

## Controversies Concerning Nation and Nationalism: An Introduction

The study of nation-building and nationalism has seen both empirical and normative controversies. Among the former one may include debates as to whether ethnicity and nationality should be seen as, in some sense, primordial or as essentially modern phenomena, the nature of the relationship between nationalism, on the one hand, and liberalism and industrialization, respectively, on the other, the precise impact of the French revolutionary epoch on the growth and spread of nationalism in Europe, and the comparability of nationalisms across time and space. Among the latter (normative) controversies one may mention alternative orientations toward notions of self-determination, disagreements concerning so-called “civic nationalism” (thought by its apologists to be non-ethnic and non-cultural, and hence salutary), and the solubility of ethnic and national conflicts.

Peter Sugar recognized, early on, the need to distinguish among alternative types of nationalism. In an essay of his published in 1969, specifically, Sugar delineated four forms assumed by nationalism in the East European context.<sup>1</sup> These he identified as bourgeois, aristocratic, popular, and bureaucratic nationalisms. While scholars might perhaps quarrel about the specific categories or labels indicated by Sugar, few if any can doubt but that distinguishing among types of nationalism constitutes the starting point, whether explicitly or implicitly, for any serious study of the subject.

Once this first step is taken, advocacy of a simple “primordial” interpretation of nationalism as such becomes completely untenable. In any event, there has been a growing consensus emerging in the field over the past three decades that nationalism is an essentially *modern* phenomenon. Hans Kohn,<sup>2</sup> Crawford Young,<sup>3</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm,<sup>4</sup> Ernest

<sup>1</sup> Peter F. Sugar, “External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism,” in Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle and Los Angeles: University of Washington Press, 1969), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

<sup>3</sup> Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 1.

Gellner,<sup>5</sup> Charles Taylor,<sup>6</sup> and Peter Sugar himself<sup>7</sup> all agree on this point. But beneath this ostensible consentaneity, some disagreements continue, including concerning the specific relationship of industrialization to the rise of nationalism,<sup>8</sup> as well as concerning the role of the peasantry and the countryside in this dynamic.<sup>9</sup> As for how Napoleon and French revolutionary ideas figure in the rise of nationalism in East-Central Europe, one finds once again differences of opinion. Ivo Banac cautions against representing the French as if they introduced nationalism single-handedly into the East-Central European region,<sup>10</sup> while Ivan Berend underlines the role played by the Napoleonic army in the destruction of feudal systems across the continent as well as in the stimulation of local nationalism, concluding that, therefore, “nationalism arrived in Central and Eastern Europe before nations were born”<sup>11</sup>—a paradoxical conclusion.

As for the relationship of liberalism to nationalism, controversy arose as a factor of changing understandings of the definition of nation as well as of the ramifications entailed in the democratic project. When, for example, John Stuart Mill defended the notion that members of a nation “desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively,”<sup>12</sup> he was not thinking in terms of any notion of “national self-determination” in the modern sense; indeed, when he referred to “the nation,” he was not thinking of an ethnocultural or ethnolinguistic group at all, but only of the collective population in a given society. Maurice Bloch argued along similar lines. Taking the word “nationality” to refer to a distinct ethnocultural group, Bloch urged that “... generally, the principle of [the self-determina-

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in John A. Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation; Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 191–98.

<sup>7</sup> Peter F. Sugar, “Ethnicity in Eastern Europe,” in Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1980), 423–24.

<sup>8</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism,” in Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation*, 293–94.

<sup>9</sup> See Tom Nairn, “The Curse of Rurality: Limits of Modernisation Theory,” in Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation*, 108–09, 120–26.

<sup>10</sup> Oral communication.

<sup>11</sup> Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 53.

<sup>12</sup> J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government*, as quoted in Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 19.

tion of] nationalities is legitimate when it tends to unite, in a compact whole, scattered groups of population, and illegitimate when it tends to divide a state.”<sup>13</sup>

The issue became vastly more complicated when, in the Vormärz period, F. Palacký and L. Kossuth, and others, associated liberal democracy and nationalism. Later, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson linked the two concepts—liberal democracy and national self-determination—in the course of World War One.<sup>14</sup> Since then, most writers—whether one thinks of Allen Buchanan<sup>15</sup> or David Miller<sup>16</sup> or Daniel Kofman<sup>17</sup> or Brendan O’Leary<sup>18</sup>—have either taken it as a given that liberal democracy and national self-determination are mutually inclusive or sought to demonstrate the point. Kofman, for example, writes, “Should there be a right of secession? Yes, I shall argue, for territorial-based groups with historical-cultural identities,”<sup>19</sup> thereby seeming to rule out that a portion of a single homogeneous people might, for any reason, secede—a point which might require some modification in conditions of tyranny. Kofman does concede, though, that rights of secession need to be limited, and further that new states created by successful secessions are obliged to make accommodations for groups finding themselves subordinated to the new power structure. Others, such as Rudolf Rocker,<sup>20</sup> have been vastly more hostile toward both nationalism and notions of national self-determination, viewing both as intrinsically inimical to liberalism, while Rogers Brubaker has challenged the notion of the primacy of the national group (over, for example, religious group or social class) as well as the presumption that ethno-national group boundaries are capable of simple and unambiguous identification, even by those concerned.<sup>21</sup> Rather than according nationalism some kind of primordial moral legitimacy, as the apologists of “liberal nationalism” do, Brubaker argues that “... nationalism is a

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 33.

<sup>14</sup> See discussion in Derek Heater, *National Self-Determination: Woodrow Wilson and his Legacy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Allen Buchanan, *Secession: The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Kofman, “Rights of Secession,” in *Society* 35, no. 5 (July–August 1998): esp. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Brendan O’Leary, “Ernest Gellner’s Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview or, What Is Living and What Is Dead in Ernest Gellner’s Philosophy of Nationalism,” in Hall, ed., *The State of the Nation*, 66–70.

<sup>19</sup> Kofman, “Rights of Secession,” 30.

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture*, trans. Ray E. Chase (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions,” 279–80.

way of seeing the world, a way of identifying interests, or, more precisely, a way of specifying interest-bearing units...”<sup>22</sup> Hans Hermann Hoppe has defended a right of national self-determination, in a manner of speaking, without undertaking to claim that nations are invested with specific rights, by allowing that any group of people enjoys, in his view, the right of secession from the state, even down to the level of the family. Clearly, if *any* group of people may secede, without having to justify the act of secession by reference to shared language or common culture, then any *national* group may also secede under Hoppe’s scheme.<sup>23</sup> My own position is close to that of Brubaker, insofar as I have argued that, under classical liberalism, natural duties, and hence also natural rights, are aggregated only at the levels of individuals and societies, and not at the level of ethno-national groupings, which is to say that there is no “natural right” of national self-determination, only a right of any group of people, regardless of their linguistic or cultural diversity, to seek to overthrow tyranny or, failing to overthrow it, to secede.<sup>24</sup>

In assessing the relationship of nationalism to liberalism, we have already crossed into the normative sphere. Closely related, here, is the argument made by Liah Greenfeld<sup>25</sup> and others that one may distinguish between a positive “civic nationalism” and a negative “ethnic nationalism”—a distinction urged also by Pope Paul VI and Vladimir Tismaneanu<sup>26</sup> among others. In a variation of this approach, John Plamenatz has referred to “the relatively benign nationalisms” of Italians and Germans during the nineteenth century,<sup>27</sup> though I suspect that he would have been the first to admit that these “relatively benign” nationalisms turned malignant in the first half of the twentieth century. My own

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Hermann Hoppe, “The Western State as Paradigm,” in *Society* 35, no. 5 (July–August 1998): 21–25.

<sup>24</sup> See my *Whose Democracy? Nationalism, Religion, and the Doctrine of Collective Rights in Post-1989 Eastern Europe* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 1994), introduction, chap. 3, and conclusion; and my “The So-Called Right of National Self-Determination and Other Myths,” in *Human Rights Review* 2, no. 1 (October–December 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, “Nationalism, Populism, and Other Threats to Liberal Democracy in Post-Communist Europe,” *The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies*, no. 20 (Seattle: The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies of the University of Washington, 1999), esp. 22–28.

<sup>27</sup> As cited in Ernest Gellner, “Ethnicity, Culture, Class and Power,” in Sugar, ed., *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict*, 272–73.

sympathies here lie with Brubaker once again, however. For Brubaker, the distinction between a positive or “healthy” nationalism and a negative or “unhealthy” ethnic or “radical” nationalism “... is both analytically and normatively problematic.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, in his view, “there is not necessarily anything ‘civic’—in the normatively robust sense of that term—about state-framed nationhood or nationalism,” and indeed, “state-framed nationalisms are often imbued with a strong cultural content and may be (though need not be) ethnicized as well.”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, on the solubility of nationality issues, those “solutions” which have been tried have generally proven to be unstable (e.g., power-sharing arrangements as per Belgium or pre-1976 Lebanon) or counterproductive (e.g., autonomy arrangements as a substitute for liberalism, as per socialist Yugoslavia or the USSR) or fueling an infinite regress of further demands (e.g., autonomy arrangements in legitimate systems, as per Scotland or Quebec or post-1867 Hungary) or morally problematic (e.g., the population exchanges after World War One involving Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey).

The chapters which follow do not aspire to resolve the foregoing controversies—an aspiration which would, in any event, prove a vain ambition—but should be situated within the context of these controversies and debates. Each of the chapters herein revolves around one or more of the following issues:

1. *Understandings of nation.* How have different political figures, cultural figures, parties, movements, and governments construed the meaning of their nation’s history and their sense of nationhood? Where do these understandings originate? Whose interests do they serve? What are the side-effects of different understandings of nation?
2. *Understandings of nationalism.* Nationalism is not always understood the same way. How have different writers, analysts, and observers, as well as participants in political action, understood nationalism and what case do they make *for* or *against* nationalism?
3. *Changes in nationalism.* How does the nationalism of a given nation change over time? What other changes accompany changes in nationalism, and what continuities in nationalism can one identify even amid overt changes? Is most change in nationalism the result of conscious manipulation by particular individuals and parties, or the by-product of greater systemic changes in which individuals play at best bit-parts?

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<sup>28</sup> Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions,” 299.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

4. *Typologies of nationalism.* How may we best understand the nationalism of the given cases(s)? Which of a number of typologies tells us what about the given case?
5. *The urban-rural cleavage.* What is the relationship of nationalism to the urban-rural cleavage and to the tensions between city and the countryside, as well as between the capital and smaller towns? If we may posit an *ideal type* of nationalism in which urban intellectuals and politicians make use of rural culture and its artifacts and ideas in order to manufacture nationalism, exporting that nationalism back to the countryside, what deviations from that “ideal type” do we find in the sundry societies of East-Central Europe and what accounts for the deviations?
6. *The role of activists.* What is there about the background of politically active individuals which leads some of them to take up nationalist causes? How important is any given individual (whether Palacký or Starčević or any other) in fashioning the particular nationalism which takes hold in the society in question?

Coverage of the East-Central European region is relatively comprehensive in this volume. Although the decision was taken early in the life of this project to omit from separate discussion Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Slovenia, all other major communities are represented herein. Chapters are arranged in rough order of descent from treatments of earlier epochs to treatments of more recent epochs, and from north to south. These two criteria were not always mutually congruent, as will be evident. The volume closes with a tribute to Peter Sugar, written by his friend Peter Mentzel.

The issue of nationalism in East-Central Europe has, if anything, grown in salience in the past two to three decades. Yet, in spite of this, there have been few books devoted to the comprehensive analysis of that phenomenon during the nineteenth century. A notable exception is the seminal work on that subject edited by Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer and published in 1969.<sup>30</sup> This book is, thus, a fitting tribute to a scholar whose work has inspired all of us.

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<sup>30</sup> Cited in note 1. See also Peter F. Sugar, “Nationalism and Religion in the Balkans since the 19th Century,” *The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies*, no. 8 (Seattle: The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies of the University of Washington, 1996); and Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1995).