

When is a Nation?

ANTHONY D. SMITH

The dominant perspective on nationalism in history and the social sciences is one that treats nations as modern constructs, the products of the new conditions that have changed the world since the Enlightenment and the French and American revolutions. But modernist views are decidedly ethnocentric; they are also as theoretically problematic and historically questionable as the perennialist perspective which they supplanted. An alternative 'ethno-symbolic' approach reveals the various forms of the nation in history, and seeks to supplement the rather linear historical question, 'when is the nation?', with the more recurrent and sociological problem of 'when is a nation?'. The latter question invites us to delineate different starting points and patterns of nation-formation in terms of ideal-type constructs, while an emphasis on the role of ethnic myths, memories, symbols and traditions helps us to explore the processes and routes by which nations are formed in different epochs and continents. By taking more subjective features into account, an 'ethno-symbolic' approach also reveals the tentative nature of such an exploration and the extent to which the category of the nation is subject to different, and often conflicting, interpretations by members, outsiders and analysts.

When is a Nation?

The category of the nation has long constituted a puzzle for all kinds of people. For universalist liberals and internationalists, the nation is a major obstacle to their dreams. But it also represents a conundrum. Why, they ask, in an age of enlightenment and progress should so many men and women remain wedded to their national identities and be prepared to make sacrifices for their national states? For socialists, too, nationalism has constituted at best a major diversion from the march of history. Yet they are no more able to account for its power and ubiquity. The same, from the other side of the ideological spectrum, is true of universal religions which seek to transcend all boundaries of caste, class and nation. Even conservatives and traditionalists, who may 'feel' the nation and grant it a role in history, find themselves at a loss to account for its appeal, or to explain the emergence and diffusion of nationalism. For all these differing

Anthony D. Smith, European Institute, London School of Economics, University of London.
Email: <nations@lse.ac.uk>.

Geopolitics, Vol.7, No.2 (Autumn 2002) pp.5-32
PUBLISHED BY FRANK CASS, LONDON

perspectives, the nation and its nationalism are felt to be profoundly problematic.

Yet, in one respect, there is almost universal agreement. If scholars give widely discrepant answers to the question, 'why is the nation?', they are largely united over the question of 'when is the nation?'. For the vast majority of analysts, some ancient and medievalist historians excepted, the nation and nationalism are modern; and 'modern' means both relatively recent (since the French and American revolutions) and qualitatively novel. Their 'modernism' is structural, a matter of sociology as much as chronology. They hold that nations, national identities, national states and nationalist ideologies are both recent and novel; they are all products, or constructs, of modernity and its novel conditions of urbanism, capitalism, industrialism, secularism, mass education, bureaucracy and democracy.

Here I want to concentrate on the category of the nation. I shall be attempting to show that this category takes different forms in different periods and areas. Different forms of the nation have varied 'pedigrees', that is, they can be traced back to different starting-points and through varied processes of nation-formation. Our task is to reconstruct those pedigrees, by uncovering their ethnic bases and formation processes, including the continuities and ruptures with earlier forms of collective cultural identities. This approach is altogether different from the 'reconstruction' of the nation undertaken by nationalists, which as a species of salvation drama, was and continues to be based on a mythology of origins, efflorescence, decline and renewal. Rather, the type of 'reconstruction' undertaken here is analytical, exploratory and problematising, and it aims to suggest new lines of historical and sociological investigation.

Modernism and its Problems

No such doubts and questions attach to the current modernist orthodoxy. On the contrary: its proponents are scornful of any approach that does not start from the premise that nations and nationalism are modern (recent and novel). Thus Elie Kedourie boldly asserts the early nineteenth-century European, indeed German Romantic, origins of nationalist doctrine, and Ernest Gellner, John Breuilly and Eric Hobsbawm are equally firmly convinced of the modernity of nations and national states. This is because nations and national states are the products – 'inventions', 'creations' and/or 'constructs' – of the ideology of nationalism, which is itself wholly modern. For modernists, the causal chain is basically one-way, and it runs from modernity to nationalism to nations.¹

To demonstrate the modernity of the category, modernists bring forward five features of the nation which they claim to be both recent and novel, and

which can only be found, and can only flourish, in modern conditions. The nation is a category of modernity, and cannot be found outside it, because it is:

- 1 a territorial unit, with clear borders, one that is a translocal, but bounded community, with mobility of its population throughout the territory, and a close bond between the 'people' and their 'homeland', which shapes the character and identity of the people;
- 2 a legal-political community, that is, a community which shares a single code of law, the members of which have a common legal status which carries common rights and duties based on a distinctive political culture and shared traditions and values, the nation in turn being regarded as an autonomous political community *vis-à-vis* other such communities;
- 3 legitimated (if not created) by nationalist ideology, which holds that the world is divided into nations, each having its own character, history and destiny; that nations are the sole source of political power; that individuals owe the nation their first loyalty; that, to be free, they must belong to and realise themselves through a nation; that nations, to be authentic, must be autonomous; and that global peace and justice require all nations to be free;
- 4 international, that is, an essential element in the global system of national states, with nations being inconceivable outside of a global system built on the principles of political and cultural pluralism, a system that only began to come into being after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 and the subsequent European and global treaties;
- 5 a mass community, that is, one in which the vast majority of the included population is aware of belonging to the nation and participates in national life, and more particularly in the political arena, because the nation is identified with the 'people' as a whole, and nationalism necessarily appeals to all the people and treats them as 'citizens'.

Together, these five features mark out the novel category of the nation, and because each of them only appeared in the modern epoch, the nation which they constitute can only in turn be modern. This particular form of human association, the modernists argue, simply could not emerge before the modern epoch, before, that is, the Enlightenment and the economic and political revolutions of the later eighteenth century.

Now, Kedourie is surely correct in regarding nationalism – the ideology and movement – as both European and modern, even if he underrates the importance of the earlier contribution of French thinkers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau and their followers, as well as the French Revolution itself. The *theory* of nationalism is undoubtedly modern, that is, both relatively recent in date and novel *qua* theory, even if on occasion some

of the ideas and activities of nationalism can be discerned in earlier periods. But it is quite a different matter when it comes to the phenomena of the 'nation', national identities and national states. Here the theories of Gellner, Hobsbawm and Breuille rest on less certain ground, and raise as many questions as they answer. Let me mention three of these problems.²

Ethnocentrism

The first is the ethnocentric nature of the modernist conception of the nation. Not only is it strictly modern, its features are specifically West European and American. Indeed, Hans Kohn termed it 'western' nationalism, and then went on to speak of this western conception of the nation as a civic and rational-legal association with a strong voluntarist component – as opposed to an 'eastern' nationalism, whose conception of the nation was organic and often mystical and authoritarian. The features of the western conception include:

- 1 a strong emphasis on territory and on birth and residence in that territory;
- 2 a belief in the nation as a legal-political community;
- 3 the importance of citizenship for all members of the legal-political community;
- 4 the need for a public culture and civil religion to bind the community and give it political cohesion.

Now, it will be immediately apparent that the features of this western conception of the nation correspond closely with those which define the modernist idea of the nation as a whole. In other words, modernists have taken the western conception as the norm, and used it as the yardstick for their understanding of the 'modern' nation. But this is, at the least, myopic and at worst misleading. Some modernists indeed, like Hobsbawm, realising the problem, regretfully refer to another 'ethnic' conception of the nation, but see it as a backward-looking, reactionary form which will surely pass away.³

In fact, the western 'civic' model is something of a minority form. It does not really cover the case of immigrant societies such as Canada, the USA and Australia, where in more recent times, the civic model has been undermined by a much more 'plural' form of the nation, with its series of ethnocultural communities, acknowledging, even celebrating, their cultural diversity, beneath an overarching domain of the national state, based on common laws, founding myths and heroes and elements of public culture.⁴

Nor, of course, does the western model fit the much more numerous category of 'ethnic' nations. While ethnic nations share with every instance of the category 'nation' a strong territorial component, they emphasise the historic nature of particular ethnic landscapes (or 'ethnoscapes'). In the ethnic conception of the nation, it is not enough to possess land; it must be 'our' land, the land of our ancestors and of our heroes and heroines. Similarly, while citizenship and public culture are important in the ethnic model, they are predicated of particular ethnic communities, and hence confined to those who are members of those communities. Thus to the common stock of conceptions of the nation, the ethnic model adds:

- 1 a strong emphasis on genealogy, on the fictive tie of ethnic descent in defining membership of the community;
- 2 the importance of vernacular cultures, including myths of election, linguistic codes, customs and traditions;
- 3 a nativist interpretation of history, or 'ethno-history' – the set of authentic tales retold by the community;
- 4 a commitment to 'the people', and hence an emphasis on popular mobilisation as the key to authenticity.

These cases differ from the classic western model for which the concept of the modern nation was first formulated by nationalists in the West, a point made forcefully and cogently by Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlov in their introduction to a revealing collection of essays, entitled *Asian Forms of the Nation*. However, it is not so much because they are 'Asian' that their forms differ from western models, but because in other non-western civilisations different factors have played important parts for which there has been little or no parallel in the West. It is just these different role 'pedigrees' that we need to explore, if we are to grasp the variety of forms of the nation.⁵

Mass Participation

The second problem faced by modernism is more theoretical. It becomes evident when we press the question: when does a nation come into existence? Must *all* the features of the modernist conception of the nation (borders, legal-political community, nationalist legitimation, inter-state system and mass citizenship) be present for a nation to exist, or can we already speak of the nation's existence when some of these features, such as clear borders and a legal-political community, are present? And, if so, which features? In particular, can we speak of the *nation* only as a 'mass' phenomenon?

This is the problem adumbrated, but not fully addressed, by Walker Connor in his seminal essay, 'When is a nation?'. Having reminded us that nations are simply self-conscious and politically aware ethnic groups, Connor then goes on to argue that, though nations emerge by stages, we cannot really speak about their existence as nations until the great majority of their members are aware of belonging to the nation and also participate in national life. In a democracy, says Connor, that means that we cannot speak of the existence of a nation if the majority are (still) disenfranchised; it follows that until at least women are given the vote, the nation can hardly be said to exist. More generally, Connor concludes: 'In any event, claims that a nation existed prior to the late nineteenth century should be treated cautiously'.⁶

This is an odd conclusion. Leaving aside the question of linkage between the nation and democracy, and participation and voting, can we accept the postulate that nationalism and the nation are mass phenomena? Of course, nationalism, the ideology, appeals to 'the people', that is, the 'masses', in theory the total population of the community. But that population, mass or 'people' nationalism defines in terms of specific cultural and territorial criteria, i.e., as the resident members of a cultural and territorial community, often to the exclusion of immigrants and (some) minorities. Now, these criteria of membership tend to change over long periods. In earlier ages, they may include only upper and middle class adult males, yet these members may possess intense national awareness. On the other hand, we may find cases where all the residents within the nation's territory, including newcomers, are treated as members, but they are loosely integrated and display little awareness of belonging to a nation. In other words, the relationship between inclusiveness and national consciousness may vary considerably; inclusiveness does not of itself define or validate nationhood.

There is a further problem. Nationalism may be described as a mass phenomenon, as Connor does, but there is no reason why the object of its endeavours, the *nation*, must also be constituted as a mass phenomenon, at the time of the nationalist struggles. In fact, typically, the nation is *not* a 'mass phenomenon' at such times, as the case of Italy, cited by Connor, demonstrates. Massimo d'Azeglio's celebrated remark: 'We have made Italy, now we must make Italians', simply recognised the absence of a 'mass nation' in the Italian peninsula. But it also implicitly recognised the physical, symbolic and political reality of 'Italy'. Hence, one could argue that a nation of Italy already existed, but it was not (yet) a mass nation – some would say, it is still not a mass nation.

Furthermore, if the nation is a 'process' and is formed in stages, why must we reserve the term 'nation' only for its 'final' (or later) stage? Why

can we not speak of middle-class communities as nations? Why can we not designate as 'nations' certain communities which have recently come into being and are affirmed as such by some of their members? This is very much the line taken by medieval historians, for whom Hastings may be said to speak when he argues that:

one cannot say that for a nation to exist it is necessary that everyone within it should want it to exist or have full consciousness that it does exist; only that many people beyond government circles or a small ruling class should consistently believe in it.⁷

Specifically, Hastings does not think that because most of the peasantry had no sense of belonging to a nation, this fact somehow invalidates that nation – unless, of course, the community in question consisted solely of nobles and peasants. After all, as Connor indicates more than once, the mass of the population was mute; it left no records itself, and we have only the testimonies of elite members, usually the clergy.

For medievalists, that is insufficient objection. They are happy to infer from the sources the origins of nations in the early medieval epoch; many of them are also ready to see a continuity through vicissitudes of national sentiments into the modern era. Very few draw back from the obvious teleological implication, that the modern national state is implicitly treated as the end-state governing the 'early development' of the nation from the medieval period. This is the burden of Susan Reynolds' complaint against Hugh Seton-Watson's category of the 'old, continuous nations' of western and northern Europe:

A more fundamental distortion arises from the fact that belief in the objective reality of nations inevitably diverts attention from itself: since the nation exists, belief in it is seen not as a political theory but as a mere recognition of fact. The history of nationalism becomes less a part of the history of political thought than of historical geography, while the starting-point of political development becomes the nation, with its national character or national characteristics. This pre-existing nation is then seen as moving through the attainment of 'national consciousness' to find its own rightful boundaries in the nation-state.⁸

For Reynolds, this is to impose a retrospective relationship between the 'peoples' and sentiments of medieval *regna* and those of the modern nation and nation-state. Instead, she proposes to term medieval sentiments of loyalty to kingdoms 'regnal', by analogy with the 'national' sentiments of modern nation-states. But this only leaves the relationship between the two ambiguous. Could we not see in these regnal sentiments and the kingdoms

of custom, descent and government to which they are attached pre-modern forms of the nation, in the same way as we earlier discerned non-western forms of the nation? And isn't Reynolds, too, taking as normative the modern western form of the nation?

Pre-nationalist Nations?

Such questions bring us to the third problem, the questionable historical basis of modernism. At one level, this is a problem of the interpretation of sources, at another level of the employment of different definitions, and at still another level of fundamental theoretical paradigm clashes.

Broadly speaking, medievalists fall into the camp of what we may term *continuous perennialism*. According to this perspective, some modern nations are seen as continuous with earlier communities in the same area; or rather, it is a case of one and the same community persisting 'immemorially' beneath the many changes to which 'it' has been subject over the centuries. It is not that medieval historians are oblivious to the many ruptures and dislocations in the area under consideration; on the contrary, they are very much aware of these changes. But, in their eyes, these changes only serve to highlight other continuities (thus they speak of 'change in X'). Nevertheless, these medievalists tend to qualify the continuity thesis by pinpointing the precise nature of the 'nation' in pre-modern times, thereby revealing its differences with the modern versions of the species.

The perspective of current medieval historians must, therefore, be differentiated from the older, rather uncritical *perennialism* which tended to see nations in all periods everywhere, without qualification. Current medieval historians' 'neo-perennialism' is careful, nuanced and qualified. It also insists on the separation of 'nations' from 'nationalism' – in the sense of a theory and ideology. For medievalists, the primary sources clearly demonstrate the existence of 'nations' in the minds and hearts of at least some of their members, but not of 'nationalism'. Some of these sources may be problematic, but there are sufficient medieval documents and chronicles which reveal widespread assumptions about the existence of 'nations' and 'national sentiment' in western Europe from the later medieval epoch, if not earlier. For Adrian Hastings, John Gillingham, Colette Beaune and Bernard Guenee, concepts of English and French nations and sentiments of national loyalty had gained currency from at least the time of the Hundred Years' War; and the same period, according to Bruce Webster, saw the birth of a Scots national identity in the aftermath of the Independence Wars.⁹

Modernists would, of course, dispute the designation 'nation' for the political identities of this period, or even for the period of the Reformation.

For the latter period, at least, they are on shaky ground. The return to Old Testament ideals of the chosen people spurred a powerful religious national sentiment (if not a defensive nationalism) in England, Scotland, the Netherlands and Sweden, with strong echoes in semi- or non-Protestant countries like France, Spain, Switzerland and Russia. Certainly, Liah Greenfeld is prepared to date the birth of the first nation and nationalism, that of England, from the early sixteenth century – on the grounds that then, for the first time in history, the elite equated the nation with the whole 'people'. We might also add that sixteenth-century England conformed in some other respects to the modernist definition of the 'modern nation': it had a relatively compact territory with clear borders, constituted a type of limited 'legal-political' community, formed part of a community of states, and boasted a parliament representing the elites of the country. If England lacked a theory of 'self-determination', its elites certainly acted in accordance with its assumptions. The same might be said, in varying degrees, of France, Holland, Scotland, Denmark and Sweden, and to a lesser extent (in respect of unclear borders) Poland and Switzerland.¹⁰

But the problem goes deeper. Hastings, for example, argues not only that England and neighbouring nations can be traced back beyond the Renaissance and Reformation, but that the nation in general is a Christian phenomenon, its appeal being the result of the spread of Christianity in Europe. Not only did Christianity sanction the use of vernacular languages, it also presented a model of the ideal polity, derived from the Old Testament, which after all Christianity had adopted. This ideal was the biblical nation of ancient Israel. Though Christianity rejected the Jews and replaced them with *verus Israel* (the Church), and though the Jews themselves had, in their long diaspora, according to Hastings, lost their nationhood, the ideal of the nation which the Jews had pioneered became the political cornerstone of the new order of Christendom. That, along with Christianity's vernacularising thrust, was why nations and their particularist 'nationalisms' originated so early in England and western Europe.

But, why then stop at western Europe? Why not earlier Christian nations elsewhere? Hastings himself mentions Monophysite Ethiopia and Gregorian Armenia as ancient or early medieval nations. Others have pushed the dating of nations back even further – to the ancient Near East, to the ancient Persians, Egyptians and Jews, as Steven Grosby and Doron Mendels have argued. True, these nations ceased to exist as nations for long periods (they 'lost their nationhood'), only to re-emerge as nations later. But is that a justification for restricting the origins of the concept of the nation to medieval Europe, let alone the modern West? Might we not more profitably talk of the 'recurrence of nations' throughout history, viewing the history of large collective cultural identities as one of nations continually

forming and dissolving over different periods and continents? And, if such a *recurrent perennialism* is accepted, might we not expect to find nations in other parts of the world – in Central and Southern America (Incans, Aztecs), in Africa (Egypt, Ethiopia), in the Far East (China, Korea, Japan) and southeast Asia (Burma, Sinhala, Thailand, Vietnam)?¹¹

Such questions prompt a 'history of the nation' very different in aims and scope from the historically restricted modernist project. In answer to the broad historical question, 'When is *the* nation?', it might be possible to chart a series of patterns, starting from various forms of collective cultural identity – clans, tribes, city-states and especially ethnic communities (or *ethnies*) – and show how, in different periods, the category of 'nation' emerged in different forms, from antiquity to the modern forms of the nation.

It would, of course, be possible to see in these different patterns an evolutionary series in an ascending scale of mass inclusiveness of the resident designated populations. But such a gross view of the 'general evolution' (of humanity) overlooks the many conflicts, breaks and reversals which have characterised the changes in form of particular *ethnies* and nations, or of particular groups of nations. A more comprehensive 'history of *the* nation' in this sense would have to attend closely to such conflicts and discontinuities in the different forms of the nation. It would also presuppose an agreed definition, or at least ideal-type description, of 'the nation' which forms the object of such an enquiry.

An Ethno-symbolic Approach to Nations

An alternative 'history of the nation' from the conventional modernist account requires a new approach to collective cultural identities derived from a quite different paradigm. We may term that paradigm *historical ethno-symbolism*. The modernist paradigm emphasizes the novel economic and political features of modernity, and the role played by *nationalism*, the ideology, in disseminating the culture of modernity, and thereby creating nations. In the ethno-symbolic paradigm, the emphasis falls upon the symbolic and social elements that compose collective cultural identities, and more especially ethnic communities. An ethno-symbolic approach goes on to stress:

- 1 the need for an analysis of the persistence of collective cultural identities over *la longue durée*;
- 2 the importance of continuity, recurrence and appropriation as different modes of connecting past, present and future;
- 3 the significance of the ethnic type of collective cultural identity and of ethnic communities or *ethnies* in the formation of nations;

- 4 the importance of symbols, memories, myths, values and traditions for an understanding of ethnic and other kinds of collective cultural identity;
- 5 the peculiar role of memories of golden ages, myths of origin and ethnic election, cults of heroes and ancestors, homeland memories and attachments in the formation and persistence of national identities;
- 6 the different kinds of *ethnie* that serve as bases and points of departure for the formation of various kinds of nation;
- 7 the special contribution of the modern ideology of nationalism to the dissemination of the ideal of the nation and the role of nationalists as 'political archaeologists'.

Such an approach lays special emphasis on the subjective components of national identity, while simultaneously underlining the sociological basis of collective cultural identities like *ethnies* and nations. The key to this approach is the need to differentiate *ethnies* from nations (and nationalism), and then to analyse their varied historical and sociological relationships.

For this purpose, we require some provisional definitions of the pure or ideal types of both these kinds of collective cultural identity. Thus we could define:

- an *ethnie* as a named community of shared origin myths, memories and one or more element(s) of common culture, including an association with a specific territory; and
- a *nation* as a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs.¹²

The modern western kind of nation analysed by the modernists can be seen as an ideal-typical variant on this basic definition, with the additional features of well-defined borders, a single territorial economy and common rights and duties for all members (i.e., a legal-political order). The ethnic form of the modern nation is another typical variant, since, while locating it in its historic homeland, it defines the nation in terms of genealogical myths, a *vernacular* public culture, a nativist history and popular mobilisation. In this way, different forms of the nation, while featuring the basic elements of territory, culture, customs and laws, and shared myths and memories, may vary the proportions of, and/or add to, the common elements of the pure type. I should add that, in practice, few nations conform fully to one or other of these forms. Typically, ethnic elements are mingled with territorial-civic forms, even in those cases like France which are held up as models of the civic-republican form, and which provide the standard for the modernist conception of the nation. Similarly, there is considerable overlap between

civic-republican and 'plural' forms of the nation, as the history of the USA reveals.

From the above we can see that the concept of the nation is more closely aligned with that of the *ethnie* than with other collective cultural identities, or with the state with which it sometimes continues to be confused. Unlike the state, nations and *ethnies* are types of cultural community; but the type of the *ethnie* is broader, looser and closer to *felt* kinship ties, while the national type also incorporates territorial, legal and public elements lacking in *ethnies*.¹³

In practice, the line between *ethnies* and nations cannot be drawn too sharply, partly because of the fluidity of all historical processes, but mainly because the concept of the nation, in addition to serving as a category marker, also acts as an ideal that, for nationalists at least, is never fully and finally attained. In the modern epoch, and here the modernists are surely correct, the nation has also become a central political ideal for a host of ethnic communities, with nationalist ideology providing a blueprint across the globe. There is, therefore, a real difference in the emotional charge with which some of the features of modern nations are invested – for example, in the political functions of 'the homeland' or the public nature of the common culture and education system. While people often manifested strong attachments to their homelands and cultures in previous epochs, both of these elements became ideologised and politicised in the modern epoch through the theory of national self-determination and the ideals of authenticity and autonomy, which are so central to nationalist ideologies.

At the same time, even without the ideology of nationalism, we saw cases of strongly expressed national sentiments and national identity in pre-modern epochs, at least among the educated elites. This raises the question: if nations are not always the result of nationalism (and modernity), then what are the processes that help to make nations? In other words, in addition to the historical and rather linear question, 'when is *the* nation?', we must also ask a more general sociological question, 'when is *a* nation'?

Processes of Nation-formation

If 'nation' here signifies an ideal-type community, then it is to the selected features of the pure type that we must look for an answer in the first instance. The selection is inevitably oriented to the purposes of the investigation and the questions to be addressed, and there is little agreement about definitions of the concepts of nation and nationalism. Nevertheless, as a minimum, we may suggest the following features which are often remarked on in the literature:

- 1 a collective proper name,
- 2 myths and memories of communal history,
- 3 a common public culture,
- 4 common laws and customs,
- 5 a historic territory or homeland.

No doubt, different scholars would include further economic, political or cultural features, but in these cases, we would be dealing less with the generic concept of 'nation' and more with a specific, usually modern, form of the concept. For our purposes, a nation can be said to exist if, and only when, a collectivity manifests the above five features. Particular social formations, of course, only approximate to this pure type; but, for purposes of analysis, we may say that if one or more of these features are lacking or barely discernible, we cannot (yet) speak of that formation as a 'nation'. On the other hand, if a particular social formation clearly manifests these features, we may speak of it as attaining the 'threshold' of nationhood in the generic sense – though not, typically, in the special sense of the nationalist conceptions of the nation, for which nationhood is forever an unattainable, because always moving, target.¹⁴

From a sociological standpoint, our enquiry must be directed in the first place to the conditions that favour the emergence of formations approximating the ideal-type. These vary, of course, according to historical epoch, culture-area and particular context. But we can, I think, proffer some generalisations about the kinds of processes that give rise to instances of the nation in this sense, i.e., to formations manifesting these features.

Names and Self-definition

For nationalists, a collective proper name is an essential marker of nationhood, the prime symbol of that uniqueness which the ideology of nationalism prizes. But collective proper names long antedate the era of nationalism, and they point to both the generic nature of the concept of the nation and the ethnic basis of so many actual nations.

A crucial element in the formation of nations is the process of self-identification as distinct cultural populations through naming and self-definition. Nations are only one type of human cultural association marked by collective proper names. Others include castes and ethnic groups. It is a moot point whether all ethnic groups have distinctive names. Here we need to distinguish 'ethnic communities' (or *ethnies*) from 'ethnic categories'. Whereas the latter populations are classified as separate categories by outsiders and lack a sense of solidarity and developed networks, ethnic communities exhibit a strong sense of common ethnicity manifested in shared traditions, memories and symbols, including a proper name for the community.¹⁵

In some cases, it is true, such as the ancient Phoenicians, the community (or communities) is known only by the collective proper name accorded by outsiders like the Greeks. But, in general, names and naming are essential components of the sense of collective identity of a culturally distinct population, for they evoke to members and outsiders a particular atmosphere and unique emotions connected with a specific collective fate or destiny. Where there is no recorded collective proper name and the language of self-definition is absent or of limited usage, we may suspect an absence of a sense of common ethnicity or of nationhood, in the population under review. This was the case, possibly until the thirteenth century, among the German-speaking peoples east of the Rhine, who though they were referred to by Italians as Teutonici somewhat earlier, only began to call themselves *deutsch* in the high Middle Ages.¹⁶

We should also note that collective proper names in the same cultural tradition can change over time. Thus, in Homer we have the Greeks often referred to as Achaeans (or even Argives) as well as Hellenes, whereas later they were generally called by themselves and others Hellenes. Similarly, the children of Israel (Israelites) became, after the Babylonian Captivity, Jews (from their settlement of the Persian province of Judah).¹⁷

Myths and Memories

For nationalists, the distinctiveness of nations lies quintessentially in their cultural heritage, above all, in their unique fund of myths, memories and traditions. A nation without such a heritage and fund is a contradiction in terms. Hence the many attempts to 'rediscover' an ancient history, revive or develop a vernacular language and create a mythology of the nation. Once again, these activities can be found well before the era of nationalism. In ancient Rome, for example, historians from Livy to Tacitus recounted the annals of ancient Rome, as well as its more recent history; playwrights, poets and writers from Ennius and Plautus to Cicero developed a vigorous native Latin; while poets like Virgil constructed the myths of Roman origins, wanderings and election. Similar activities can be found among ancient Greeks, Jews and Armenians, as well as medieval Persians and Sinhalese.¹⁸

Such activities are common to ethnic communities and nations. However, in the case of *ethnies*, the key element in its cultural heritage is the myth of ethnic origins and descent. Hence the importance of genealogies and filiations. In many ways, such myths proclaim the presence of *ethnies*, because they identify a discrete population through their belief in common ancestry, a point made so powerfully by Walker Connor. Of course, as he underlines, it is not biological kinship, but *felt* kinship that matters for a sense of common ethnicity, the presumption of shared ancestry and cognate

lines of descent. Indeed, until the modern epoch, the ethnic community was the largest presumed kin-based group, the most extended of extended 'families' in both time and space.¹⁹

But, are nations equally defined by myths of national origins and descent? That they usually possess such myths is not at issue; rather, it is the relative importance accorded to them by the members of nations. Here, I think we can begin to see a development away from ethnicity and its presumptive kin-base. In many nations, more particularly in the modern period, myths of origin are increasingly overshadowed by other myths and more immediate memories and traditions.

What are these other myths and memories? First and most powerful has been the myth of ethnic election, the sense of collective chosenness for a task entrusted to the people by its deity. This myth has taken various forms from the strict 'covenant' of the Jews in the Old Testament to the looser 'missions' of different communities and their dynasties like the medieval French or Russians – and latterly, the idea of a providential destiny of 'the people', such as we find in the USA.

Second, the various myths of liberation and migration, from the Exodus to the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain or the Great Trek of the Afrikaners in South Africa. Again, there are few ethnic communities that cannot point to such myths and traditions in their repertoires, even if documentary evidence of their occurrence and character is sparse or absent.

Third are the various memories, which border on heroic myths, of the 'golden age' or golden ages, periods of communal greatness, be they political and military, or economic and social, or religious, or artistic and intellectual. These are the high points in the 'ethno-history' of the community – the history of the community as recounted from generation to generation by the members of that community – and they serve as beacons and guides for the present and future of the community. Once again, we find such nostalgia and such memories of golden ages well before the advent of nationalism – among medieval Arabs looking back to the Age of the Companions, among medieval English and Welsh idealising the age of Arthur and his knights, among Jews yearning for the age of the rabbis or the Temple in ancient Palestine and among diaspora Greeks before independence harking back to the glories of Orthodox Byzantium.²⁰

Finally, we may recall the memories of heroic sacrifice made by great men and women in the tales recounted in the community's ethno-history – the sacrifices and sufferings of saints and sages, the great exploits of ancestors and heroes, and the courage, tenacity and fortitude of the common people in the face of alien oppression. Once again, there are plenty of pre-nationalist commemorations of such sacrifices on behalf of ethnic communities and city-states, from the Greeks who died at

Marathon and Salamis and the Armenians at Avarayr to the medieval Swiss and Scots who successfully resisted external oppressors at Sempach and Bannockburn, from Themistocles and Mamikonian to William Tell and Robert Bruce. But it is in the annals of nations, more particularly after nationalism had hallowed them, that the ideal of collective self-sacrifice, and the cult of the 'glorious dead', becomes the hallmark of the ideal of the citizen-nation.²¹

Together, these ethnic myths, memories and traditions form a cultural repertoire whose development marks one of the key processes in the formation of nations. For this reason, the crystallisation of an ethnic community provides a firm and flexible basis for the later development of a nation. Without such a basis, the formation of nations becomes much more protracted and uncertain.

A Common Public Culture

For nationalists, a common *public* culture is a *sine qua non* of the nation. More generally, it represents a key feature of the concept of nation, endowing it with a sense of unity and a recognised distinctiveness. It is not enough for the designated population to share a common language or religion and customs. This language or religion must become a common public property and part of an acknowledged, or official, distinctive culture.

But there is more to the meaning of 'culture' when we speak of nations. Unlike ethnic groups, whose members share one or more cultural attributes, but may make no conscious reference to or virtue of them, nations turn these attributes into special differentiating marks and collective virtues; they become the bonds that are perceived to link both the current members and the generations of the members. It is through a common public culture and education that the dead, the living and yet unborn are felt to be bound together into a single community of citizens.

Of course, in pre-modern epochs, public cultures and education tended to be circumscribed. Often confined to the elites, they were usually linked to, or were part of, religious institutions, and they tended to differentiate an inner class of initiates who received a specialised textual education from the rest of the elites or, in rare cases, from the adult male population whose public education was more generic and less intensive. It is really only in the modern epoch that an insistence on the whole population receiving the benefits of a *mass*, standardised, public and academy-supervised education system has become widespread. And, only in the modern epoch, with a few interesting exceptions, has that system been linked to the conscious inculcation of national 'civic' values.

Hence, one way of tracing the formation of nations is to chart the growth of public cultures and education, and particularly the transition from

traditional and limited modes of culture and education to public, formal systems. While, in most cases, the latter postdate the coming to power of avowedly nationalist regimes and may therefore be seen as products of nationalism, we can find earlier examples of attempts to broaden the culture and education base and give it a more public character as an expression of growing elite or middle-class national sentiments and goals, particularly in western Europe from the late medieval period.²²

Common Laws and Customs

The rise of common legal systems has often been seen as a mark of modernity, in that the modern bureaucratic state presupposes the large-scale development of procedural as well as substantive law. Of course, legal systems can be found in some of the earliest civilisations and were already highly developed in later antiquity. But in many of these cases, they were products of, as well as conditions for, the development of empires, and were largely divorced from collective cultural identities like ethnic communities and nations.

Prior to the development of a written form of their languages, many ethnic groups were governed by custom and oral tradition, all of which changed relatively slowly in line with new economic or political conditions. It was writing, and the development of a literature, that helped to transform these loose ethnic categories into more developed and self-conscious ethnic communities, with written texts spurring the compilation and recording of customs, traditions and rituals and their gradual crystallisation into codes of law. The best-known of the ancient law codes were those of Hammurabi and Moses, but others soon followed, especially in the classical city-states and later ethnic kingdoms.²³

Clearly, such codes of law, custom and ritual do not by themselves mark out nations from other kinds of collective cultural identities or states. Nevertheless, the members of nations, like those of city-states, comprise communities of law and ritual in the sense that they possess certain rights in return for the performance of reciprocal duties, legal and ritual, which define them symbolically in relation to non-members. The membership itself may be limited, being normally confined to adult males or even heads of families until the modern epoch, but their relations with each other and with outsiders are increasingly governed by a public code of common laws and symbolic acts and prescriptions, which set them apart from their neighbours. In this sense, law and ritual define the symbolic boundaries of the nation even more sharply than have the customs and traditions of ethnic communities, though the line between them cannot be drawn in a hard and fast manner.

Historic Territory, or a Homeland

Some form of territorial attachment may be universal, but the ideologised emotional tie to an ancestral homeland is specific to certain ages and conditions. Such a bond is regarded by nationalists as both a key component of the definition of the concept of the nation, and as a supreme collective virtue. Nations, for nationalists, are special kinds of spatial communities, those that can trace their origins or 'roots' to specific ancestral landscapes; and nationalism, among other things, is both a struggle for national control of the homeland and the expression of deep attachments to those ancestral roots. Hence, the nation is a community that both possesses 'its' homeland, and belongs to its ancestral landscape.

In the modern epoch, the homeland has become 'hardened' into a recognised, compact and unified national territory, symbolised by the ideal of 'natural borders'. In practice, of course, many nations deviate from this ideal, their borders often the result of conflicts and treaties, and their populations sometimes divided and far-flung, as was the case with the Germans and Pakistanis, and is still with the Palestinians and Armenians. Nevertheless, the ideal of one nation, one state, one territory, has remained a cornerstone of the international community, despite the fact that many states are polyethnic and few are territorially compact.

But nationalism has had another, equally important consequence: the creation of an inner bond between landscape and nation. This was, in part, the result of the influence of Romanticism with its elevation of Nature, its pervasive belief in the mutual shaping of peoples and their natural surroundings and its trust in the healing and purifying power of landscape and the countryside. The Romantics turned territory into landscape, terrain into countryside, a subject for music and poetry and an object of individual and collective self-expression. Two processes aided this transformation of territory into *ethnoscape*: on the one hand, the naturalisation of the community, in which *ethnies* became intrinsic components and appeared as 'natural' outgrowths of their historic environments, and on the other hand, the historicisation of territory, through which the community's environment and terrain became part of its history, the sole arena of its heroic exploits and the ever-present witness of the great turning-points of the community's history.²⁴

These symbolic processes can be found even before the advent of nationalist ideologies. The idea that certain communities are shaped by their environments, can be found in ancient Roman poets such as Horace and Virgil, as well as in texts from late medieval Holland and England. Conversely, the notion of historic territory – the homeland as an extension or even a product of the community's history – can be seen in the belief in

the Promised Land of ancient Canaan, as well as the historic Alpine landscape of Switzerland. These are all examples of the 'territorialisation of memory', the process by which communal memories are located in historic space and come to define the ancestral terrain of an *ethnie* or nation. In these cases, we can trace the growth of territorialised memories right up to their modern nationalist codification.²⁵

The Pedigrees of Nations

Symbolic self-definition; myth-making and memory-selection; the creation of a public culture; legal standardisation and ritual codification; and the territorialisation of memory and hardening of space: these are some of the key social and symbolic processes which allow us to chart the formation – and dissolution – of nations. The more complex and developed each of these processes, and the more stable and interrelated they become, the more can we speak of a community approximating to the ideal-type of the nation. In the case of the modern western type of nation, these processes, notably the cultural, the territorial and the legal, have become particularly well developed, extensive and closely interrelated. In the ethnic variant, the development of myth-making and memory-selection, along with the creation of a public culture, has been particularly intensive and pervasive.

This preliminary analysis raises two main questions. The first concerns the key factors in the development of each of these processes. The second addresses the issue of when and how are they linked together to form nations? Here, I can only say a few words about some of the main causal factors, as my concern is with the dating and lineage of nations.

Two sets of factors have been particularly significant in the development of processes of nation-formation. The first is inter-state warfare (which presupposes at least a rudimentary system of politics), the second organised religion with its texts, liturgies and priesthoods. In pre-modern epochs, inter-state warfare has played a crucial role in mobilising the members of *ethnies*, and creating bonds of political solidarity between them. This is most clearly seen in the case of warfare between city-states, but it also greatly affected the development of *ethnies* like the ancient Persians and Jews or the medieval Scots and Swiss, where protracted warfare clearly contributed to their sense of common ethnicity. Such wars may also have encouraged developments of some of the processes involved in nation-formation – notably those of territorialisation of memory and hardening of space, as well as a degree of legal standardisation and shared public culture. As important, warfare, in throwing up heroes and victories (or defeats), dramatised the community's fortunes and provided rich materials for subsequent myth-making and memory collection, well into the modern

period. Equally, as both Charles Tilly and Michael Mann have demonstrated, warfare has been as crucial to the consolidation of states as of *ethnies* and nations; and this may have contributed to the continual tendency to confuse state and nation.²⁶

The effects of organised religion are more complex and ramified. Suffice it here to mention two: the sanctification of ancestral land and the cult of fallen heroes or 'the glorious dead', both closely associated with the formation and persistence of nations. By no means all ethnic or national conflicts centred on disputed sacred territories, but those that did, like the Crusades or, in modern times, the Middle Eastern or Balkan conflicts, have been particularly bitter and protracted. As for the cult of fallen heroes, this has become a hallmark of the modern (civic or ethnic) nation, though we can find earlier examples of such cults, for example, in ancient Athens and Rome. Once again, Romanticism in conjunction with revolutionary populism, has democratised the cult of fallen warriors, so that today it commemorates the self-sacrifice of all ranks and every citizen. The cult clearly contributed to, as it also expressed, the importance of national rituals and ceremonies, and the myths and memories associated with them, helping to create the public culture of a sacred communion of citizens.²⁷

Turning to the second question, the linking of these different processes to form nations, we may ask: how and when were they brought together to create what we recognise as nations? How and when were the processes I outlined above linked together, so that we can begin to speak of nations?

I think we can begin to answer such a broad question by distinguishing a number of patterns of nation-formation, which we can tentatively place in rough sequence, despite considerable overlap and many 'reversals' in each of these processes in given cases. This, then, is no evolutionary or determinate sequence, but rather a series of recurrent, and frequently coexisting, patterns of collective cultural identity formation.

Ethnic Categories and Communities

The earliest, and probably most widespread, pattern is that of populations distinguished by one or more cultural elements, be it language, customs or religion, with perhaps a link to a specific terrain – and a collective proper name, even if it is one supplied by outsiders. Thus, Estonians and Slovenes in the Middle Ages may have been distinguished by outsiders as a separate *ethnic category*, but the members themselves, though they had a good idea of what or who they were not, had little or no positive notion of who they were. Such 'ethnic categories' may not have had an ethnonym for themselves, as we saw with the Phoenician city-states, who were named by the Greeks. In other cases, the population may have lacked myths of origin,

migration and election and memories of sages, heroes and golden ages. Nor did their elites share a sense of solidarity, which set them apart from neighbours.

A number of developments helped to transform some of these ethnic categories around the globe into more compact, self-conscious and organised *ethnic communities*. For example, ecological and economic factors may have encouraged given populations to pool their resources and co-operate in recurrent seasonal activities. Alternatively, conquest by outsiders may have forged bonds of shared discrimination and subjection. The rise of certain extended families may have activated networks of relations among the population in question. Whatever the immediate causes, a threshold was crossed when the first genealogies, epics and chronicles were disseminated among the elites, more especially when these were committed to writing, and the foundations of a vernacular literature were laid. At this point, certain populations began to acquire the main features of an ethnic community or *ethnie*: a self-designated collective proper name, myths of origin, migration and election, an ethno-history including memories of sages, heroes and golden ages, one or more elements of shared culture, including perhaps a link with a particular ancestral terrain, and a measure of social solidarity among, at least, the elites.

From this, we can see that the emergence of *ethnies* in different parts of the world, from the dawn of recorded history, represents a vital development in the formation of nations. For some of the basic features of the ideal-type of the nation are already present in the *ethnie*, notably the self-designated collective proper name, and the fund of ethnic myths and collective memories. On the other hand, we can detect little in the way of institutionalised public culture in most *ethnies*, and only the most rudimentary sense of a clear-cut historic homeland. Though the members of many *ethnies* engage in various rituals, they tend to be localised, as are the customs; there is little standardisation of customs, let alone laws, across the ethnic community, even in such a developed case as ancient Greece, whose city-states undoubtedly shared some elements of common culture (religion, dialects, some festivals). Nevertheless, the significance for the formation of nations of names, myths and memories should not be underestimated; they represent the inner symbolic foundation of many nations, and their absence makes it well-nigh impossible to turn a modern state into a nation.²⁸

Ethnic States and the First Nations

The advent of patrimonial states and temple-religions in the early civilisations of antiquity signalled new developments for ethnic communities. On the one hand, we witness the rise of several 'ethnic states'

– in ancient China, Sumer and Egypt – in which states were formed on the basis of particular ethnic groups. In most cases, states straddled ethnic categories and communities; but, in a few cases, the best-known being ancient Egypt, they were formed on the basis of a single or dominant ethnic community. Such states should not be confused with nations: they lacked the clear boundaries and ethnoscares, the public culture and sense of political community, and the ideal of common laws for the members essential to the concept of the nation. Such public culture as they had tended to be confined to the priesthood or at least the elites; it did not pertain, in theory or practice, to the population at large.²⁹

However, in a few cases, we sense the beginnings of a new pattern, alongside that of ethnic states. Here we find, in addition to a collective proper name, a fund of ethnic myths and shared memories, the wider dissemination of a public culture to adult males, the growth of a standard law code and ritual practice for all members, and a powerful collective attachment to an ancestral homeland with clear (if in practice shifting) borders. Among the Armenians of late antiquity, and even more among the Jews of the Second Temple period and later, the development of organised religion, liturgy and religious law produced a growing sense of what we can term incipient ‘national identity’, even if it did not last in the subsequent diaspora epoch. Nevertheless, a new tradition had been established. Through the Bible and subsequent scriptural writings, as Hastings argues, an ideal of the monolithic nation (however fragmented in practice) was promulgated, to inspire subsequent developments and creations.³⁰

Dynastic and Oligarchic Nations

The first to build on the ideal of nation-as-religious-community was what we may term the *dynastic nation*. This is the type to which the medievalist historians trace the origins and pedigrees of several modern nations. Even when they are wary of the nationalist myth of national continuity, medievalist historians find in the sources of the period from about 900 to 1500 AD a growing number of references to, and descriptions of, ‘nations’, if not as mass phenomena, then at least as firmly entrenched among the elites attached to the dynasty and its *regnum*. Certainly, by the later Middle Ages, strong dynastic states like England, France, Spain and Sweden were forging a sense of common nationhood among the upper classes through the process of *bureaucratic incorporation* of middle classes and outlying areas. In these cases, we can observe, in addition to collective proper names, ethnic myths and collective memories, a quest for clear borders of the ancestral homeland, the dissemination of a public (usually religious) culture, and a centralisation and standardisation of common laws and

customs. In the post-Reformation epoch, the base of such states involved the middle classes in a far more intensive manner, particularly in Protestant states with the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and the sharpening of religious conflict between increasingly territorially defined nations.³¹

Apart from these dynastic nations, we can also find a few interesting cases of oligarchic nations, like Switzerland and the Netherlands. Here, particular cantons, city-states and provinces became the centres for resistance to outside threats to ancient liberties or against religious persecution. As a result, in addition to the fund of common myths and memories, we find a growing attachment to an ancestral and ‘delivered’ homeland, and at least some sharing of customs, laws and rituals. On the other hand, local divisions hindered the development of a centralised law code and a truly public culture, until the nineteenth century.³²

Modern Nationalist Territorial Nations

A further development of the dynastic nation after the Reformation saw the rise of strong *territorial* nations and patriotic sentiments directed to the territory and its community rather than the dynasty. By the early eighteenth century, ideas of ‘national character’ and ‘national genius’ were becoming standard among the upper middle classes, and the use of the term ‘nation’ as the repository of rights and liberties entered the political lexicon. After the middle of the century, a new feeling for national landscape and the simplicities of the countryside, associated with the pre-Romantics and Rousseau, led to firmer identifications of the community with ‘its’ homeland, and an emphasis upon the sensibilities and sincerity of public-minded citizens of the commonwealth.³³

Such national ideas informed many of the celebrations which marked the course of the French Revolution, soon emulated in Germany and elsewhere, but they took on a new urgency through the identification of the territorial community with the will of ‘the people’. The nationalist doctrine of popular sovereignty opened a new era of political legitimation, but it retained, and reinforced, the earlier territorial framework of a plurality of states operating in a loose inter-state – and later ‘inter-national’ – order. This specifically European and nationalist order soon became the standard recipe for other parts of the globe, as colonialism replicated the territorial format and national basis of states in large parts of Latin America, Africa and Asia.

The classic modern western nation of the modernists, then, emerged in the special circumstances of a plurality of territorial states and communities, which marked the failure to revive the Holy Roman empire and the breakdown of Christendom. To these circumstances are owed many of the

peculiar features of that model of the nation: its clear, compact territorial format; its ideal of territorial political community and citizenship; its nationalist legitimation in the doctrine of popular sovereignty; its consequent insistence upon mass participation; and its commitment to a single public culture and education system.³⁴

Modern Nationalist Ethnic Nations

Following hard upon the French Revolution, and often in emulation of these western territorial nations, there emerged a somewhat different model of the nation among many of the subject, and often smaller ethnic communities of Europe and Asia. This ethnic model was also adapted for the use of some imperial nations like Russia, Turkey and Japan whose elites felt at an economic, technological and political disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the western nations. For these elites, nationalism offered elements that could help to forge a community based on ethnic, and often presumed genealogical, ties, thereby providing the cohesion and solidarity required for the tasks of modernisation. In this ethnic model, the emphasis fell less upon territorial political community and the ideals of mass citizenship, and more on the selection of the contents of the myths, memories and traditions of earlier *ethnies*, and on communal attachments to the homeland and rituals of membership.

However, there were considerable variations among the nationalist ethnic nations. While the imperial nations carefully limited and controlled mass participation and restricted citizenship, the subject nations of eastern Europe and Asia, striving for self-determination, aimed to include the mass of 'the people' in the nationalist movement (albeit variably in practice). On attaining independence, the leaders often extended citizenship to all the native population, and even in theory to members of minorities, albeit often accompanied by discriminatory practices; but their definition of membership rested on ideas of presumed ancestry, and their designation of borders harked back to pre-modern, often medieval, precedents of former ethnic statehood. Hence, the 'ethnic' nationalist components tended to predominate over the more territorial and civic-political components of the concept of the nation.³⁵

Conclusion

Clearly, any attempt to answer the deceptively simple historical question 'When is the nation?', is beset by problems. It is not possible in this case to avoid questions of definition, as some authors recommend, nor to seek refuge in a one-sided and ethnocentric 'modern western' version of the

concept of the nation. For this is only one among several versions, or types, of the concept. An answer to the historical question requires the construction of a broader ideal-type, to address the more sociological question, 'What is a nation?' – an ideal-type that highlights the components of the generic concept of the nation. Only thereafter is it possible to trace the pedigrees of particular subvarieties of the concept of the nation, and to determine the periods in which we may legitimately begin to speak of the nation as a 'presence' in the historical record.

Or, more accurately, a presence in the minds and hearts of people in given historical periods. Unfortunately, any answer to such a question must be extremely tentative, at least before the eighteenth century. In the nature of things, we can only infer the possibility of that presence from the records of a tiny portion of the elite – poets, chroniclers and priests. At the same time, the fact that the vast mass of the populations of pre-modern societies are silent on this, as on other issues, should not lead us to conclude that no conception of the nation was entertained by, at least, the elites prior to the modern period. Of course, if the criterion of 'mass participation' is felt to be determinative for the concept of the nation, or if the analyst is only concerned with 'mass nations', then an enquiry into the historical dating of nationhood is foreclosed. Indeed, as we saw, consistency on this point would place the emergence of nations in the first half of the twentieth century, and would preclude all mention of the concept prior to this date.

This is a conclusion with which only the most hardened of modernists would be entirely happy. Moreover, fixation on one criterion, however important, tends to divert attention from other, perhaps equally significant, criteria like territory and public culture. Even more important, it unbalances the ideal-type of the nation in a way which makes it impossible to deal with such problems as the relative failure to date to create 'nations' on the basis of many sub-Saharan African states, despite the mass participation (admittedly sometimes theoretical) of the populations of those states in the political process.

What all this suggests is that there can be no 'magic moment' at which nations can be said to form. The concept of the nation involves a series of different processes coming together; and, in the nature of things, it must be a matter for judgement, of the participants and the analyst, as to whether these processes have developed to the point where they and we can begin to speak, more or less tentatively, of the presence of nations in the minds and hearts of people and in their institutional expressions.

This last point is crucial. For, while the ethno-symbolic approach which I have been using lays great emphasis upon the subjective elements of attachment, will and imagination of groups of individuals, it also points to the institutional expression of these elements – in recorded myths,

memories and traditions, in symbols and values, and in the various forms and styles of art, music, literature, law, ritual and activity that give concrete and recurrent embodiment to these elements. Hence, in attempting to trace the pedigrees of particular nations or different types of nation, it is to these institutionalised expressions that we must also turn. While their interpretation is fraught with problems, they afford vital clues to the presence, and hold, of both ethnic communities and nations in different culture areas and historical periods.

NOTES

1. For the main modernist texts, see Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson 1960) and Elie Kedourie (ed.), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1971), Introduction, Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1964), ch.7 and *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1983), Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990) and John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Second Edition) (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1993). While they differ considerably over the mechanisms of modernity's links with nationalism, all agree on the novelty and recent date of nations and nationalism.
2. For a detailed study of the development of ideas of 'national character' in eighteenth-century France and England, which serves as a corrective to Kedourie's exclusive emphasis on the German Romantics, see Aira Kemilainen, *Nationalism, Problems Concerning the Word, the Concept and Classification* (Yvaskyla: Kustantajat Publishers 1964).
3. For this 'ethnic' conception, see Hobsbawm (note 1), ch.4 and for Kohn's dichotomy of 'eastern' and 'western' nationalisms, see Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (Second Edition) (New York: Collier-Macmillan 1967).
4. For such 'plural' immigrant societies, see Lyn Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997) and Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1995), ch.4.
5. In their Introduction, Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlov ((eds), *Asian Forms of the Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996)) compare the utility of modernist and ethno-symbolic accounts for the study of Asian nations and nationalisms. See also the essays in Michael Leifer (ed.), *Asian Nationalism* (London: Routledge 2000).
6. Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994), p.224. Connor's related article, 'When is a Nation?' (*Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13/1 (1990) pp.92-103), leans heavily on the analysis of late-nineteenth-century France in Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernisation of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus 1979).
7. Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), p.26. For Hastings, the evidence of the medieval sources - religious, poetic and political (chronicles) - points to a continuity in the conception of the nation right up to modern times, especially in England.
8. Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press 1984), pp.252-3; and see her earlier account of myths of ethnic descent attached to ruling houses in the early medieval period, in Susan Reynolds, 'Medieval *origines gentium* and the community of the realm', *History* 68 (1983) pp.375-90.
9. Apart from note 7 see John Gillingham, 'The beginnings of English imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5 (1992) pp.392-409, and for France, Colette Beaune, *Naissance de la Nation France* (Paris: Editions Gallimard 1985) and for Scotland, Bruce Webster, *Medieval Scotland: The Making of an Identity* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1997).
10. See Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1992), ch.1, where she also emphasizes the role of Protestantism and the

- return to the Old Testament. Gellner (1983, 91-2, footnote) was prepared to concede the early nationalist development of England.
11. For a fuller discussion of Hastings, and of the contributions of Steven Grosby, 'Religion and nationality in antiquity', *European Journal of Sociology* XXXII (1991) pp.228-65 and Doron Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday 1992), see Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England and Cambridge: Polity 2000).
 12. For a fuller statement of the 'ethno-symbolic' approach, see Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), Introduction; see also John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1982). The definition of 'nation' here differs from that given in Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1991) ch.1, which is closer to modernist definitions of the modern western type of nation.
 13. This suggests an affinity with Weber's political definition of the nation as 'a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own' (Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills 1948) p.176; see Paul Gilbert, *The Philosophy of Nationalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1998) ch.1. But this would be to overlook the importance of cultural elements and deny the title of nation to all those communities that conformed in other respects to the ideal-type of the nation, but lacked states of their own, for example, Scotland and Catalonia.
 14. For the ideal-type method, as applied to nations and nationalism, see Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (Second Edition) (London: Duckworth and New York: Holmes and Meier 1983) ch.7. Only here, as will become evident, the selected 'features' are in fact 'processes', and hence variables. It must remain a matter of judgment as to the degree of such variables that suffices to convince people (members and outsiders) of the existence of the nation.
 15. See Anthony D. Smith *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981) ch.4 and the more elaborate distinctions in Thomas Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press 1993).
 16. Leonard Scales 'Identifying "France" and "Germany"', *Bulletin of International Medieval Research* 6 (2000) pp.21-46, briefly discusses the question of proper names and self-designations of 'Germany' (in opposition to 'France') in this period. On the naming and language of the Phoenicians, see Sabatino Moscati, *The World of the Phoenicians* (London: Cardinal Sphere Books Limited 1973).
 17. On the ancient Greeks' identity, see Moses Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London: Hogarth Press 1986) ch.7 and Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992). For the ancient Israelites/Jews, see W.D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (eds), *Cambridge History of Judaism Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984) Introduction, and Steven Grosby (note 11).
 18. For a penetrating account of Roman myths of origin and cultural identity, see Erich Gruen, *Culture and Identity in Republican Rome* (London: Duckworth 1993).
 19. See Connor (note 6) ch.7; also Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press 1985) chs.1 and 2 and Smith (1999, note 12) ch.2.
 20. On ethnic and national myths and memories, see Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood* (London: Routledge 1997) and Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell 1986) ch.8, and (1999, note 12).
 21. The pioneer in this area was George Mosse (*The Nationalisation of the Masses* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1976) and *Fallen Soldiers* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 1990)). On commemoration and ceremonies for the fallen, see also the essays in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1994), and Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995).
 22. Gellner (note 1) underlines the importance of 'high culture' and state-based education systems, as does E. Weber (note 6) in respect of the French Third Republic.
 23. For ancient Israelite religious law, see Irving Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge: Polity 1984). Steven Grosby (note 11 and 'Borders, territory and nationality in the ancient Near

- East and Armenia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40 (1997) pp.1–29) points out that, in antiquity, religion often substituted for citizenship as the criterion of membership and its rights and duties.
24. Against the modernist account given in, for example, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Second Edition) (London: Verso 1991) ch.10, see Anthony D. Smith, 'Sacred territory and national conflict', *Israel Affairs* 7/1 (1999) pp.13–31.
 25. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: William Collins 1987) provides an illuminating account of the influence of landscape on Dutch identity in the seventeenth century; for the Swiss and Canadian cases, see Eric Kaufmann and Oliver Zimmer, 'In search of the authentic nation: Landscape and national identity in Canada and Switzerland', *Nations and Nationalism* 4/4 (1998) pp.483–510.
 26. On warfare and states, see Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1975), Introduction, and Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986) ch.5; on warfare, ethnicity and nationalism, see Anthony D. Smith, 'War and ethnicity: the role of warfare in the formation, self-images and cohesion of ethnic communities', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4/4 (1981) pp.375–97 and Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993) especially ch.7.
 27. For this cult, see Mosse (1990, note 21). On contemporary religion and nationalism generally, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press 1993) and Gilles Keppel, *The Revenge of God*, trans. by Alan Braley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995).
 28. For the relation of the city-states to the ancient Greek ethnic community of 'Hellas', see Finley (note 17).
 29. This was the situation in ancient Egypt, with its clear cultural division between elites and the majority; in other respects, notably shared myths and memories and fairly clearly bounded territory, ancient Egypt came close to the national ideal-type. See Bruce G. Trigger, Barry J. Kemp, David O'Connor and Alan B. Lloyd (eds), *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983). For an interesting and controversial argument that ancient Athens should be seen as a 'nation', and was so seen by ancient Greeks on account of its size and extent, see Eric Cohen, *The Athenian Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2001).
 30. Hastings (note 7) ch.8. For the ancient Armenians, see David Lang, *Armenia, Cradle of Civilisation* (London: Allen and Unwin 1980) and for the ancient Jews, Mendels (note 11).
 31. For the process of 'bureaucratic incorporation', see Anthony D. Smith, 'The origins of nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12/3 (1989) pp.340–67. For the late medieval and early modern periods, see Bernard Guenée, *States and Rulers in Late Medieval Europe*, trans. by Juliet Vale (Oxford: Blackwell 1985) and Greenfeld (note 10).
 32. For Holland, see Schama (note 25), and for the Swiss case, see Ulrich Im Hof, *Mythos Schweiz: Identität-Nation-Geschichte 1291–1991* (Zürich: Neue Verlag Zürcher Zeitung 1991).
 33. For the 'inter-state' context of modern territorial nations in Europe, see Tilly (note 26), Introduction and Conclusion, Andrew Orridge, 'Separatist and autonomist nationalisms: the structure of regional loyalties in the modern state', in Colin Williams (ed.), *National Separatism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 1982) pp.43–74, and James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).
 34. For such imperial nationalisms, see Anderson (note 24) ch.6; for the ethnic nations of Eastern Europe, see Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (London: Methuen 1977) ch.3, and Pedro Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press 1989).
 35. For a critique of such 'ethno-linguistic' nationalisms and the nations they 'invented', see Hobsbawm (note 1) chs.4–6; see also Smith (1999, note 12) ch.7 for the trend to cultural purification encouraged by ethnic nationalism. For the processes of 'vernacular mobilisation' of demotic *ethnies*, as the route to ethnic nations, see Smith (note 31).