe writes (1989: 137), '... appear as they are seen from without, seeming ... to be strong and secure, if not outright aggressive. Certainly this is how Germanness is perceived in many parts of Europe.'

Forsythe's research on German identity indicates that this central and powerful identity – considered by many as *the* dominant national identity in Europe<sup>3</sup> – is characterised by anomalies, fuzzy boundaries and ambiguous criteria for belongingness. First of all, it is unclear *where* Germany is. Although both the inhabitants of the Federal Republic and the GDR are clearly German (Forsythe's article was written before the reunification), they fail to unite the nation in a nation-state. Not all West Germans would include the GDR as *Inland*. Even after reunification, the distinction between *Wessies* and *Ossies* is a salient one, which refers to economic as well as to imputed cultural differences. Further, many Germans would include the areas lost to Poland and the former USSR during the Second World War as German.

Second, it is difficult to justify the existence of the German nation by referring to history. With the Nazi period (1933–45) in mind, Forsythe writes (1989: 138): 'The German past is not one that lends itself comfortably to nostalgia, nor is it well-suited to serve as a charter for nationalists' dreams for the future.'

Third, more or less as a consequence, it is difficult to state what it means to be German in cultural terms. Pride in national identity has positively been discouraged since the Second World War, as many 'typical' aspects of German culture were associated with Nazism (cf. Dumont, 1992, for a controversial cultural–historical analysis of German national identity).

Fourth, and this is the issue which is of particular concern here, the question of *who is German* turns out to be a complicated one. In principle, 'the universe is divided into the theoretically exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of *Deutsche* (Germans) and *Ausländer* (foreigners)' (Forsythe, 1989: 143). In practice, there are nevertheless difficult problems associated with

3 This is perhaps particularly true after reunification in 1990, when Germany suddenly became much bigger in terms of population, and geographically even more central, than the other large European countries.

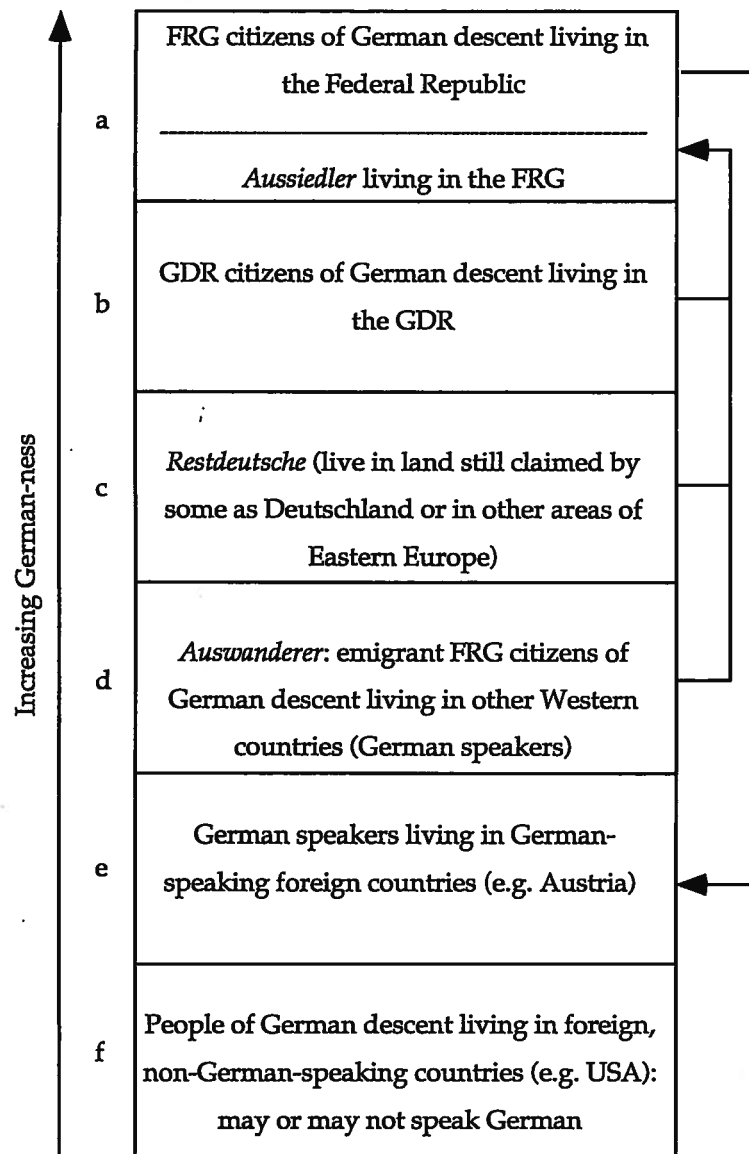
the delineation of boundaries. The criterion for Germanness, as applied by ordinary Germans, can be either language or 'a mixture compounded of appearance, family background, country of residence, and country of origin' (ibid.). A certain number of foreigners are included in both definitions of Germanness, and the latter especially is quite inaccurate. Austrians and the majority of Swiss are German-speakers, but do not live in a German state. On the other hand, millions of people of German descent, who may or may not actually speak German, live in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> These, as well as other emigrants, fall into different categories (see Figure 6.1).

The category *Ausländer* (foreign) presents similar problems, and it transpires that the Dutch and Scandinavians are considered much 'less foreign' than Turks and Jews.

These anomalies, while they pose specific problems to German identity, are general and widespread. Such problems highlight the lack of congruence between ideal models or ideologies and that social reality to which they ostensibly refer. Nationalist and other ethnic ideologies hold that social and cultural boundaries should be unambiguous, clear-cut and 'digital' or binary. They should also be congruous with spatial, political boundaries. This, as we have seen, is an ideal which is very difficult to uphold in practice. Some violent nationalisms may try to eradicate the anomalies; such was the case of Nazism, where millions of members of so-called lower races occupying parts of German territory were killed or forced to emigrate; and more recently, Europeans and Africans alike have witnessed 'ethnic cleansing' in ex-Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In most cases, however, complex realities are coped with more gracefully. We should here keep in mind that there is never a perfect fit between an ideology and the social reality it is about, since an ideology is a kind of theory – like a map – which necessarily simplifies the concrete.

German identity, although ideally solid, digital and well demarcated, functions in an *analog* way on the ground: differences of degree are made relevant in the classification of others even when the classificatory system in theory requires clear dichotomisation. It is possible to be 'somewhat German' or 'not really foreign'. German identity seems to have frontiers, but no boundaries (cf. Cohen, 1994). Perhaps official nationalist ideologies tend to be more concerned with clear-cut, unambiguous boundaries than other ethnic ideologies. An explanation for this could be that nations are territorial and political units with an inherent need to divide others into insiders and outsiders on the basis of citizenship. Cultural similarity among citizens becomes a political programme vested in the state. In this way, official national identities may, generally speaking, be more comprehensive and may place greater demands on the individual than ethnic identities in a

4 The foreign policy spokesman for the German Social Democratic Party stated, at a public lecture in 1992, that 'there are six million Germans living in the former Soviet Union'.



Source: Forsythe, 1989: 146.

Figure 6.1: Degrees of German-ness according to emic categories

polyethnic society, which are rarely sanctioned through state institutions. However, as the German example shows, popular perceptions of Germanness are more fine-grained and less unambiguous than the formal nationalism of the state would imply. The difference between dominant and popular discourses is thus evident not merely in the contrast between state nationalism and non-state ethnicity, but also in the contrast between state/formal and popular/informal nationalism (Banks, 1996: 155; Baumann, 1996; Eriksen, 1993a).

As the above examples indicate, although it may be correct to talk of a general theory of nationalism, namely that presented in the first pages of this chapter, nationalisms on the ground are quite different from each other. So far, all of the nationalisms considered have been clearly ethnic in character. Sinhalese nationalism acknowledges the presence of Sri Lankan Tamils as a distinctive ethnic group, but places them in a subservient relationship to the Sinhalese. We shall therefore round off this chapter by considering the possibility of a kind of nationalism which is *not* based on ethnicity.

#### NATIONALISM WITHOUT ETHNICITY?

So-called plural or polyethnic societies have often been described as deeply divided societies marked by perennial conflict and competition between discrete ethnic groups (M.G. Smith, 1965; Horowitz, 1985). Although this view may in some cases be relevant, we have argued against it for too strongly focusing on conflict and group boundaries, at the cost of underestimating cooperation, identity formation along non-ethnic lines, and cultural integration. Mauritius is often regarded as a typical plural society (Benedict, 1965); here, I shall approach it from a different perspective, focusing on shared meaning rather than group competition.

There are two complementary trends in Mauritian nationalism, and both of them are ostensibly non-ethnic in character (Eriksen, 1988; 1992a; 1993a; 1998). First, the Mauritian nation may be depicted as identical with the 'mosaic of cultures' reified in the identity politics of the island. Typical expressions of this view of the nation are the cultural shows organised annually in connection with Independence Day (Republic Day as from 1992). At these shows, every main ethnic category is invited to present a 'typical' song or dance from its cultural repertoire. The Sino-Mauritians are always present with a dragon of some kind, Hindus sing Indian film songs or play sitar music, and the Creoles are always represented with a *séga* (a song form associated with the Creoles). In this way, the nation is imagined as a mosaic. This trend, which we may label 'multiculturalism', is also evident in the national mass media, where every group is represented through specific radio and TV programmes, and in the educational system, where pupils may learn their 'ancestral languages' as a foreign language.

The other main trend in Mauritian nationalism depicts the nation as a supra-ethnic or non-ethnic community, which encompasses or transcends ethnicity rather than endorsing it. The flag, the national anthem and the national language express such a nationalism. The national language of Mauritius is English, which is no one ethnic group's ancestral language or currently spoken language – and which therefore seems an appropriate choice as a supra-ethnic compromise (Eriksen, 1990). Colonial symbols, which cannot be associated with a particular ethnic group, are also dominant. Formal equality and equal opportunities are emphasised.

The Mauritian situation is more complex than this outline suggests. There is some ethnic tension, and there are conflicts between national and ethnic identifications. Many post-colonial states are faced with similar problems to those of Mauritius. They are obviously constructions of recent origins. When Immanuel Wallerstein asks, rhetorically, 'Does India exist?' (Wallerstein, 1991a), he must therefore answer no – or at least, that it did not exist prior to colonisation. Many such states, particularly in Africa, had no pre-colonial state that could be revived, and the great majority of these states are polyethnic although it is true, as Banks (1996: 157) states, that in many cases, they are dominated by one ethnic group. Nevertheless, two points have to be made here. First, the only African state to have collapsed institutionally in the postcolonial era, Somalia, is/was also one of the few mono-ethnic ones. In other words, shared ethnic identity is not sufficient to build nationhood. Second, in most polyethnic states, some degree of compromise is needed, and some degree of supra-ethnic symbolism is required – if only to avoid riots and unrest. To depict the nation as identical with a 'mosaic of ethnic groups' could, at the same time, threaten to undermine the project of nation-building since it focuses on differences instead of similarities.

In a discussion of this section as it appeared in the first edition of this book, Banks (1996: 154–9) expresses serious doubt as to the notion of non-ethnic nations which 'bypass any local ethnicities' (*ibid.*: 158). Instead, he argues that 'all nationalisms, once state control is achieved, actively seeks both to enhance and reify the specifically ethnic identities of deviant others within the nation state, and at the same time to efface the idea of ethnic particularism within the national identity' (*ibid.*). His view is, in other words, that nations tend to be dominated by ethnic groups which deny their ethnic identity (instead presenting themselves simply as citizens or humans) and relegate others to minority status or assimilate them. This is an important argument, and symbolic domination frequently works this way. For example, male domination often expresses itself through the tacit assumption that 'humans' are 'men' (witnessed in statements, common in classic anthropology, like 'the X'es allow their women to work outside the home'). The stereotype of the 'American' is typically a white man, and so on. I am never-

theless not convinced of the general applicability of this logic. In Trinidad & Tobago, the dominant group has, since Independence, been the Afro-Trinidadians, and it could well be argued that Indo-Trinidadians have been exoticised as a minority – however, since the mid-1990s, an Indo-Trinidadian has been Prime Minister of the country, and Indo-Trinidadians are appropriating and adapting symbols of Afroness such as the steelband and even the calypso. The boundaries are becoming blurred, and the terms of discursive hegemony are becoming unclear. In the USA, the traditional hegemony of the WASPs is, if anything, being challenged from a number of directions: the anxieties and debates concerning multicultural education (see chapter 8) are a case in point; the majority of US Nobel laureates are often Jews; the current (2002) Secretary of State is black; and one of the foremost defenders of the American societal model, Francis Fukuyama, is of Japanese descent. Tony Blair's 'Cool Britannia' also tends to be much more variegated in terms of physical appearance and cultural image than its predecessors. Now, I am not saying that the ethnic element in nationhood is about to go away due to globalisation and eradication of 'radical cultural difference', only that there is no *necessary* link between national identity and ethnic identity.

Let us leave this debate for now, and instead see how some of the insights developed earlier may shed light on the Mauritian situation. From the study of ethnic processes on the interpersonal level – from the early Copperbelt studies onwards – we know that identities are negotiable and situational. From the Barthian emphasis on boundary processes and later studies of identity boundaries, we also know that the selection of boundary markers is arbitrary in the sense that only some features of culture are singled out and defined as crucial in boundary processes. Just as the potential number of nations is much larger than the actual number, the number of ethnic groups in the world is potentially infinite. From recent studies of nationalism, finally, we have learnt that the relationship between cultural practices and reified culture is not a simple one, and that ideologists always select and reinterpret aspects of culture and history which fit into the legitimisation of a particular power constellation.

On the basis of these theoretical insights, it is possible to draw the conclusion that Mauritian nationalism may represent an attempt to create a nation in the conventional sense; that Mauritian society is currently at an early stage of the ethnogenesis of a nation. The invention of a shared history for all the ethnic groups of the island is under way, and it has been suggested (Eriksen 1993b) that a plausible 'myth of origin' for the nation could be the last ethnic riot, in 1967–68, the 'riot to end all riots'. The homogenisation of cultural practices has gone very far, due to rapid industrialisation and capitalist integration, and by now the vast majority of Mauritians speaks the same language at home (*Kreol*, a French-lexicon creole). As an increasing

part of the individual's life is determined by his or her performance in the anonymous labour market, the supra-ethnic variety of national identity may eventually replace obsolete ethnic identities.

On the other hand, a principal lesson from ethnicity studies is that doomed ethnic categories tend to re-emerge, often with unprecedented force. An often mentioned example from Europe is that of the Celts, who have been 'perennially vanishing' for a thousand years. In the USA, occasionally mentioned as a non-ethnic nation, hyphenated identities and ethnic identity politics are perhaps more important than ever at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Referring to 'primordial' values, such identifications remain capable of mobilising people – years after the social contexts where these values were enacted had vanished. And in Mauritius itself, thirty years after 'the last ethnic riot', ethnic violence briefly erupted again in February 1999, following the unexplained death, in police custody, of a popular Creole singer. Mauritius may nonetheless remain a prosperous, stable and democratic society based on a plurality of ethnic identities which are compatible with national identity – and this is also a possible outcome of the ongoing process of transformation.

Nations are not necessarily more static than ethnic groups. Moreover, as suggested above, multi-ethnic nations may be effectively re-defined historically, in order to accommodate rights claims from groups who have felt excluded from the core of the nation. In an intriguing comparison between the USA, Canada and Australia, John Hutchinson (1994) shows how the symbolism and official identities of these three 'New World' countries have been re-fashioned during the last decades of the twentieth century. He analyses a major commemorative event in each country: the centenary of the federal Canadian state (1967), the Bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence in the USA (1976), and the Bicentenary of the settlement in Australia by Europeans (1988). In all three cases, the authorities had envisioned a consolidation of a homogeneous white national identity; and in all three cases, the national celebrations led to widespread contestation of the terms in which nationhood was framed. In Canada, the centenary marked the beginning of Québécois secessionism; in the USA, various minority activists demonstrated noisily; and in Australia, Aborigines in particular were strongly against the celebrations, declaring 'a national year of mourning' (Hutchinson, 1994: 170). Interestingly, all three countries have since embarked on official re-definitions of nationhood, now presenting themselves to the outside world as 'multicultural societies' rather than white ones. If one accepts that national identity does not have to be founded in common ethnic origins, the disruptions and conflicts surrounding the rituals may actually have strengthened national cohesion by making a wider participation possible.

## NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY RECONSIDERED

Nationalism and ethnicity are kindred concepts, and the majority of nationalisms are ethnic in character. The distinction between nationalism and ethnicity as analytical concepts is a simple one, if we stick to the formal level of definitions. A nationalist ideology is an ethnic ideology which demands a state on behalf of the ethnic group. However, in practice the distinction can be highly problematic.

First, nationalism may sometimes express a polyethnic or supra-ethnic ideology which stresses shared civil rights rather than shared cultural roots. That would be the case in many African countries as well as in Mauritius, where no ethnic group openly tries to turn nation-building into an ethnic project on its own behalf. A distinction between ethnic nationalisms and polyethnic or supra-ethnic nationalisms could be relevant here.

Second, certain categories of people may find themselves in a grey zone between nation and ethnic category. If some of their members want full political independence, others limit their demands to linguistic and other rights within an existing state. It depends on the interlocutor whether the category is a nation or an ethnic group. Moreover, national and ethnic membership can change situationally. A Mexican in the United States belongs to an ethnic group, but belongs to a nation when he or she returns to Mexico. Such designations are not politically innocent. Whereas the proponents of an independent Punjabi state (Khalistan) describe themselves as a nation, the Indian government sees them as ethnic rebels. Our terrorists are their freedom fighters.

Third, in the mass media and in casual conversation the terms are not used consistently. When, regarding the former Soviet Union, one spoke of the '104 nations' comprising the union, this term referred to ethnic groups. Only a handful of them were nations to the extent that their leaders wanted full independence.

In societies where nationalism above all is presented as an impartial and universalistic ideology based on bureaucratic principles of justice, ethnicity and ethnic organisation may appear as threats against national cohesion, justice and the state. This tension may appear as a conflict between *particularist* and *universalist* moralities. In these polyethnic societies, nationalism is frequently presented as a supra-ethnic ideology guaranteeing formal justice and equal rights for everybody. Typically, nationalist rhetoric stressing equality for all belongs to the political left in these societies, such as in Mauritius and South Africa.

A different kind of conflict between ethnicity and nationalism, which is perhaps more true to the conventional meaning of the term nationalism, can be described as a conflict between a dominating and a dominated ethnic



group within the framework of a modern nation-state. In such contexts, the nationalist ideology of the hegemonic group will be perceived as a particularist ideology rather than a universalist one, where the mechanisms of exclusion and ethnic discrimination are more obvious than the mechanisms of inclusion and formal justice. This kind of duality, or ambiguity, is fundamental to nationalist ideology (Eriksen, 1991b).

This duality of nationalism has been described as 'the Janus face of nationalism' (Nairn, 1977: part 3). A conflict between ethnicity and nationalism is evident, for example, in the case of the relationship between the Bretons and the French state. This kind of situation is characteristic of the contemporary world, where states tend to be dominated politically by one of the constituent ethnic groups (cf. Connor, 1978) or, more accurately, by its elites. In the next two chapters I shall distinguish between two types of minority situation, that of aboriginal or indigenous populations and that of urban minorities, and differences and similarities between their respective situations will be elaborated on. Several of the themes dealt with in this chapter, including contested national identities, culture and rights, citizenship and cultural change, will then be picked up and developed further in the two kinds of context.

#### FURTHER READING

- Anderson, Benedict (1991 [1983]) *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition. London: Verso. Powerful, influential and seductive on the emotional force that nationalism is.
- Chatterjee, Partha (1993) *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-colonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. A collection of essays by a political scientist sensitive to issues of culture and identity, focusing chiefly on India, highlighting both differences and similarities to the dominant European ideas of the nation.
- Özkırmlı, Umut (2000) *Theories of Nationalism*. London: Macmillan. A tightly argued, comprehensive and useful critical account of the current theoretical approaches.

## 7 MINORITIES AND THE STATE

[F]or their part, the Indians have little or nothing to put in the place of governmental administration: there are no 'typically Indian' methods of administering a hospital nor is there a 'typically Indian' way of bookkeeping or using typewriters.

Eugeen E. Roosens (1989: 72)

Modernisation and the establishment of a system of nation-states have created a new situation for the people nowadays known as 'ethnic minorities' or 'indigenous peoples'. Most of them have become citizens in states, whether they like it or not. The spread of capitalism has also played an important part in creating conditions for new forms of ethnicity – both through local economic and cultural change and through migration. The perspective on ethnicity and nationalism in this chapter can be described as a perspective from below, in that we focus on ethnic groups which are not hegemonic in a state. They remain distinctive despite efforts undertaken by the agencies of the nation-state to integrate them politically, culturally and economically – or, in other cases, they may try to become integrated as equal citizens, but are kept separate through a politics of segregation.

In a reassessment of the seminal *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Fredrik Barth (1994) admitted that his colleagues and his '1969 analyses gave limited attention to the effects of state organization' (Barth, 1994: 19). The specialisation in ethnicity studies called minority studies is, however, not guilty of this omission, since the very term minority is meaningful only in the context of a state.

#### MINORITIES AND MAJORITIES

An ethnic minority can be defined as a group which is numerically inferior to the rest of the population in a society, which is politically non-dominant and which is being reproduced as an ethnic category (cf. Minority Rights Group, 1990: xiv).

Like other concepts used in the analysis of ethnicity, the twin concepts minority and majority are *relative* and *relational*. A minority exists only in relation to a majority and vice versa, and their relationship is contingent on

