NATIONALISM, ETHNICITY AND DEMOCRACY: CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS

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Introduction

The subject of nationalism is extremely complex, not the least because of the many different sources and manifestations of the phenomenon. This paper will deal essentially with certain contemporary forms of nationalism which have emerged or intensified in Europe and the former Soviet Union during the 1990s. In order to place this discussion in perspective, a brief background of the historical experience is provided at the outset as well as a consideration of some of the basic concepts relating to this phenomenon.

As the ensuing discussion will show, it is almost impossible to come up with a uniform definition of nationalism. In its historical context, it is an ideological movement aimed at attaining and maintaining the identity, unity (through social cohesion) and autonomy (through national self-determination) of a "nation," or a peoples united under a "national" banner (Smith, 1991). In other words, it is the most potent ideology in nation state building and consolidation. However, as we will seek to illustrate, nationalism, particularly in the contemporary era, has also been a vehicle for disaffected ethnic or cultural communities to voice their dissatisfaction with the status quo. The sources of discontent may be related to a variety of factors such as denial of cultural identity, political discrimination, repression, or economic deprivation. In these cases, it is a movement of minority groups which springs up in reaction to the policies or perfOrmance of the central state. At other times, it is a counter-reaction, either on the part of the political authorities, or of threatened social groups, in response to the political authorities, and therefore embodies different objectives. But in most cases, the central state, whether directly or indirectly, plays a key role in manipulating or being the target of nationalist sentiments.

Hence, in this paper, nationalism has a broad meaning ranging from being the defining ideology of political movements seeking some form of autonomy or independent statehood; of groups striving to achieve or to improve their cultural, political, social and economic rights within a given state; of protest movements on the part of communities threatened by either state policies or by other social groups; to the core ideology employed by the state to galvanize public support for its policies or to reaffirm its legitimacy. The typology offered attempts to distinguish between these various contemporary manifestations of nationalist sentiment and discusses their impact on democracy as a means of distinguishing between the progressive and reactionary forms of nationalism.

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Historical and Conceptual Background

1. The Historical Paradoxes of Nationalism

To understand the contemporary forms of nationalism, it is useful to keep in mind the paradoxical goals which this ideology has served in the historical process of nation state building.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century European nationalism was a unifying force which brought together people of diverse backgrounds at the price of subordinating their ethnic identities to the larger territorial unit dominated by the secular state. The background to this evolution went back to the emergence of the secular state following the decline of the feudal and the rise of the industrial system, when effective power shifted from the unity of Church and State to that of Nation and State. Consequently, ethnic loyalties, which sometimes transcended the boundaries of these states, were seen to be subversive and every attempt was made to suppress them. The dominant ideology became that of nationalism, which idealized the secular state and deprecated the maintenance of any linguistic, religious or other sentiments that might conflict with loyalty to it. Nationalism became synonymous with patriotism (Richmond, 1988).

A similar trend followed the creation of nation states after the collapse of the multinational Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires in the aftermath of World War I. In the Balkans, in particular, nation states were created often with little or no regard for the rights and aspirations of the substantial ethnic groups trapped within their borders. The principle of state sovereignty, which evolved from the legitimization of national self determination made these new nation states as unsympathetic to demands for self determination from dissatisfied groups within their jurisdiction as were the Romanov, Habsburg and Ottoman rulers to the national claims that were advanced against their rule in the 19th century. (Mayall, 1990: 49). Hence, a major source of instability in Eastern Europe lay in the fact that each "purported nation-state negated the principle of self determination, even while basing its legitimacy on that principle" (Deák, 1990).

The aftermath of the decolonization process and the creation of nation states in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific after 1945 followed a similar pattern. Those states which achieved their independence through the principle of self determination held the view that a broader definition of the concept could become counterproductive.[1] Consequently, although during the 20th century, many wars of national liberation were fought over the alleged denial of the right to national self determination to groups which felt themselves disenfranchised within the existing state structure, few succeeded in attaining sovereign statehood (Mayall, 1990: 42).

Hence the paradoxical qualities of nationalism in its modern historical expression reside in the fact that it has served several conflicting purposes. It has acted as the principal ideology which enabled nations to seek self determination and political statehood. It also provided the subsequently created states with the ideological justification for holding "the nation" together. And third, it has enabled dissatisfied minority or ethnic groups within the nation states to

challenge state authority by questioning its claim to legitimacy which, in a democratic system, formally rests on the doctrine of self determination and popular sovereignty. Hence, nationalism, in this sense, has ironically contributed to the formation, and survival as well as to the dismemberment of nation states.

2. Conceptual Issues

As may be gathered from the above discussion, the phenomenon of nationalism bears closely upon such political concepts as the right to self determination, rights of national and ethnic minorities, the concept of a nation, the nation state, national sovereignty, territorial integrity (unity/ inviolability/indivisibility) and the unitary state. The relationship between each of these concepts as they relate to nationalism are discussed below.

(1) Self determination, national sovereignty and international responsibility

The concept of self determination, as articulated in the Charter of the United Nations (Art. 1, para. 2 and Art. 55), and reiterated in the famous "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" (1961), was principally developed to accommodate the legitimacy of the struggle of the colonial peoples, and peoples under alien domination, to exercise their right to sovereign statehood. "It was repeatedly stressed that it was necessary to avoid any formulation of the principle which might be interpreted as widening its scope and making it applicable to peoples who already formed part of an independent state, as the concept was meant to serve to unite peoples on a voluntary and democratic basis, not to break up existing national entities" (Vajic, 1991). Consequently, the principle of territorial integrity and respect for existing frontiers (or the preservation of the unitary state) as a major factor of international stability predominated over the right to self determination (where this implied the dismemberment of existing states) and secession.

However, advances in the field of democracy and fundamental freedoms over the last decades, accompanied by the growing consensus that the use of force is neither desirable nor effective in stifling aspirations for self determination, have led to situations where conflicts between the concept of self determination and the unitary state have become increasingly more difficult to resolve. The experience of the Kurds, the Slovenes, the Croats and the Bosnians has demonstrated that separatist pressures can no longer be regarded as strictly internal affairs, especially since the resistance to their struggle has had the effect of invalidating the fundamental assumption linking territorial inviolability—and, implicitly, the denial of self determination—to international peace and stability. Consequently, the human rights performance of a state, including its treatment of its minorities, is steadily becoming a matter of legitimate international concern. Embodied in this attitude is the developing consensus, strengthened since the Gulf war experience, that state sovereignty can no longer provide governments immunity in cases of violations of human rights, particularly in its repression of its minorities.

Another related issue is the changed world environment since the end of the cold war in Europe. Whereas before the cause of ethnic minorities was often exploited by the superpowers or their allies as a way of obtaining geopolitical leverage (e.g., US support to the Kurdish

rebellion in the 1970s), the removal of the cold war context, together with the growing intensity of independence movements, has generated a serious reconsideration of the legal foundations and ethical implications of a denial of legitimate aspirations for political and territorial autonomy.

While this may be the case, there is also much confusion as to who has right to self determination, where the limits of national sovereignty and unity lie, and whether and when the territorial integrity of nation states should remain unconditionally unchallenged. What are the main overriding criteria for self determination and independent statehood? Are there any legal distinctions between the rights of those minorities which belong to a group which already has a state (e.g., Albanians in Kosovo, Turks in Cyprus, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, Serbs in Bosnia, Hungarians in Transylvania), and those which do not (e.g., the Kurds or the Chechens)? Does the right to self determination include the right to secession and independent statehood? When should the international community recognize the rights of a peoples to decide on its own international status, and when should the territorial unity of the nation state be protected (as reaffirmed in the Helsinki Final Act)?[2]

In view of the continuing confusion surrounding such issues, self determination claims, especially when they lend themselves to violence, are likely to continue to be based on "the play of geopolitical forces rather than upon the relative merits of the moral and legal case" (Falk, 1994).

(2) Nations and nation states

It would appear then that the drive for self determination, which has acted as the principal inspiration for many modern day nationalist movements, challenges the legitimacy of the state by placing in question its claim to represent the popular will of the nation. We will now turn to the dynamic between the nation and the state as a means of understanding the basis for what is broadly known as ethno-nationalism.

Part of the confusion concerning the nature of the relationship between nation and state arises from the different (sometimes overlapping) meanings ascribed to the former concept depending on the particular context, which are briefly enumerated below:

(i) Nation as synonymous with state.
(ii) Nation as encompassing the state plus other political entities, such as trusts and non-self governing territories, as defined in the UN Charter.
(iii) Nation as representing a people (not a population) belonging to the same ethno-linguistic group, not necessarily inhabiting the same political and territorial space, but possessing the political will or ambition to form a unitary state (e.g., the Kurds).
(iv) Nation as representing a culturally homogenized population living in an existing state (e.g., as in the case of the French nation).[3]
(v) Nation as a community of peoples composed of one or more nationalities and possessing a defined territory and government (e.g., USA, Switzerland).

Given these definitions, a "nation (or multi-national nation) state" can connote:

> (i) A form of political organization under which a relatively homogenized people inhabit a sovereign state; or
> (ii) A political territory where different minority and majority nations formally possessing the same rights live together.

The nationalist belief, as expressed by Guiseppe Mazzini in the 19th century, maintained that every nation (each particular ethno-linguistic group) had the right to form its own state, and that there should be only one state for each nation. This claim has been historically impractical since, by current accounting, there exist practically no ethno-linguistically homogeneous nations.

> The territorial distribution of the human race is older than the idea of ethnic-linguistic nation-states and therefore does not correspond to it. Development in the modern world economy, because it generates vast population movements, constantly undermines ethnic-linguistic homogeneity. Multi-ethnicity and plurilinguality are quite unavoidable, except temporarily by mass exclusion, forcible assimilation, mass expulsion or genocide—in short, by coercion (Hobsbawm, 1991).

In reality, therefore, the definitions are not so clear cut as states are generally multinational (and hence, rarely homogeneous) and nations are quite often polyethnic.[4] Although the "political nation" corresponds to the territorial boundaries of the nation state, an "ethnic nation" may spill over several state boundaries (e.g., the Kurds) and therefore, in that sense, is not synonymous with state.

Nationalism in the Contemporary Era

A number of contemporary developments, one pertaining to the European continent and the former Soviet Union, the other occurring on a world scale but affecting Europe closely, provide some basis for our understanding of the resurgence of nationalism in modern times.

The former concerns the parallel and opposed dynamics in today's Europe between the forces of integration on the one hand (European Union), and those of political disintegration and fragmentation (e.g., former Yugoslavia), fuelled by the awakening of latent ethnic antagonisms, on the other. Expressing itself in the form of nationalist or self determination movements, notably in the Balkans and in several republics of the former Soviet Union, these groups have been seeking protection of minority rights, territorial autonomy or sovereign statehood. It is interesting to note that both trends have had the effect of challenging state sovereignty, though the tendency towards fragmentation—or the weakening or collapse of central political authority —has also delivered a direct blow to the concept of the territorial integrity of the nation state.

The other development has its origins in the increase in international migration as a result of global economic and political developments. Over the last decade or so, Europe has become a main destination for people fleeing economic and political distress, traditionally from the South but increasingly from Eastern Europe. This development, in turn, has created fertile ground for the emergence of xenophobic right-wing groups in Western Europe which are exploiting economic discontent to justify hostility to "outsiders" perceived as competing for limited resources. As we will see later, the xenophobic reaction is not confined to Western Europe, but has come to the fore as a platform of protest in the economically unstable former socialist societies as well.

Contemporary Forms of Nationalism: A Typology

The phenomenon of modern day nationalism springs from multiple and often overlapping factors encompassing social, psychological, economic, political and cultural dimensions. Because of the diversity of the conditions, it is manifested in many different forms which makes it difficult to draw clear distinctions between them. Nevertheless, to the extent possible, the following analysis will concentrate on three broad—and sometimes overlapping-—contemporary varieties, namely, state nationalism, ethno-nationalism and, finally, what we call "protest" nationalism, encompassing both right-wing nationalist movements in Europe and the former Soviet Union as well as the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. Given the background of the preceding section, which has sought to establish the relationship between certain key concepts, we will try to show that in each case nationalism is *a reaction* to something which is directly or indirectly related to the policy or the performance of the state.

(1) State nationalism

In a practice widely resorted to by governments, state nationalism embraces the nation as a whole, thus transcending ethnic distinctions. It is the creation of mass public sentiment in favor of the state and is used by the latter to mobilize popular support for its policies (most prominently in wartime) or to reaffirm its legitimacy.

State nationalism can be expressed in a multitude of ways. Most prominently, it is an instrument wielded in the process of nation state building where the state is created and sustained around the concept and the glorification of the nation (e.g., Croatia). It can also allude to state manipulation of nationalist ideology to promote unity against external opposition (e.g., Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, Castro versus the USA, Iraq under Saddam Hussein). Externally, it can refer to policies aimed at extending the territory of the state into areas which the state claims as belonging to its nation (e.g., Hitler's claims to the Sudentenland and Austria, Serbia's current policy in Bosnia). Internally, one could describe as nationalist actions taken by the state against specific groups or individuals amounting to a denial of cultural pluralism and justified on grounds of the anti- or un-national ("unpatriotic") character of those groups or individuals (e.g., Turkish state and the PKK).[5] The latter policy, as seen from the Turkish-Kurdish confrontation, can serve, in turn, to engender a heightened sense of ethnic identity among the disaffected group, thereby challenging the state's claim to represent the interests of the nation as a whole.

(2) Ethnicity and ethno-nationalism[6]

Although no common definition of ethnicity exists, it is generally described as the awareness on the part of a particular community of having *a separate identity* on the basis of common history, race, language, religion, culture and territory. Where that community constitutes a minority, which is often the case, ethnicity is also used synonymously with minority or identity groups, which is sometimes also loosely extended to migrant or refugee communities. Most ethnic groups are oriented towards recognition and expression of their cultural identity and the protection of their rights as a group to share in the benefits of the state in which they live. An increasing number, however, are seeking various forms of political recognition or autonomy. Irrespective of the regions involved, the complaints appear to be the same: each group feels it is being denied some of the economic, political, social and cultural rights and opportunities available to other populations in a given state.[7] Where their aspirations for greater autonomy or social justice have a territorial basis, the movements concerned may assume a separatist form.

Broadly speaking, therefore, ethnicity becomes a form of nationalism when it assumes a political (and often territorial) dimension that challenges the status quo, and, in some cases, the legitimacy and stability of the state in question by becoming a catalyst for intra- or inter-state conflict. Some would argue that the most dynamic ingredient of nationalism is ethnicity; indeed, that nationalism is in essence the political expression of ethnicity.

It is clear that ethnic divisions have existed since time immemorial. Conflicts or tensions have been present (even when apparently latent) and grievances nursed for generations. What concerns us here are the factors which have given rise to contemporary ethno-nationalism, some of which are enumerated below.

At the national level, the resurgence of ethno-nationalism can be sought in the failure or inability of the modern nation state to serve the national community and to meet the needs of its minority populations in terms of an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Economic deprivation and disparity, as witnessed in numerous cases, has often acted as a powerful catalyst igniting the flame of nationalist revolt and in crystallizing a sense of ethnic identity. Not only does the denial of cultural and political rights and the lack of active power-sharing for minority groups through constitutional arrangements fail to close the poverty gap, but this failure combines, in some cases, with frustration over the slow development of democratic forms of government—a combination that helps to explain some of the political bases for ethnic resurgence. Furthermore, the tendency of the modern nation state to resort to political discrimination, repressive action (e.g., Serb policy towards Kosovo Albanians), or military confrontation (e.g., Turkey and the PKK) to quell the identity demands of its minority populations is another major factor which has exacerbated ethnic tensions. Such actions invariably result in strengthening aspirations for separate ethno-national identity.

A related consequence of state policies also resulting in ethno-nationalism happens when migrant communities fleeing ethnic, political and economic victimization settle in the more industrialized societies and create new hybrid cultural identities distinct from the society in which they have settled. The growing hostility to their presence (frequently expressed through racist rejection) is leading these groups to declare their specificity and to rally around different forms of cultural or political expression. Though most Muslims in Western Europe (numbering over

8 million) say they want to integrate, it can be argued that it is the enmity and coldness of the native European populations which push them to assert their identity through religious and cultural differences.

In Central and Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the principal stimulus for ethnic revival springs from the multinational and multiethnic composition of most of the societies in the region.[8] Large and small minorities living in one country have often felt a greater affinity for their fellow countrymen across the border mostly because of perceived political or cultural inequalities or outright discrimination they experience at home. Such reactions have invariably sprung from or led to repressive government policies, thereby periodically creating serious tensions between the states or communities concerned. In addition, almost all the countries harbor revisionist claims against one another. However, although such tensions have occasionally strained inter-state relations since World War II, they have never jeopardized national and regional stability to the extent witnessed since the collapse of the socialist state system, the war in Bosnia being its most tragic illustration.

The situation in the former Soviet Union is analogous, demonstrated most dramatically by the liberation struggle of the Chechen people and the inter-ethnic conflicts within the Transcausian republics. Several reasons are ascribed to this development, some of which are outlined below.

The "deep freeze" effect: namely, that the totalitarian regimes were not successful in quelling ethnic passions; they were merely kept frozen only to resurface when authoritarian structures which imposed an artificial homogeneity disintegrated.[9] In fact, some would even argue that the historical tendency in the Balkans has inclined more towards ethnic differentiation than towards integration (Liebich, 1991: 60).

Others claim that it is the disintegration of central power and not the strength of national feeling that has forced certain republics, such as Khazakstan and Macedonia which did not previously dream of separation, to assert their independence as a means of self-preservation (Hobsbawm, 1991). Or, stated differently, nationalism, in this case, becomes a means of filling the political void left by the rapid breakdown of central political authority, or of retrospectively celebrating new-found statehood. A related argument is that nationalism is a reaction to communist ideology's denial of national identity based on its promotion of the all-embracing concept of "homo-Sovieticus" which sought to foster the illusion of homogeneity.[10] In other words, it is an identity response to the vacuum left after the collapse of communist rule.

The seeming inability of the nation state to satisfy the demands of ethno-cultural minorities and the lack of an accepted international premise for the recognition of self determination (as in the case of Chechenya) no doubt constitute additional reasons for the eruption of ethnic tensions in the region.

(3) Protest nationalism

Not unlike ethno-nationalism, the phenomenon of what we call protest nationalism can broadly be explained as a response to perceived social, political, cultural or economic insecurity brought about or subsequently exploited, directly or indirectly, by state policy.

(a) Right-wing nationalism in Western Europe

According to conventional wisdom, wealth, individual freedoms and political maturity should have inoculated Europe against xenophobic and parochial forms of nationalism and ushered in a heightened sense of tolerance and acceptance of the "other." On the other side of the coin, modernization theory assumed that the experience of industrialization and urbanization would gradually reduce ethnic differences and ultimately assimilate all minority groups (principally through the educational and occupational systems) into a single homogeneous culture defined by the boundaries of the nation state.

Yet, as recent European history has shown, xenophobic nationalism, embodying characteristics of neo-fascist ideology, can also emerge among groups within so-called advanced societies. These reactions have tended to flourish within a more general context of socio-economic decline and political change. The ensuing insecurities have found their principal target in the settled or newly arriving immigrant communities. As many analysts have pointed out, at a time of economic stress, all "foreign" elements and new arrivals are bound to be resented —even ethnic Germans from ex-GDR wishing to settle in Germany. "The Germans have been gripped by fear," reported *Der Spiegel* in 1992. "Fear of strangers, fear for their jobs, fear of inflation and recession, fear also of the unavoidable impression that the island of prosperity on which they live can no longer be preserved."[11]

These phenomena explain in part the popular appeal of right-wing parties and groups in Western Europe[12] which seek to defend so-called national and cultural identity and norms on the basis of reactionary, authoritarian and racist slogans advocating for the most part the severe restriction of immigration and asylum policies. The phenomenon or, as some put it, the traumatism, of immigration has been used as a convenient target for public discontent and has become a politically important and sensitive issue.

Some also explain the popular successes of these groups or parties in terms of the reaction to the political disorientation arising from the rapid collapse of the communist menace and the accompanying psychological need to transfer the "enemy" image to new sources of threat. As has traditionally been the case in history, most notably with the Jews, in times of economic crisis and social instability, ethno-nationalistic sentiments offer groups an opportunity to put the blame on others outside their own community.

A further attraction of these right-wing parties appears to lie in their promise to eliminate corruption, misery and unemployment and their ability to exploit people's aspiration for a better life. Sadly, they speak for those Europeans who have lost faith in more moderate or mainstream political parties,[13] who are disoriented by post-communist upheavals and who fear interlopers from other countries and other cultures.[14]

The real threat of these parties is not that they will take over power in Europe. Their pernicious impact lies in the fact that they are forcing the center-right parties to shift further to the right, threatening, in some cases, to undermine the very foundations of democracy. In France, for instance, the ruling conservatives have stolen the far-right's thunder by tightening French citizenship laws and officially calling for "zero immigration," leading to the observation that the moderate right is simply trying to "outflank the National Front by being even tougher on immigrants" (*The Economist*, 27 April 1996, p. 33). The German government has similarly

restricted the country's asylum policies, a step that can hardly be unrelated to mounting xenophobic sentiment expressed not only by fringe groups, but also by far-right parties. In Britain, asylum and immigration policies have been tightened to a point where state policies are considered by some to seriously breach liberal values and to "betoken a dangerous defensiveness" (*The Economist*, 4 May 1996, p. 16).

(b) Right-wing nationalism in the former Soviet block

The phenomenon of right-wing resurgence is not confined to Western Europe. Extremist groups and parties have also sprung up in the former Soviet block. About 80 ultra-nationalist groups are said to be currently active in the Russian Federation. One of the most prominent social manifestations of this trend is Pamyat, the xenophobic chauvinist Slavic movement founded in 1986 which extols Russia's imperial past, advocates submission to the authority of the Russian Orthodox church and whips up discontent and support by targeting ethnic minorities as scapegoats for Russia's troubles. A more prominent manifestation of right-wing populism in Russia is the misleadingly named Liberal Democratic Party. Led by the now well-known Vladimir Zhirinovsky, it is said to get its support from the most alienated segments of society, such as blue collar workers hit hard by food shortages and inflation, army officers bitter about the country's fall from superpower status and its seemingly inescapable dependence on the West for economic revival, and young voters disappointed with the Yeltsin experiment. Some of Zhirinovsky's supporters have since defected to the Communist Party, whose leader, also a fervent nationalist, claims that great power status is an intrinsic part of Russia's national identity and that a "voluntary" restoration of the old Soviet block is "a historical necessity" (*The Economist*, 16 March 1996, p. 33). However, it is also sobering to observe that the far right's real hard core views Zhirinovsky with contempt. One example is the Russian National Unity led by Alexander Barkashov who is building a neo-fascist movement whose declared objective is to "fight . . . against the internal and external enemies of . . . the Russian nation"; a paranoia that appears to be shared by all national patriots (*The Economist*, 28 January 1996, p. 21).

Nor need one look to extreme far-right groups to find evidence of manipulation of nationalist sentiment. Neither Boris Yeltsin, who has led a merciless and ineffective war since 1994 against the determined resistance of the Chechen people, nor General Alexander Lebed, his new security advisor, have been shy about exploiting nationalist feelings to attract popular support.

Several reasons are advanced to explain the resurgence of right-wing nationalism in the former Soviet block. At first, one could imagine it being a means of filling the ideological void left by the collapse of the communist system. More importantly, however, the feeling of gloom upon which it feeds has its roots in the rapid dismantling of the old centralized political system and the attempt to achieve a quick transition to a market economy. This is taking the shape of destructive inflation, mass unemployment, shortages of goods, declining living standards, growing disparities in income, and increased crime and Mafia activity. New market-induced inequalities are replacing the old. Predictably, non-Slavs living in Russia (notably, the Chechens, Azeris, people from Central Asia and the Jews) are being targeted. Moreover, the concept of social justice, deeply engraved in people's minds in all state socialist countries, is making adjustment

to the economic crisis even more dramatic. Consequently, right-wing populism is also seen as a reaction to the climate of insecurity triggered by the accelerated transition to new political and economic systems.

(c) Religious fundamentalism

The sources of dogmatic fundamentalism, whether of the nationalist or of the religious variety, appear to spring from the same psychological roots, the principal component of which is probably the question of identity. In this case, religious faith is used as a means to assert or reaffirm a separate identity, which is why we consider it to be a manifestation of nationalism.

There is no doubt that the crisis of identity in the Third World, provoked by its struggle for self preservation and survival in a world dominated by hegemonic political and economic structures controlled by the industrialized powers, is the most critical factor contributing to a return to traditional religious values. It is also a way of helping people cope with the pace of rapid change and modernity.

In addition, both nationalist and religious fundamentalisms derive their support from popular grassroots sentiments such as insecurity and disorientation, poverty and social unrest, political and economic exclusion, and the sentiment of injustice. Thus, religious fundamentalism —most prominently, of the Islamic variety—also tends to arise from the disarray people feel in the face of what appears to be a society without future. In addition to being a unifying force, a main attraction thus seems to reside in its ability to provide people with a sense of purpose and a guide for the soul in an unjust, unfriendly and oppressive world.

Similarly, the revival of orthodoxy and other forms of religious worship in the former Soviet Union as well as in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, with which some neo-nationalist movements have closely aligned themselves, is said to be a means of countering the disappointment and despair which came at the heels of the initial euphoria of liberation and feeling of political and national renaissance. In addition to being a reaction to the spiritual vacuum which prevailed under 70 years of atheist rule, the use of the Church is also considered to be a means employed by the state to promote national identity (e.g., Serbia), or to reinforce claims to a separate identity (e.g., Poland).

Among expatriate communities in Western Europe threatened by exclusion, hostility, xenophobia and racism, religion is used as a means of protecting and preserving national and cultural identity.

In Islamic societies, where religious values have traditionally provided the foundation for social and political life, it is not surprising to see religion being used as an alternative to Western-influenced state policy which is perceived as having failed to cope with dire socioeconomic and political problems. The former is mainly due to the uncontrolled exodus from rural to urban centers and the ensuing socioeconomic hardship confronted by these groups. No less important is the accompanying culture shock which rural migrants receive when they are faced with the "decadence" of city life which is generally attributed to Western influence. Political instability, on the other hand, is induced by undemocratic forms of government, open political conflict or confrontation, or by outright military occupation. The growing popularity of such groups as Hamas (in Gaza), Hezbollah (in southern Lebanon), the FIS (in Algeria), and

the religious party (Refah) in secular Turkey which draws much of its support from the Kurdish community, bears witness to the observation that religious groups draw their support from prevailing political, economic and cultural threat and insecurity. Religious values and a return to traditionalism are thus used as a means of expressing public protest, and of generating some element of hope among the threatened and disillusioned.

Nationalism and Democracy

It would appear, at first sight, that the correlation between these two processes are sometimes of a causal nature. That is to say that in some cases, nationalism is the manifestation of democratic pluralism taken to its extreme in the *negative* sense, by leading to intolerance and exclusivity. Conversely, in other cases, nationalism is the expression of social opposition to the lack of, or insufficient forms of, democracy. Looking at the recent experience of the former socialist countries, however, one is tempted to speculate that it is more the *rapid* and radical transition from totalitarian to democratic rule, rather than the switch to democracy itself, which has unleashed the forces of nationalism. One may then conclude that nationalism can spawn or stifle democracy, depending on whether it takes a fundamentally progressive or reactionary form.[15]

A nuanced comparison can also be made about the relationship between the two processes in Western Europe, where an advanced state of democracy has also provided the context within which extremist nationalist forces have been able to express themselves. The manifestation of ultra right-wing sentiments in Western Europe could, in turn, have the effect of undermining democratic principles in the long run by forcing mainstream parties to pander more to populist policies.

More serious perhaps, is the situation in the former Soviet block. Where there are economic grievances and undeveloped democratic institutions, as in the case of most of the former socialist countries, processes of democratization and pluralism can initially fuel populist, chauvinist, nationalist, parochial and ethno-centric trends.[16] Indeed, in societies just emerging from totalitarian rule, processes of democratization can act as a vehicle for the flourishing of nationalism or separatism—or the free expression of particularisms—because they encourage ethnic self-consciousness which, in turn, threatens to overwhelm democracy by encouraging conflict and violence. Paradoxically, therefore, pluralistic revolutions can in certain circumstances (in this case, as a counter-effect to totalitarianism) reignite explosive national conflicts and fuel anti-pluralist tendencies.

The economic component becomes a critical factor in the success of the transition process. The destructive impact of the economic crisis in some countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is said to be undermining stable democratization by unleashing disintegrative energies and by providing implicit support for anti-reformist forces (Nakarada, 1991). In a situation where a major incentive for rejecting communism came from its inability to provide the economic prosperity enjoyed in the West, and where people long accustomed to the notion of

social welfare see their lives made worse by the new freedoms, the nationalist backlash will continue to grow. If the former Soviet Union's experiment with democracy collapses with economic ruin, it is quite possible that right-wing populists will be there promising a return to order and stability in exchange for political freedoms.

In fact, studies of transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe suggest that "a rapid decomposition of state power, especially when aggravated by serious economic decline, is hardly conducive for the establishment of viable democratic regimes." This claim seems to be born out by the current situation in Eastern and Central Europe, where "the rapid disintegration of party-states [has] produced a power vacuum which has been hastily permeated by highly fragmented political forces . . . prone to radicalization not only around political and economic issues, but also around ethnic and religious cleavages." Hence, some argue that "the tasks facing new democratically elected governments are so drastic that some form of coercive policies may be necessary in order to accomplish a fundamental restructuring of political and economic systems" (Ekiert, 1991: 288 & 312).

Another inherent danger contained in the transition to a democratic system, particularly in heterogeneous societies, concerns the rights of minorities. While democracy is based on majority rule, it also implies respect for the rights and interests of minority groups. It is the lack of sufficient constitutional guarantees for minority rights, combined with discrepancies in economic conditions between different regions and ethnic groups, which has been one of the principal causes of inter-ethnic tensions within and between states. While an advanced democratic system may eventually achieve some form of social, economic and political equilibrium between majority and minority ethnic interests, this may be extremely difficult to attain at the early stages of democratic institution-building. In such a situation, political freedoms might actually be used on the part of the majority as a pretext to vent ethnic or cultural prejudice —and hence, to curtail the freedom of minority groups, a development which may eventually provoke a counter-nationalist backlash—rather than to institutionalize political and cultural pluralism.

In fact, aspects of such a development can be witnessed in certain republics of the former Soviet Union where the transition to democratic rule has paradoxically been accompanied by a drive to create "ethnically pure" states. Proposals to grant citizenship on the basis of ethnic criteria have been advanced in Georgia as well as in the relatively more advanced Baltic republics.[17] In witnessing such developments, one cannot help recalling Hannah Arendt's observation, made in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* that the road to ethnic purification was one that lead directly toward totalitarianism. However, a more optimistic rejoinder might attribute such tendencies to the counter-effects of totalitarianism and to the undeveloped state of democratic institutions. It might argue that young democracies take a while to be nurtured; that they cannot simply be ordained.

Conclusion

As will be clear from the preceding analysis, nationalism has assumed a multitude of forms, both historically and in the contemporary era, most of which are generally related, directly or indirectly, to the policy or performance of the central state. At the outset of this paper it was argued that nationalism had historically served three paradoxical purposes by contributing to the formation, survival as well as the dismemberment of nation states. In the context of the typologies created, one could argue that state nationalism constitutes a celebration of sovereign statehood; ethno-nationalism, a challenge to the legitimacy (and sometimes, integrity) of the state; and protest nationalism, a critique of state policy or, going one step further, a response to the crisis of the nation state.

Although one obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that the nation state has clearly failed in its claim to represent the popular will, it does not necessarily follow that it has also expended its purpose as an effective or desirable form of political organization. One fundamental impediment to transcending this claim is the prevailing and ever-strong aspiration of most self determination movements to seek the nation state paradigm as the final embodiment of their political goals. Hence, the issue appears to be more one of *how* boundaries should be drawn, rather than that of questioning the basic legitimacy or desirability of sovereign political statehood within a defined territory. Given the historical discrepancy between the political development of different peoples, a more realistic approach for the medium-term may be to advocate measures which seek to narrow the growing disparity between the rights of (all members of) society and the obligations of the central state. It is also conceded that given the rise in nationalist sentiment in recent years, the question of the recognition of ethnic and minority rights will eventually have to be treated beyond the nation state paradigm.

Notes

1. Indeed, given that an ethnic redrawing of the African political map would give birth to over 300 new states, the OAU adopted, on the eve of its creation in 1963, the binding principle of *Uri Possidetis*, namely, implicit respect for existing boundaries, in a separate resolution from its Charter. Consequently, members of the OAU have been largely faithful to the policy of not granting assistance to secessionist movements in Black Africa, a prominent illustration being their refrain from providing support to the Biafran movement during the Nigerian civil war.

2. By way of a partial response, jurists point out that not all groups have the automatic right to self-determination. In fact, under existing international law, minorities do not have the right to statehood or autonomy unless the state in question voluntarily grants it (e.g., as in the case of the Czech and Slovak Republics) or is forced to cede them such rights (e.g., Eritrea). Only "nations" and "peoples" do (e.g., as in the case of the Croats and the Slovenes, as defined

by the former Yugoslavian constitution). Hence, according to this interpretation, Albanians in Kosovo do not have the same rights as the Croats and Slovenes because they constitute a "minority" according to the constitution of the new Yugoslavia, even if they form a majority in the region of Kosovo itself. The case of the Kurds is also tricky and analogous to that of the Serbs in ex-Yugoslavia and the Russians in the former Soviet Union spread over several different state boundaries. A military solution to gathering an ethnic peoples within a single state by parcelling out existing states, whether through a policy of "ethnic cleansing" or aggressive conquest, is not, as the Serbian case has shown, a viable option.

3. Since 1974, four regional languages are recognized for instructional purposes: Breton, Basque, Catalan and Occitan (Cellard, 1976).

4. There are around 8,000-10,000 identifiably separate ethnic groups in the world, yet only 178 [now 185 - Eds.] states (Mayall, 1990: 64).

5. See Breuilly (1982: 10). Other examples include anti-Semitism of the Third Reich, and the policies of the US government (e.g., Committee on un-American Activities) during the McCarthy era of the 1950s.

6. For an excellent theoretical analysis of this subject, see Lawson, 1992.

7. According to some estimates, 25% of the global population are minorities experiencing serious deprivation in relation to fellow citizens of a given state. While a greater percentage are in Third World countries, Western Europe has 21 such minority groups spread over 13 countries, constituting 7.8% of the total population, and North America has 8 minority groups in 4 countries, comprising 15.8% of its population (Boulding, 1990).

8. To get just an inkling of the inter-ethnic composition of the Balkan states, one need only consider the presence of Hungarians in Transylvania (Romania) and in Vojvodina (Serbia); the Romanian-speaking Moldavians in Moldovo (or Bessarabia, historically contested by Romania); the Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia and Greece; the Greeks in northern Epirus (Albania); the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina; the Macedonians in Greece and Bulgaria; the Turks in Bulgaria. For a detailed exposition of the distribution of ethnicities in Central and Eastern Europe, see Liebich (1991: 56-61).

9. A related explanation argues that the communist state never allowed the development of a civil society; it oppressed ethnic, national and religious beliefs, permitting only class identification. The explosion came when communist leaders attempted to manipulate these beliefs, playing one nationality against the other, in order to stay in power as long as they could (Drakulic, 1992).

10. As Vaclev Havel (1993) explains, "This vast shroud of uniformity, stifling all national, intellectual, spiritual, social, cultural, and religious variety covered over any differences and created the monstrous illusion that we were all the same."

11. Cited in *Newsweek* "Europe's New Right," 27 April 1992, p. 9. In Vienna, the Austrian Freedom Party, which employs strong anti-immigrant rhetoric, won 23% of the municipal elections in 1991, and 22.6% of the vote in October 1994. The far-right Italian Social Movement (MSI), which won 13.5% of the general election in March 1994, then became part of the ruling coalition (*International Herald Tribune*, 27 November 1992; *The Economist*, October 15, 1994, pp. 41-42). The prevailing public alarm is in turn reinforced by the poor living

conditions and increased crime rate of some immigrant communities (e.g., Albanians in Italy), which act as unpleasant reminders of the social ills generally associated with developing societies.

12. In Germany, France, Italy, Austria, and Belgium, the far-right parties scored advances in the early 1990s, although support for these parties has since waned in some countries.

13. As the political platforms of Social Democrats and moderate conservatives in Europe have slowly converged so as to become virtually indistinguishable, the extreme right has also benefitted as the primary recipient of *protest* votes. The smaller parties are also loosing votes to the far right. Many of Mr. Pen's latest supporters are said to be working class defectors from the Communist Party, who fear that their blue-collar jobs are jeopardized by immigrants willing to accept lower wages to work in France. In the 1994 municipal elections, the Front won more than a quarter of the votes in 20 big towns of over 30,000 inhabitants, and outright control of three towns (*The Economist*, 27 April 1996, p. 33).

14. For the range of discontent these parties exploit, see *Newsweek*, 24 April 1992, p. 10.

15. An example of progressive nationalism is that which developed in the East European countries during the time of Soviet domination, when "nationalism became the common denominator of East European resistance to communism" (Ekiert, 1991: 290). The nationalism of Serbian leader Milosevic, on the other hand, is qualified as reactionary because it is used as an instrument of exclusion, destruction and oppression.

16. As in Yugoslavia, for instance, where the fall of communism did not usher in a democratic order. Instead, it gave way to populist ethno-nationalism.

17. Among the most restrictive is Latvia, seeking to protect its 52% majority ethnic Latvian population on the basis of birth rights and linguistic competence. Similar suggestions have also been advanced in Lithuania, where nationalists refuse naturalization to those settled in the country after 1940 (Neier, 1991). In the Estonian elections of June 1992, only those of Estonian origin were allowed to vote.

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