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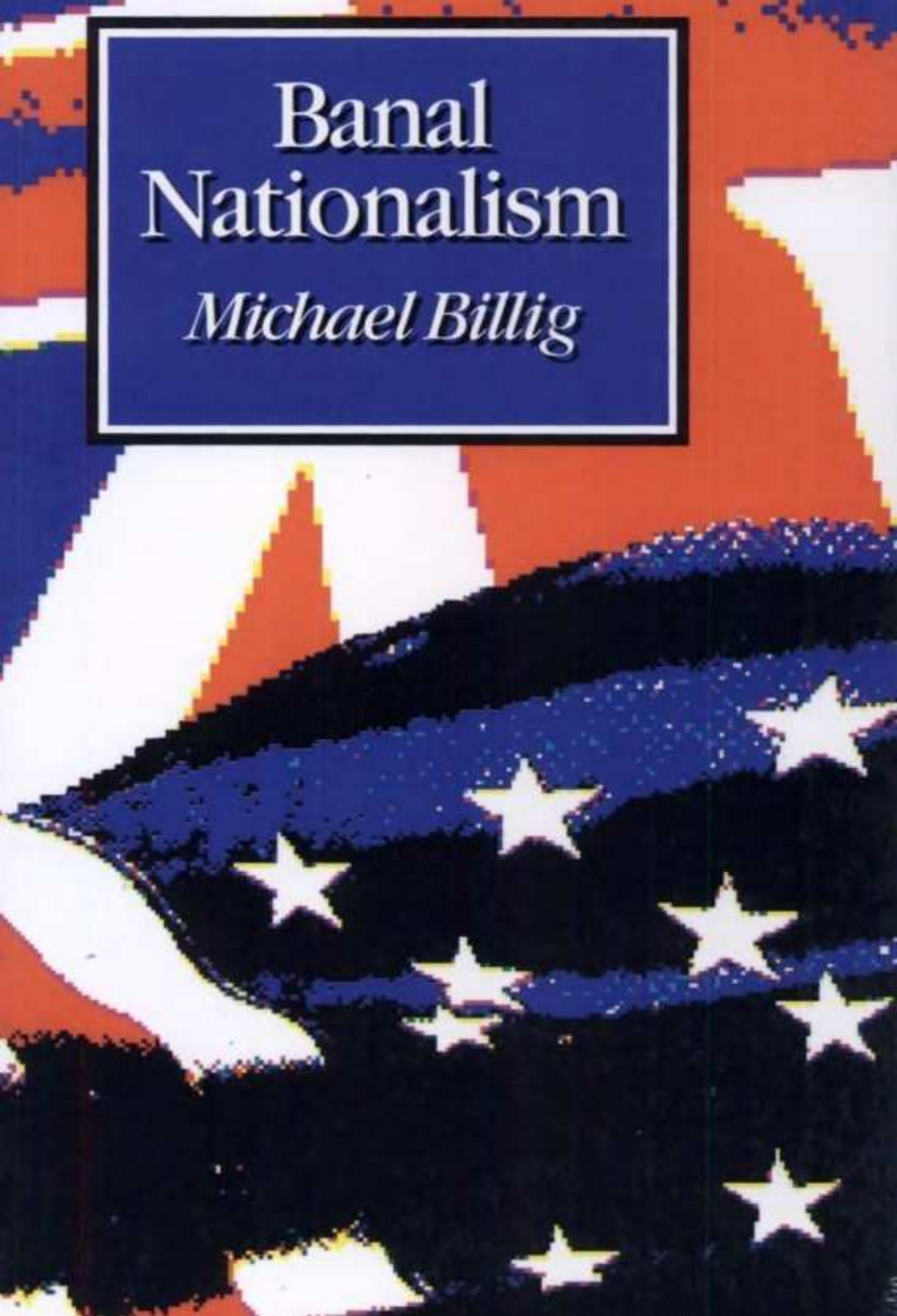
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Banal
Nationalism

Michael Billig

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National Identity in the World
of Nations

It is easy to think that the problems of nationalism come down to issues of 'identity'. So much about nationalism seems, at first sight, to be explained by 'identity'. To be German or French is, psychologically, to have a German or French 'identity'; nation-states are being threatened by the search for 'identities'; patriotic ceremonies strengthen the sense of national 'identity'; 'identity politics' is a reaction to a crisis of modern 'identity'; and so on. 'Identity' seems to provide familiar diagnoses and explanations. As John Shotter has written, " 'identity' has become the watchword of the times" (1993a, p. 188).

The watchword, however, should be watched, for frequently it explains less than it appears to. The routine flaggings, discussed in the previous chapter, might be said to strengthen 'national identity' in the contemporary, established nation-state. But what does 'national identity' mean in this context? It certainly does not refer to an inward emotion – a glow of patriotic awareness – experienced by all who pass by the unsaluted flag. Nor does it mean that everyone within the nation-state becomes identical. As Stuart Hall affirms, "the notion that identity has to do with people that look the same, feel the same, call themselves the same, is nonsense" (1991a, p. 49).

There seems to be something psychological about an 'identity', but theories of psychology are often unable to explain what this psychological element is. There does not seem to be a particular psychological state, which can be identified as an 'identity'. That being so, an investigation of national identity should aim to disperse the concept of 'identity' into different elements. An 'identity' is not a thing; it is a short-hand description for ways of talking about the self and community (Bhavnani and Phoenix, 1994; Shotter and Gergen, 1989). Ways of talking, or ideological discourses, do not develop in social vacuums, but they are related to forms of life. In this respect, 'identity', if it is to be understood as a form of talking, is also to be understood as a form of life. The saluted and unsaluted flags are not stimuli that evoke 'identity-reactions'; they belong to the forms of life which constitute what could be called national identities.

Serge Moscovici (1983) has argued that the so-called inner psychological states of individuals depend upon culturally shared depictions, or representations of the social world. A person cannot claim to have patriotic feelings

for their nation, unless they have assumptions about what a nation is and, indeed, what patriotism is: unless, to use Moscovici's terminology, they have social representations of 'nation', 'patriotism' and much else beside (see also Farr, 1993; McKinlay et al., 1993; Moscovici, 1987). In consequence, the psychological study of national identity should search for the common-sense assumptions and ways of talking about nationhood. The present chapter, therefore, investigates the general themes of nationalist consciousness and its habits of thinking. It involves examining what Roland Barthes (1977) called "banal opinion", or 'the doxa' of common sense (p. 162).

With regard to nationalist thinking, one need not ask 'What is a national identity?' but 'What does it mean to claim to have a national identity?' The general forms of nationalist thinking then need to be outlined. As will be argued, these include ways of conceiving of 'us, the nation', which is said to have its unique destiny (or identity); it also involves conceiving of 'them, the foreigners', from whom 'we' identify 'ourselves' as different. Nationalist thinking involves more than commitment to a group and a sense of difference from other groups. It conceives 'our' group in a particular way. In doing so, it takes for granted ideas about nationhood and the link between peoples and homelands; and about the naturalness of the world of nations, divided into separate homelands. A whole way of thinking about the world is implicated. If this way of thinking seems to be commonplace and familiar, then it, nevertheless, includes mystic assumptions which have become habits of thought.

This nationalist way of thinking, even when it is ingrained as habitual, is not straightforward. Just as a dialectic of remembering and forgetting might be said to sustain 'national identity', so this 'identity' involves a dialectic of inwardness and outwardness. The nation is always a nation in a world of nations. 'Internationalism' is not the polar opposite of 'nationalism', as if it constitutes a rival ideological consciousness. Nationalism, like other ideologies, contains its contrary themes, or dilemmatic aspects (Billig et al., 1988). An outward-looking element of internationalism is part of nationalism and has accompanied the rise of nationalism historically. When US presidents, today, claim to speak simultaneously on behalf of their nation and a new world order, they are not placing, side by side in the same utterance, elements from two, clearly separate ideologies; nor are they creating a novel synthesis from the thesis of nationalism and the antithesis of internationalism. They are using the hegemonic possibilities of nationalism. As will be suggested, these possibilities are endemic in nationalist habits of thinking.

Theory and Nation

The rise of the nation-state brought about a transformation in the ways that people thought about themselves and about community. It could be said to

have brought about a transformation of identity, even bringing into the popular vocabulary the notion of 'identity' itself (Giddens, 1990). Nevertheless, before the vocabulary of identity was set in place – before people could claim that they 'were searching for their identity' – it was still possible to talk of the self and of loyalties to the community. People were able to label themselves, whether in terms of place, religion, tribe or vassalage. But these labels, as it were, bore different packets of meaning than the labels of nationhood.

In *Language and Nationalism*, Joshua Fishman recounts a story of peasants in Western Galicia at the turn of the century. They were asked whether they were Poles. "We are quiet folk", they replied. So, are you Germans? "We are decent folk" (Fishman, 1972, p. 6). The story appears to be about the clash of identities. According to Fishman, the peasants had a concrete consciousness: their identity was with *this* village, or *this* valley, rather than with the more abstract idea of the nation. It is said that rural Slovaks, emigrating to the United States at about the same time, were often unaware of their national identity, only knowing from which specific village they had come (Brass, 1991, p. 39). These are not stories of ignorance: the peasants in the Fishman story seem to know more than they admit. Nor do the stories merely tell of a clash of personal identities, as if the only difference were that the peasants identified themselves with the village, while the officials had a national identity. More was at stake than the way of defining the self.

Fishman's story tells of a conflict between two outlooks, or forms of ideological consciousness. Calling it a clash of 'identities' lessens the full force of what was occurring. Like was not confronting like, as if two 'identities' – two variants of the same genus – were in competition. This was not a conflict between Poles and Germans. The peasants were standing against the very assumptions and forms of life which led to the identities of Pole and German. They were resisting the notion of nationhood, reacting against its theories as well as labels. A world, in which it is natural to have a national identity, was meeting, and overrunning, an older world. And now it appears strange – well worth telling as a good story – that four generations ago there were people who neither knew, nor wished to know, their nationality.

The sort of confrontation described by Fishman has been enacted countless times, in one form or another, throughout nationalism's triumphant march across the globe. In Central Arabia, writes Helms (1981), nationalism was unknown until the twentieth century. Previously, identities had been based on the tribe or on the 'sphere of trade'. The tribal and trading boundaries were constantly changing. A world of fixed boundaries, and clearly delineated identities, was to replace this older world. Sometimes, colonial powers imposed the assumptions of nationalism by means of force. The British often insisted upon treating indigenous leaders as if they headed sovereign states (Hinsley, 1986). In the 1830s the British Resident in New Zealand advised Maori chiefs to form themselves into a

'United Tribes of New Zealand'. Not only would such an arrangement be administratively simpler; also, if sovereign state were appearing to negotiate with sovereign state, then highly unequal treaties could be presented with an outward display of legality and morality. In this, of course, a particular ideological vision of morality was being victoriously imposed.

The new imposed identities (such as belonging to the United Tribes of New Zealand) were part of a more general outlook on the world. In this sense, nationalism involves a theoretical consciousness. Etienne Balibar has written that there is "no racism without theory (or theories)" (1991, p. 18). The racist may hate unthinkingly, yet, as Balibar implies, racism distinguishes between 'our race' and 'other races', 'our racial community' and 'theirs'. At the very minimum, the racist shares some common-sense theory of what a 'race' is; why it appears important; how 'races' differ; and why 'ours' should remain unmixed. By the same token, there is no nationalism without theory. Nationalism involves assumptions about what a nation is: as such, it is a theory of community, as well as a theory about the world being 'naturally' divided into such communities. The theory does not need to be experienced theoretically. Intellectuals have written theoretical tomes about 'nation'. With the triumph of nationalism, and the establishment of nations across the globe, the theories of nationalism have been transformed into familiar common sense.

The assertion of belonging to a 'people', if made in a political context in which 'peoples' are assumed to deserve nation-states, is not an assertion of an inner psychological identity. A movement of national independence will not only claim that 'we are a nation', but, in so doing, it will be demanding the political entitlements which are presumed to follow from being a nation. Demanding such entitlements is not possible without assumptions about the nature of nations (any nation, not just 'ours'). The theory can be expressed theoretically, in terms of abstract principles about what a nation is and should be. However, as the world of nations is set in place as *the* world, so the theory also becomes enhabited in common sense. It ceases to seem theoretical, but is embedded in habits of thought and life. In the Fishman example, the peasants were concretely resisting nationalism's habits of thought, asserting their own practical consciousness.

There is a case for saying that the categories of nationalism come with particular theoretical discourses, which do not accompany other categories. Banton suggests that in the polyethnic society of Malaya, people use ethnic terms concretely. He claims that the residents of Petalingjaya rarely use any general notion of 'ethnicity'. Instead, they use "a practical language embodying proper names such as Malay, Chinese and Indian" (1994, p. 6). In day-to-day life, while shopping at Indian or Malay stores, residents do not theorize about the various groups in Malaya. It is possible that Banton may be exaggerating the lack of theoretical consciousness on the part of the residents of Petalingjaya. Other things may be said on other occasions, especially in the context of political disputes for resources. Banton is, nevertheless, suggesting something important: the residents do

not have an overall 'theoretical' category under which to group the categories 'Malays', 'Chinese' and 'Indians', and to stipulate, in theory, what these groups are.

They do have a further category, which sometimes subsumes the ethnic categories: this is the national category of being 'Malaysian'. According to Banton, this category comes to the fore at international sporting occasions. The national category is both concrete and theoretical. It is concrete in the sense that nations confront the inhabitants of today's world as concrete entities: Malaysia concretely exists for its citizenry, just as the United States of America, France and Brazil also concretely exist. Similarly, the Malaysian basketball team concretely exists when it plays the Indonesian team and when all its members, whether Malays or Chinese, are cheered by the partisan crowd as 'Malaysians'. In addition, Malaysia, and other nations, exist theoretically. They can be spoken about as 'nations'; there are general ways of talking about these concrete entities.

In the world of nations, nationhood is both unthinkingly enhabited and is a matter of political controversy. 'Nation' can be an essentially contested concept, to use Gallie's phrase (1962). On occasion, definitions will be produced, to prove what a nation *really* is. As Seton-Watson (1977) suggested, definitions of nationhood generally aim "to prove that, in contrast to the community to which the definer belonged, some other group was not entitled to be called a nation" (p. 4). In this respect, the debates about what a nation is parallel, and sometimes are combined with, those debates, discussed in Chapter 2, about what a language is. Disputants, in arguing their political cases, might disagree about what should count as a *real* nation and or a *real* language, but they will take for granted that nations and languages *really* exist; and that they should exist.

For example, the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization (pointedly called the Palestinian *National* Charter) declares the Palestinians to be a people and a nation. More than this, it has a rhetorical stake in distinguishing between 'genuine' nations and groups which are not nations. According to the Charter, Jews, whatever status they might claim for themselves, are a religious group, and, unlike the Palestinians, they do not "constitute a single nation with an identity of its own" (Article 20; see Billig, 1987b; Harkabi, 1980). In this, there is a theorizing about what constitutes a nation, a people and a religion: the nation is said to have a distinctive identity of its own. This theorizing, or common-sense sociologizing, is not abstract, but is rhetorically and politically directed.

This type of thinking is not, of course, confined to aspiring nations. Established nations can respond in theoretical kind. For years, leading Israeli politicians denied that the Palestinians were a people: the "so-called Palestinian people" was a phrase used by prime ministers, to be contrasted rhetorically with the so-called genuineness of Jewish peoplehood. Yitzhak Rabin's letter to Yassar Arafat in September 1993, accepting mutual recognition, was discursively historic: "The government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian

people" (*Guardian*, 10 September 1993). Not only was the PLO recognized, but so were the Palestinians as a 'people', who were entitled to such a representation. Opponents of the agreement used different terminology. Tehran denounced the agreement as not being "commensurate with ideals for which the Muslim Palestinian nation has fought for decades" (*Guardian*, 1 September 1993). A differently characterized people – the 'Muslim Palestinian nation' – is indicated.

These are not haphazard labels. Not only do they reflect political stances, but these stances are articulated by means of common-sense sociological ideas about 'peoples', 'nations' and 'identity'. Wallerstein (1991) recounts the intense debates in South Africa among those classified by the apartheid regime as being 'coloureds': should they call themselves 'coloureds' or were 'coloureds' merely a 'so-called people', an illegitimately imposed category? The debate was one of identity and self-definition, for the protagonists were speaking deeply of themselves. But it was more than that. The nature of the categories – the meaning of peoplehood – was at issue. In the contemporary world, the issue 'what is a nation?' is not merely an interesting topic for academic seminars. It touches upon issues which contemporary people think worth the sacrifice of life – issues which the Galician peasants in the story could recognize as dangerous missiles, from which evasive cover should be taken.

Identity and Categories

All this is said as a warning against the temptation to explain nationalist consciousness in terms of 'identity', as if 'identity' were a psychological state, which exists apart from forms of life. Nationalism is more than a feeling of identity; it is more than an interpretation, or theory, of the world; it is also a way of being within the world of nations. The problem is that the historical particularities of nationalism, and its links with the world of nation-states, tend to be overlooked, if national 'identity' is considered as functionally equivalent with any other type of 'identity'. A complex topography of heights and depths then becomes flattened into a single plain.

Unfortunately, this flattening characterizes many social psychological theories of identity. It even characterizes the most creative and important theory of social identity to be produced in recent years. The Social Identity Theory has justly been described as "one of the most ambitious undertakings in research on group processes" (Eiser, 1986, p. 316). The theory was originally formulated by Henri Tajfel (1974, 1981, 1982; see also Brewer, 1979; Brown, 1988), and has been developed, more recently, under the heading of 'self-categorization theory' (e.g., Abrams and Hogg, 1991; Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Taylor and Moghaddam, 1994; Turner, 1984; Turner et al., 1987). Although Tajfel (1969, 1970) was concerned to study national identity, Social Identity Theory is not primarily a theory of

nationalism. It is a general theory of group identity, exploring universal psychological principles, which are presumed to lie behind all forms of group identity.

Social Identity Theory assumes that psychological elements are crucial in group behaviour. Tajfel gave the example of nations: a nation will only exist if a body of people feel themselves to be a nation (1981, p. 229). This illustrated, he suggested, a more general point: groups only exist if members identify themselves with the group. Identification, according to Social Identity Theory, is, at root, a form of categorization. For groups to exist, individuals must categorize themselves in group terms. The theory stresses that categorization is divisive, because categories segment the world. The meaning of the category 'table' is derived from the fact that a 'table' is to be distinguished from a 'chair' (Rosch, 1978). Similarly, to be a member of an 'ingroup' entails a categorical distinction from an 'outgroup'. The imagining of 'our' community involves imagining, either implicitly or explicitly, 'them', from whom 'we' are distinct. One of the major strengths of the Social Identity Theory is to emphasize this sense of social division, which group identification and categorization entails.

Tajfel's theory contained a strong motivational theme. Individuals, he claimed, have a need for a positive social identity, or self-conception: "It can be assumed that an individual will tend to remain a member of a group and seek membership of new groups if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of his (sic) social identity" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 256). To achieve this positive identity, groups will tend to compare themselves positively with contrasting outgroups, and they will seek dimensions of comparison on which they will fare well. For instance, nations will produce flattering stereotypes of themselves, and demeaning stereotypes of those other nations, with which they compare themselves. The dimensions, on which they pride their own qualities, will be accorded extra importance. The flattering stereotypes, held by the ingroup about itself, and the unflattering ones about outgroups, will maintain the positive self-identity, which is necessary for the group's continuing existence.

There are, according to Hogg and Abrams (1988), three stages in the process of group identification. First, individuals categorize themselves as part of an ingroup, assigning themselves a social identity and distinguishing themselves from the relevant outgroup. Then, they learn the stereotypic norms associated with such an identity. Third, they assign these norms to themselves, and "thus their behaviour becomes more normative as their category membership becomes salient" (Hogg and Abrams, 1988, p. 172). In this way, the self-categorization version of the theory links self-identification to stereotyping.

Two critical points can be noted about this important body of social psychological theorizing. The first relates to the universalism of Social Identity Theory and its neglect of the specific meaning of social categories. The second critical point concerns the theory's focus upon individual categorization and its neglect of the ways in which national identity

becomes enhabited. This, in turn, leads to a neglect of the central, distinguishing features of banal nationalism.

Categorizing the Categories

Social Identity Theory describes psychological features which are presumed to be universal and not linked to particular socio-historic contexts. Just as classical sociology assumed the universality of 'societies', in which all humans are presumed to live, so Social Identity Theory, and most other psychological theories of 'group identity', assume 'groups' to be universal. Nations, properly speaking, might belong to the modern period, but 'ingroups' and 'outgroups', 'groups' and 'group identities', are to be found in all eras (Bar-Tal, 1993). Of course, Social Identity Theory recognizes that there are different forms of group, such as caste, nation, religion, tribe and so on; feminist critics, however, have maintained that Social Identity theorists have consistently overlooked gender and its particularities (Condor, 1989; Griffin, 1989; Williams, 1984).

Social Identity Theory assumes that the differences between groups are less important than their psychological similarities. Hogg and Abrams begin their book *Social Identifications* by discussing how ingroups distinguish themselves from outgroups. They mention a variety of different sorts of groupings:

> national groups (Italians, Germans), religious groups (Buddhist, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic), political groups (socialist, conservative), ethnic groups (Tamils and Singalese in Sri Lanka), sex groups (male, female), tribal groups (Karen, Lahu, Akha in Thailand), youth groups (punk, skinhead), university faculty groups (Science, Arts, Law) and so on. (1988, p. 2)

The authors declare that the essential social psychological question is "*how do people identify with a group, and precisely what are the consequences of such identification?*" (p. 2, emphasis in original). The task is to find the psychological similarities behind the different forms of group identity.

As Breuilly (1985) has pointed out, the specific meanings of nationalism are lost if it is seen as just another form of 'group identity' – as if the Galician peasants' 'identity' were of a piece with the national identities of Poles and Germans. Psychologists, working with Social Identity Theory, tend not to ask what it specifically means to declare oneself to be a member of a national group, or to declare one's group to be a national group. Any such declaration – whether of self or of the group – is itself a discursive act, which takes its meaning from what is being said and from the context of its utterance (Edwards, 1991; Edwards and Potter, 1992, 1993; Potter et al., 1993). Also, the categorizations come into the discursive situation carrying their own extra packets of meaning. The PLO, in declaring Palestinians, but not Jews, to be a nation, was doing more than make a personal declaration of identity. A sociological way of thinking was being mobilized to make a political case. This case centres on the notion of nationhood and the claim that the group has a national identity.

Social Identity theorists argue that group members must think the group to be 'real'. Turner points out that members of a nation "do not interact with more than a small minority of their fellows"; nevertheless, "the members tend to define themselves and be defined by others as a nation" (1984, p. 521; see also Turner et al., 1987). Benedict Anderson, in describing the nation as an 'imagined community', makes a similar point: the individual members "will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion" (1983, p. 15). The same might be said for many other sorts of large grouping, such as religious groups, class groups, or even professional groups such as professors of biochemistry. These, too, have to be imagined.

The point is not that such groupings have to be psychologically imagined, and, therefore, they are all psychologically similar. Quite the contrary, it can be argued that they have to be imagined in different ways, and, thus, are psychologically different. As Anderson suggests, communities are to be distinguished "by the style in which they are imagined" (1983, p. 16). The religious communities of the Middle Ages were imagined in different terms from the modern nation: the imagining of 'Christendom' involved different 'theories', representations of morality and assumptions about the nature of the world than are involved in the imagining of the modern nation. The imagining of the great Islamic *umma*, before the age of nationhood, differed crucially from the imagining, and creation, of particular Islamic nation-states today (Zubaida, 1993). Smaller range identities also imply theories and representations. Academics cannot classify themselves as 'biochemists' or 'professors' without making assumptions about academic disciplines, institutions, professions and, indeed, about the nature of knowledge itself. All these imaginings depend upon wider ideological beliefs. In consequence, grammatically similar statements of identity can have very different meanings. 'I am a sociologist', uttered at professional gathering of anthropologists carries a different meaning from the famous declaration of US President John Kennedy, '*Ich bin ein Berliner*'. To say that both are similar statements of group identity would close down analysis at precisely the point at which it should begin.

Social Identity Theory, especially in its 'self-categorization' variety, flattens out different ways of representing the world. The search for the psychological factors leads the analyst to the psyche of the categorizing individual: identity is understood as an inner response to a motivational need. In conceiving identity in these terms, social psychologists narrow their focus unnecessarily. The significant factor may not be how individuals come to categorize themselves, but how the category is categorized. As far as national identity is concerned, not only do the members have to imagine themselves as nationals; not only do they have to imagine their nation as a community; but they must also imagine that they know what a nation is; and they have to identify the identity of their own nation.

Enhabiting the Categories

Social Identity Theory assumes that individuals have multiple ways of describing and categorizing themselves. In different contexts, different identities become 'salient' (Turner et al., 1987). Hutnik (1991) claims that self-categorizations "act as 'switches' that turn on (or off) aspects of social identity" (p. 164), as identities are used in 'salient' situations. One might imagine an Italian–American woman: in the delicatessen shop she may engage in ethnic signalling with fellow 'Italians', adjusting gesture and intonation to this saliently 'Italian' situation; in her woman's group, she may signal her solidarity with a wider community of 'women'; there may be times when she is an 'American', a 'New Yorker', or even a 'Neapolitan', courtesy of her grandfather's early life (for detailed examples of such switching of behaviour and accent, see Essed, 1994; Giles et al., 1987; Plotnicov and Silverman, 1978). The cues that elicit the switching of identities can be quite subtle and may not even be consciously registered.

If the use of a particular identity is intermittent, nevertheless the identity itself is a constant latency: "An individual who defines him- or herself as an 'Australian' . . . may never think about nationality for days at a time, yet if that self-definition did not exist as a latent identity, it could hardly become salient in relevant settings" (Turner et al., 1987, p. 54). There is no problem with the idea that there are particular situations in which someone might act in a self-consciously, flag-waving Australian manner: after all, the Australian government does not arrange – with due promotional advertising – bicentenary celebrations each week (Augoustinos, 1993). However, Social Identity Theory has little to say about what happens to the identity in between such national situations: it merely becomes some sort of latency, or internalized cognitive schema, within the individual's 'memory-store'; there it stays, awaiting active service when the next salient situation pops along.

There is much more to be said about national identity and its maintenance. The latency of nationalist consciousness does not depend on the vagaries of individual memory: if it did, then many more people would forget their national identity. Nor does national identity disappear into individuals' heads in between salient situations. The hypothetical Australian, while not consciously acting or thinking in an Australian way, continues to live in a nation-state and in a world of nations. Unlike the Galician peasants of former times, this hypothetical citizen of a nation-state will continually encounter, if not consciously register, flagged signs of nationhood. The apparently latent identity is maintained within the daily life of inhabited nations. The 'salient situation' does not suddenly occur, as if out of nothing, for it is part of a wider rhythm of banal life in the world of nations. What this means is that national identity is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition: it is a form of life, which is daily lived in the world of nation-states.

Imagining 'Us' as the National Community

The theory of 'self categorization', as its own name suggests, focuses upon the first person singular: it is concerned with the declarations of identity which 'I' make about 'myself'. There is a case for saying that nationalism is, above all, an ideology of the first person plural. The crucial question relating to national identity is how the national 'we' is constructed and what is meant by such construction. The nation has to be conceived as an entity with its own identity. As the PLO charter implies, only if the nation is imagined to have an identity, can 'we' claim 'ourselves' to have a national identity.

Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an 'imagined community' is a useful starting-point for examining these themes – at least so long as it is realized that the imagined community does not depend upon continual acts of imagination for its existence. Anderson argues that the nation is to be imagined as a unique entity in terms of time and space. It is imagined as a community stretching through time, with its own past and own future destiny; it is imagined across space, embracing the inhabitants of a particular territory. The temporal dimension ensures that all nations maintain a sense of their own history, which is no one else's. It is no coincidence that the emergence of nation-states has typically been accompanied by the creation of national histories (Colley, 1992; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). Because nations not only have to be imagined, but also have to create their own histories, or interpretations of themselves, Edward Said (1983) insists that they are 'interpretive communities' as well as imagined ones.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, some national histories claim that the nation emerged from the misty dawns of time. The English have often liked to speak in these terms, letting the term 'England' speak for the whole of Britain. The Conservative prime minister of the inter-war years, Stanley Baldwin, in a famous example of populist national sentimentality, spoke of the sight of plough-teams as an "eternal sight of England". These sights, together with the sound of the hammer on the anvil and the corncrake on a dewy morning, "strike down into the very depths of our nature, and touch chords that go back to the beginning of time" (Baldwin, 1937, pp. 16–17; on the importance of Baldwin's type of English nationalism, see, *inter alia*, Schwartz, 1986).

National histories will have their special moments, in which heroes and heroines seem to step out of the banal progress of calendrical time. Sometimes, the stories start with the sudden shock of liberatory gunsmoke, and then a hero – a Washington, Bolivar or Nkrumah – bestrides the scene with bigger steps and larger character than later citizens. The narrative structure of these stories can be well known, with citizens easily able to summarize the story in conventional forms (Wertsch, in press;

Wertsch and O'Connor, in press). If the national hero is obviously a dull character, like George Washington, his ordinariness can always be transformed into a mythic ordinariness, in order to symbolize the national genius for ordinary-dealing (Schwartz, 1987).

Nations often do not typically have a single history, but there are competing tales to be told. In Britain, the same people will speak about the national past using conservative and liberal tales: they will talk about 'the good old days' of order and hierarchy; and they will speak of the 'bad old days' of poverty and ignorance (Billig, 1990a). The historical tales emerge from the struggles for hegemony. When Estonia was part of the USSR, an official history, which was taught in schools and which told of Russian liberators, was popularly opposed by an unofficial history of Russian oppressors; this unofficial story has now become official (Tulviste and Wertsch, in press). Different factions, whether classes, religions, regions, genders or ethnicities, always struggle for the power to speak for the nation, and to present their particular voice as the voice of the national whole, defining the history of other sub-sections accordingly. 'The voice of the nation' is a fiction; it tends to overlook the factional struggles and the deaths of unsuccessful nations, which make such a fiction possible. Thus, national histories are continually being re-written, and the re-writing reflects current balances of hegemony. As Walter Benjamin argued, history is always the tale of victors, celebrating their triumphs: "Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate" (1970, p. 258).

National histories tell of a people passing through time – 'our' people, with 'our' ways of life, and 'our' culture. Stereotypes of character and temperament can be mobilized to tell the tale of 'our' uniqueness and 'our' common fate (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). As Balibar (1991) emphasizes, 'we' can speak of culture – 'our' culture – as if it were a precious genetic inheritance, to be transmitted uncontaminated and unweakened (see, also Barker, 1981; Taguieff, 1988; Van Dijk, 1993, for further discussions of the 'racialization' of the idea of national culture). Language, too, can be spoken in these terms. The Académie Française seeks to transmit the unique genius of the French language to future generations, protecting it from interbreeding with contaminating foreign words. Julia Kristeva has claimed that, in France, the foreigners' use of French "discredits them utterly – consciously or not – in the eyes of the natives who identify more than in other countries with their beloved, polished speech" (1991, p. 39).

In all this, a sense of 'our' uniqueness and integrity is conveyed. Integrity is frequently conveyed by the metaphors of kinship and gender: the nation is the 'family' living in the 'motherland' or 'fatherland' (Johnson, 1987; Yuval-Davis, 1993). 'We' do not merely categorize 'ourselves', but claim that the object of 'our' identification possesses an identity, indeed a preciously unique identity. Themes of uniqueness can be readily mobilized

should an 'alien' threat to 'our' identity be imagined (Windisch, 1985, 1990).

In late twentieth-century Britain there is much uncertainty about 'national identity', especially as relations within the European Union are negotiated. In a study of English people talking of the monarchy, many speakers claimed that the Royal Family was precious because it was one of the things which distinguished 'us', the English/British, from other nations (see Greenfeld, 1992, for a discussion of the historical basis of this belief). One speaker declared that if 'we' didn't have the Royal Family, then 'we' wouldn't be the "British Isles as we know it, we'll perhaps be another state of America or something like that" (Billig, 1992, p. 34). Then 'we' wouldn't be 'us'. The unique form of life, and, hence, 'our' national identity would be lost. Were these to be lost, then so would be 'our' own sense of 'ourselves' as 'ourselves'.

In 1992 Prime Minister John Major sought to reassure his Conservative Party that the signing of the Maastricht Treaty did not entail a loss of national sovereignty to the European Community. The notion of 'national identity' was itself a rhetorical symbol. At the party conference of that autumn, his speech replayed patriotic themes. "We are all British citizens and we will always remain British citizens", he declared (see report in *Guardian*, 10 October 1992). He continued: "I will never, come hell or high water, let our distinctive British identity be lost in a federal Europe." The national flag and the stereotypes of self-praise were consciously waved: "And if there are those who have in mind to haul down the Union Jack and fly high the star-spangled banner of a United States of Europe, I say to them: you misjudge the temper of the British people!" Never would Britain be browbeaten: "And to those who offer us gratuitous advice, I remind them of what a thousand years of history should have told them: you cannot bully Britain."

Such stereotypes of character, identity and history are summoned with ease. No details had to be specified, nor argument advanced. The speaker did not have to argue with facts and figures that 'Britain' possessed a distinctive national identity; nor did he have to cite the corncrake and the plough-team. He could refer to a thousand years of national history without mentioning any historical detail. These were commonplaces in themselves. It was enough to remind the audience (or 'us') that 'we' have existed for a thousand years in 'our' unique manner. The speaker could presume that his audience would well understand, or recognize, that the nation possessed its own distinctive national identity.

If these themes appear as the epitome of insularity, then the idea of insularity itself is not, strictly speaking, insular, or peculiar to those, like John Major, who claim to be members of an 'island race'. The notion is constructed from the more universal themes of nationalism. The way 'we' assert 'our' particularity is not itself particular. 'We' have a history, identity and flag, just like all those other 'we's. In this, 'we' (whichever national 'we' is to be proclaimed) speak (or imagine ourselves to speak) a universal

code of particularity. This mixture of universality and particularity enables nations to proclaim themselves as nations.

If 'we' are to imagine 'ourselves' as unique, 'we' need a name to do so. As Tajfel's Social Identity Theory emphasized, 'we' must categorize 'ourselves' with a distinctive label, so that 'we' are 'French', or 'Belgian' or 'Turkish' (or 'Breton', or 'Flemish' or 'Kurdish'). The category not only categorizes 'us', in our particularity – demarcating 'us' as an 'us' – but the category is to be categorized (or proclaimed) as a national label in its universality. There is, in short, a universal code for the naming of particulars.

National labels would not be able to signify particularity, if two, or even more, nations shared the same name. Two 'Germanies', existing side by side, indicated and preserved an ideology for unification. Two 'United States of America', each recognizing the other, are unthinkable. Codes of national particularity are seriously threatened by a duplication of names. The Greek government claims that the Republic of Macedonia has appropriated the name and ancient insignia of Greek Macedonia, the 'real' Macedonia in its eyes. Separate Macedonias, each claiming the unique emblem of the Sun of Vergina, is "a clear provocation", to quote the words of the Greek Prime Minister (*Guardian*, 6 January 1994). The leader of Macedonia's largest political party claims that his people cannot accept the internationally imposed name of the 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia': "We are not a former republic and we hope that the two words will be dropped from our country's name very soon" (*Guardian*, 17 December 1993).

Of such matters, major incidents are made in the contemporary world. Conflict can be threatened: 'we' claim the right to call 'ourselves' what 'we' want and to have no one else usurp 'our' name. More than a million Greeks demonstrated on the streets against the allegedly spurious Macedonia, and the mayor of Salonika declared: "We are ready for battle and sacrifices . . . our history goes back 4,000 years . . . We are all united on Macedonia because Macedonia is non-negotiable" (quoted in *Guardian*, 1 April 1994). Such a stance should not be dismissed as something peculiarly 'Balkan' or old-fashioned. One should ask whether the people and government of the United States would stand by idly, should President Castro declare that Cuba would henceforth be known as the 'United States of America' and that its flag would be a pattern of 13 blue and white stripes, with a top left corner of 50 hammer and sickles in a red square.

In proclaiming the uniqueness of 'our' national name, 'we' are not just talking of 'our' own particularity. The imagining of this particularity forms part of a universal code for nationalist consciousness: no one should usurp another's name, nor their right to name themselves. Somehow, in ways difficult to articulate, the magic of 'our' name matters to 'us' deeply, whichever national 'we' are: it indicates who 'we' are, and, more basically, *that* 'we' are. In the secular age, the name of the nation is not to be taken in vain.

Imagining the National Homeland

A nation is more than an imagined community of people, for a place – a homeland – also has to be imagined. Many peoples have imagined themselves to be distinct, carrying their own particular sense of destiny into the future, but this does not make them nations in the modern sense. As Smith (1981) points out, peoples from earliest times have nurtured a sense of their own communal distinctiveness "in the specific history of the group, and, above all, in the myths of group origins and group liberation" (p. 65). Nationhood, however, involves a distinctive imagining of a particular sort of community rooted in a particular sort of place. Nationalism, to quote Agnew (1989), is never "beyond geography" (p. 167). But the geography is not mere geography, or physical setting: the national place has to be imagined, just as much as the national community does.

Not all peoples have imagined themselves to be living within a 'country', in the sense that nation-states are countries. The European peasants, described by Fishman (1972), had a deep sense of attachment to their immediate place of living, without possessing a sense of a wider national home stretching beyond the directly apprehended locality. In fourteenth-century Montaillou, the unit of geographical perception was the *terra*, which was any region "with limits at once human and natural", like valleys, uplands or lowlands (Ladurie, 1978, p. 283). The imagining of an overall 'country', in which lived-in localities are united within a wider homeland, does not seem to have been typical in pre-modern Europe. As Nigel Harris writes, "under mediaeval serfdom, each serf was tied to a piece of land and to a particular lord". This differs from present times when "every inhabitant is expected to be tied to one national soil and one government, or to be an outcaste" (1990, p. 258).

The imagining of a 'country' involves the imagining of a bounded totality beyond immediate experience of place. The boundedness of this totality distinguishes the homeland from the shifting spheres of trade which loosely divided pre-national Central Arabia. The imagining of the national place is similar to the imagining of the national community. As Anderson stressed, the community has to be imagined because it is conceived to stretch beyond immediate experience: it embraces far more people than those with which citizens are personally acquainted. Similarly, the mediaeval peasants would know intimately the crags and shallows of their *terra*. By contrast, the citizens of the nation-state might themselves have visited only a small part of the national territory. They can even be tourists, indeed strangers, in parts of 'their' own land; yet, it is still 'their' land. For American patriots, the United States is not merely the America they know: their America is to be conceived as a unique, vast but homely, totality. In this respect, the unity of the national territory has to be imagined rather than directly apprehended.

In the modern nationalist imagination, one national territory does not shade into another. Nations stop and start abruptly at demarcated borders.

Rathzel (1994) suggests that the German word '*Heimat*' expresses "a prime symbol of the nation" (p. 84). *Heimat* and 'homeland' capture a duality of meaning. The country is the place of 'our' personal homes – my home, your home – and, as such, it is the home of all of 'us', the home of homes, the place where all of 'us' are at home. In this sense, the homeland is imagined as a unity. Outlying districts are as integral as the metropolitan areas: the images of the remote countryside are as commonly used as stereotypically national images as are the grand public buildings of the capital city. This image of integral unity is, of course, one of the ideological elements by which the metropolitan areas seek to establish their hegemony over the peripheral districts (Nairn, 1977). The special quality, which marks the homeland as 'ours', continues without dilution right up to the borders: and there it stops, to be separated from the different foreign essence which is marking out the territory on the other side. "In the modern conception", writes Anderson, "state sovereignty is fully, flatly and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory" (1983, p. 26).

Each homeland is to be imagined both in its totality and its particularity. The world is too small to bear two homelands with the name 'Macedonia', even if clear borders between the two are agreed. Each homeland must be considered a special place, separated physically and metaphorically from other homelands. In the eighteenth century, it was common for the British, and especially the English, to imagine their island as being God's chosen country (Colley, 1992). Jerusalem was to be built in England's green and pleasant land. Across the Atlantic, Americans were also imagining a new Israel. It is said that German immigrants, on arrival in the United States, sang "America . . . is a beautiful land that God promised to Abraham" (Sollors, 1986, p. 44). As was mentioned in Chapter 1, President Bush, announcing the liberation of Kuwait, asked God to continue blessing "our nation, the United States of America". To this day, American patriotic songs declare 'America the beautiful' and invite God's blessing. In these hymns of praise the beauty is not localized: America is not beautiful because it offers a stunning waterfall near Buffalo or a canyon a couple of thousand miles away in Arizona. The country as a totality is praised as special, as 'the beautiful'.

It has been said that nation-states hate losing territory and that national governments will do all they can to appease separatist movements within their boundaries (Waterman, 1989). However, it is not the loss of territory *tout court* which provokes the special pain, but the loss of territory which is situated within the imagined homeland. Ernest Gellner was quoted in Chapter 3, claiming that the modern person considers having a national identity as natural as having a nose and two ears. Losing a part of the imagined homeland is worse than merely losing an ear: in the case of territory, the lost ear always turns up on someone's else's face. Something beyond utility – some part of 'our' home, 'our' selves – has been illegitimately taken by another. This sense of territory does not depend

upon a personal link with the physical place. Iran and Iraq felt it worthwhile to expend hundreds of thousands of lives on a strip of land, which both nations imagined to be an essential part of their respective homelands and whose economic importance was dwarfed by the costs of the struggle. The majority of the population in Argentina believes that the national boundaries should include the Malvinas Islands, although no one personally dreams of returning there, nor any current inhabitant of those islands yearns for the *Anschluss*.

The sense of geographic integrity can be seen in the way that nations do not necessarily hold on to all territory with equal tenacity. Some territory is imagined to be 'ours' and to be fought for; some can be ceded, as not really part of the homeland. Israel, in its peace treaty with Egypt, could hand back the Sinai Peninsular, which was situated beyond the Eretz Yisrael depicted in even the most expansionist of Zionist imaginings. By contrast, East Jerusalem, captured during the same war as Sinai, continues to be imagined as integral to the homeland, even within the less expansionist imaginings. It is a place which occupies a very different side of a psychological boundary. The tragedy is that it occupies a similar position in the imagining of a Palestinian state.

The boundary consciousness of nationalism was at work in the agreement between the British and Irish Prime Ministers over Northern Ireland, issued in December 1993. The so-called 'Downing Street Declaration' asserted that "the people of Britain would wish . . . to enable the people of Ireland to reach agreement on how they may live together in harmony". If the people of Northern Ireland wished to remain within the United Kingdom, then this was to be accepted, as would any decision to support "a sovereign united Ireland". The British government was conveying the message that Ulster was not integral to Britain. Its inhabitants were identified as part of "the people of Ireland", as compared with "the people of Britain". The British government stressed that it "had no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" (full text of the Declaration in *Guardian*, 16 December 1993). In other words, Ulster could be detached from 'Britain'. It was not part of Britain's totality, as imagined by the British and Irish governments; both governments could imagine Ulster becoming part of Éire's totality. The British government's position was in striking contrast with its position on Scottish nationalism. Scotland, declared the Conservative Party at the 1992 General Election, could not be detached without the break-up of the Union, of 'our' nation. Ulster could go without disrupting 'our' national identity, the identity which the party's leader claimed to defend 'come hell or high water'.

The sense of a link between the people and the homeland can be seen clearly in the diaspora consciousness of peoples, who dream of a return to their homeland (Sheffer, 1988). It is not enough for the national community to feel its bonds of communal identification; it claims the need to be situated within, and have control over, a special section of the globe. The leader of the Crimean Tartar assembly declares that "we want to get back

to our motherland and to re-establish our national territorial republic" (reported in *Guardian*, 1 September 1993). Only a particular place is imagined to be nationally appropriate. In 1905 the Seventh Zionist Congress overwhelmingly rejected Joseph Chamberlain's idea to establish a Jewish national home in Uganda. It was the right idea in the wrong place.

In such claims, a mystical link between the people and its land is detectable. Sometimes the link can be expressed in outwardly religious terms. Thus, God is to bless America; and to build Jerusalem within England; or to re-build Jerusalem within Jerusalem. The mysticism of place does not depend upon an explicitly religious consciousness. Hazani (1993), describing the early Young Zionist *halutzim*, writes of the "paradox of atheists who tenaciously cling to basically religious beliefs, such as the right of the Jewish people to inherit God's Promised Land" (p. 63). As Anderson and others have commented, nationalist consciousness is essentially secular. God may be cited as a justification for the nation's specialness, but the deity, unlike the claim to a special place, is an optional extra. The national community, as a product of the modern age, has descended from heaven to earth.

In essentials, the theory of nationhood stipulates that a people, place and state should be bound in unity. The nationalist-as-poet is a familiar figure in the early stages of movements to establish new nations (Hroch, 1985; Ignatieff, 1993). The mystic bond between people and place is a much repeated theme in their writings. Once nations are established, and nationalism becomes banal, the poets are typically replaced by prosaic politicians, and the epic ballads by government reports. The imagined community ceases to be reproduced by acts of the imagination. In established nations, the imagination becomes enhabited, and, thereby, inhibited. In this sense, the term 'imagined community' may be misleading. The community and its place are not so much imagined, but their absence becomes unimaginable.

Even though the imagination may become banally habitual, nevertheless, the mysticism which posits the special people in its special place does not disappear. The flags can be waved, and sacrifice offered in the cause of the nation's special identity. A mayor of Salonika, cheered by crowds of compatriots, declares himself ready to protect his ancient nation against the idea of a second Macedonia; a British prime minister, whose image-makers struggle to make insipidity a public virtue, declares that Britain has never and will never be bullied out of its distinctive identity. The rhetoric is familiar: past sacrifices are invoked in the name of the present.

The mystic bond, which can be overtly defended, has in the late twentieth century become banal, seeping into everyday consciousness. It underwrites stodgy government documents, such as the Downing Street agreement on Ulster. In such prose, theory has becomes enhabited in a familiar grammar. Around the world, nation-states use the same basic categories for their 'country' and their 'people'. This is part of the universal code of nationality: the particular nation is affirmed within a general code,

which always stipulates that a particular people and particular homeland are to be imagined as special, and, thereby, not so special. The same linguistic root gives rise to the singular name of the state or country (Portugal, Peru, Pakistan); and a collective noun for describing the people, who supposedly possess that state (the Portuguese, the Peruvians, the Pakistanis). One major exception to the code is the United Kingdom, a state not peopled by 'United Kingdonians' (the other major exception, the USSR, has already collapsed into more typically named segments). Significantly, the official title, the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland', is hardly used by its inhabitants, especially when describing themselves (Condor, in press; Hall, 1992). The pair 'Britain/British' is more frequently used, although the English will unthinkingly substitute 'England/English' for the wider term. Such semantic habits reveal that the complex nomenclature of the United Kingdom permits the complex continuation of an English hegemony (Nairn, 1988).

Notwithstanding the exception of the United Kingdom, the world of today is represented habitually as a world of countries and peoples, tightly bound in semantic unity and concrete reality. America (or at least the 'United States of') exists as the place of Americans (as if the rest of the geographical Americas did not exist); France as the place of the French and so on. Indeed, these are more than places: they are 'countries', unique totalities, populated by their unique peoples. A form of semantic cleansing operates in these terms: there is no gap between the people and its country. If France exists – and it so obviously does – then so must the French exist; and similarly for Peru and the Peruvians; if there are no more Belgians, only Flemings and Walloons, then Belgium should exist no more. All this appears as if obvious. The bonds linking people and place are held firm by a universal grammar, which promises a cleansed vision of proper peoples in their proper places.

Because countries are materially established in this world, the mysticism of this vision appears as a natural, worldly fact of national life. Much can be daily forgotten, as nations appear as inevitable entities, their histories of bitter hegemonic struggle hidden behind the cleanliness of grammatical symmetry. The language of sacrifice is easily called upon to sustain the vision. And when competing visions of homelands draw different boundaries around the same places, the rivals can dream of cleansing each other's vision, and each other's very being, from the geography of their own imagined homeland. Then, semantic and material 'cleansing' become fatally united.

Stereotyping 'Them'

If nationalism is an ideology of the first person plural, which tells 'us' who 'we' are, then it is also an ideology of the third person. There can be no 'us' without a 'them'. As Henri Tajfel (1981) stressed, a social category, in describing who 'we' are, indicates who 'we' are not. The national

community can only be imagined by also imagining communities of foreigners. The 'foreigner', in the age of the nation-state, is a specific category, not merely any 'other'. The point is well expressed by Julia Kristeva, who points out that, with the establishment of nation-states, "we come to the only modern, acceptable, and clear definition of foreignness: the foreigner is the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality" (1991, p. 96).

Kristeva's point is an important one, for it gets to the root of the issue of whether nationalism should be considered as a historically specific outlook, or as an example for a more general outlook, in which outsiders are despised. The Galician peasants, in Fishman's story, could be said to have shared an inward-looking perspective, once characteristic of European peasantry. Those living outside the immediate locality – or the *terra*, to use the old mediaeval term – would be viewed with suspicion, if not downright hostility. This is the state of mind which Marx and Engels described in *The Communist Manifesto* as "national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness" (1968, p. 39), predicting that such restricted world-views would be swept aside by the international spread of capitalism.

The narrowness of mind of which Marx and Engels were writing, is often now called 'ethnocentrism'. William Graham Sumner, in formulating the concept of 'ethnocentrism', wrote that "each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt on outsiders". Sumner went on to claim that "each group thinks its own folkways the only right ones, and if it observes that other groups have other folkways, these excite its scorn" (1906, p. 13; see LeVine and Campbell, 1970). Surely, it might be thought, Sumner's description fits the nationalist *par excellence* (Adorno et al., 1950; Forbes, 1986; Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989). As Gellner has written, "in a nationalist age, societies worship themselves brazenly and openly, spurning camouflage" (1983, p. 57). In worshipping themselves, nationalists disparage foreign nations. Again the question might be asked: why bother to insist upon the specialness of nationalism, when it can be seen as an example of something much older and more general – in this case, as an example of ethno-centrism?

Marx and Engels, however, were both right and wrong in their prediction about national one-sidedness. They were correct in supposing that an inward-looking, one-sided perspective would be supplanted by an international outlook in the modern world of international capital. They were wrong to identify the supplanted ideology with a national conscious-ness. Traditional ethnocentrism was being swept aside, but nationalism was part of the historical force to do the sweeping. Most crucially, the nationalist outlook, as a product and producer of the modern world of nation-states, differs from the ethnocentric view, as described by Sumner. There is one particularly revealing phrase in Sumner's description: the group is scornful '*if* it observes that other groups have other folkways'. The ingroup is presumed to be so culturally isolated and so wrapped within its

own concerns that the outside world might be ignored. This, however, is not the condition of nationalism in the modern world.

Nationalists live in an international world, and their ideology is itself an international ideology. Without constant observation of the world of other nations, nationalists would be unable to claim that their nations meet the universal codes of nationhood. Nor would they have ready access to stereotyped judgements about foreigners. Even the most extreme and unbanal of nationalists do not shut out the outside world from consciousness, but often show an obsessive concern with the lives and outlooks of foreigners. Hitler's *Table-Talk* is filled with speculations about the characters of different nations. One illustrative example, taken from 1942, can be given. Martin Bormann had apparently lent his Führer a book entitled *Juan in America*, itself an indicative action. Hitler opines lengthily, while his admirers listen:

> The British swallow everything they are told . . . [Americans] have the brains of a hen . . . the German Reich has two hundred and seventy opera houses – a standard of cultural existence of which they have no conception . . . Spaniards and Americans simply cannot understand each other . . . the Americans live like sows. (1988, pp. 604–5)

And so on. Hitler speaks a continuing stream of stereotypes, as he surveys the rest of the world from his camp at Rastenburg.

Social psychologists frequently assume that narrow, bigoted thinking is characterized by the use of stereotypes. If the imagining of foreignness is an integral part of the theoretical consciousness of nationalism, then foreignness is not an undifferentiated sense of 'Otherness' (McDonald, 1993). Obsessively fine distinctions can be made between different groups of foreigners. Indeed, debates and controversies can arise about how similar or how different various groups of foreigners are to 'us'. In one of the earliest studies of stereotyping, Katz and Braly (1935) showed the extent to which white, American college students used conventional labels to characterize different ethnic and national groups: Jews were mercenary, Turks were cruel, Germans efficient, etc. Later studies have indicated a decline in respondents' willingness to use such generalizing stereotypes (Gilbert, 1951; Karlins et al., 1969). The stereotypes of other nations tend not to be uniformly scornful. Some foreigners are presumed to be more meritorious than others. Thus, Katz and Braly found that some foreign national types, such as the Germans, were praised in ways which others, especially non-European nations, were not.

Stereotypes are shared, cultural descriptions of social groups. Even respondents, who might themselves claim to be sceptical about the truths of the stereotypes, recognize a culturally shared scale of valuations (Devine, 1989). Some foreigners are identified as being stereotyped as more admirable, and more like 'us', than others (Hagendoorn, 1993a; Hagendoorn and Hraba, 1987; Hagendoorn and Kleinpenning, 1991). Inglehart (1991), examining the national attitudes of members of European nations, found that, with the exception of Italians, members of all

nations rated their own nation as the most trustworthy. However, not all foreigners were rated equally untrustworthy. Members of small, non-Mediterranean European nations, such as Danes, Swiss and Dutch, tended to be rated more trustworthy, even by Mediterranean respondents. In short, it is commonplace that stereotyped distinctions are made between different sorts of foreigners.

Public opinion polls suggest that there is nothing static in the stereotyped judgements. Foreign stocks can rise and fall, in accord with the movements of political crises. The favourable stereotypes of Germans, which Katz and Braly (1935) found, declined as the United States prepared to enter the Second World War (Harding et al., 1954). Most dramatic was the change in American judgements of Russians, who, in 1945, switched from being heroic allies to bitterest rivals (Yatani and Bramel, 1989). With the collapse of Soviet communism, the American public has been presented with new enemies – whether Libyans, Iraqis or Arabs in general. With prolonged conflicts, a 'siege mentality' can develop, in which stereotypes become rigid, and the enemy is demonized with regular ferocity (Bar-Tal, 1989, 1990; Silverstein and Flamenbaum, 1989). Sudden crises can produce quickly sharpened stereotypes, as, for example, the emergence of 'the Argie' in the British media during the Falklands War (Harris, 1985). The quickly summoned stereotype will build upon older cultural myths, although there might be some initial uncertainty how these should be combined. One member of the British war cabinet was reported as wondering whether the Argentinians would actually go to war, given their half-Italian and half-Spanish ancestry. "There's no precedent", he said, because "if the Spanish half is uppermost, they'll fight, if the Italian, they won't" (quoted in Young, 1993, p. 278).

Stereotypes are often means of distinguishing 'them' from 'us', thereby contributing to 'our' claims of a unique identity. In the eighteenth century, Britain developed many of its modern symbols of nationhood in conscious contradistinction to French styles of nation-making (Cannadine, 1983; Colley, 1992). English writers debated whether there should be an English Academy, but the idea was rejected as being too French (Haugen, 1966a). The first recorded cartoon, depicting John Bull as an 'Englishman', also shows a Frenchman, as thin and meagre as Bull is fat and generous (Surel, 1989). In this case, the icongraphic stereotype of 'us' was created in contrastive differentiation from the stereotype of 'them'. The point is not merely a historical one, but there is an implicit contrast in the stereotyped judgement of 'them' (McCauley et al., 1980; Stangor and Ford, 1992). Typically, people ascribe more stereotypic traits to outgroups than to ingroups; 'we' often assume 'ourselves' as the standard, or the unmarked normality, against which 'their' deviations appear notable (Quattrone, 1986). If 'they, the French' are stereotyped as 'emotional', it is with implicit reference to 'our' presumed, non-emotional standards. Or conversely another group might be stereotyped as 'cold', whereas 'we' will be neither 'cold' (too cold) nor 'emotional' (too emotional).

There is always the possibility of projection, as Kristeva realized in her descriptions of 'foreignness'. 'We' can claim that 'they' possess the qualities, which 'we' deny in 'ourselves'. In Western democracies, 'our' tolerance is much praised by 'ourselves'. Journalists and politicians, especially when arguing for immigration restrictions, cite 'our' tolerance, and 'their' intolerance, as a reason for excluding 'them', the foreigners (Barker, 1981; Van Dijk, 1991, 1992, 1993). The rhetoric denies 'our' prejudice and it condenses an argumentative structure, which attributes intolerance to 'them': 'our' tolerance is threatened by 'their' presence; 'they' are either intolerant or cause intolerance; thus, 'we' seek to exclude 'them', not because 'we' are intolerant but, quite the reverse, because 'we' are tolerant (Billig, 1991; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). In conditions of the 'siege mentality', it is always the 'other' who breaks faith, acts dishonestly and starts aggressive spirals: 'our' actions are justified by circumstance, but 'theirs' are said to reflect a deficiency of character, indeed, the very deficiencies which 'we' deny in 'ourselves' (Pettigrew, 1979; Rothbart and Hallmark, 1988).

It is important not to stereotype the act of stereotyping, as if ready formed judgements come spilling out of the mouth of the person evoking stereotypes (Billig, 1985). More is at stake than the ascription of character-istics to groups. Respondents have much more to say about 'them', the foreigners, than they are permitted to utter while completing question-naires about stereotypes (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). There are multiple ways of talking about a multiplicity of 'thems', and the same speakers have different 'voices', or different tones, for talking about 'them'. Above all, the voices of the particular and the general can jostle to be heard, even as a single person, in making a single utterance, talks about 'them' (Billig et al., 1988).

Van Dijk (1993) gives the example of the German Minister for the Interior arguing for increased immigration restrictions. The minister declares: "It belongs to this fair balance of interests that further immi-gration of foreigners must be restricted, because for each society there are limits to the ability and the readiness to integrate" (quoted p. 94). The minister, in seeking to exclude 'foreigners' from 'our' homeland, is using, and seeking to be seen to use, the rhetoric of reasonableness. The value of fairness is cited: this is not merely 'our' fairness, but a universal fairness. The minister looks beyond the homeland, to cite a general rule about 'each society'. Thus, 'our' interests are not merely 'our' particular interests; 'we' are claiming to act in a universally reasonable way, so that 'our' society is in accord with a universal sociology, which stipulates what each society can and cannot do. This talk, like most academic sociology, assumes, quite naturally, that 'society' is the nation, or the 'country'.

This is characteristic of nationalist discourse in late twentieth-century democracies. As so often, nationalism combines the particular and the universal. 'We' claim to look beyond 'our' boundaries, even when seeking to close those boundaries. 'We' cite universal principles and general laws,

denying 'our' own narrowness. Thus, 'we' speak in 'our' own interests with an authority which appears to stretch beyond 'ourselves'. The authority, in this case, is not a deity nor a cosmic force. It is something much more persuasive for the nationalist consciousness. This is the grandeur of a sociological imperative, to which all nations – 'ours' and others – must apparently conform. In this way, 'we' imagine 'ourselves' and 'foreigners' to be equally ruled by the sociology of nationhood. This governing sociology produces 'countries', in which 'we' and 'them' are reproduced as peoples bound both uniquely and universally to 'our' places. Armed with this vision of nationhood, not only can 'we' claim to speak for 'ourselves', but also 'we' can speak for 'them', or for 'all of us'.

Imagining a Nation among Nations

Nationalism inevitably involves a mixture of the particular and the universal: if 'our' nation is to be imagined in all its particularity, it must be imagined as a nation amongst other nations. The consciousness of national identity normally assumes an international context, which itself needs to be imagined every bit as much as does the national community: or at least the imagination has to become frozen in a habit of thought. Thus, foreigners are not simply 'others', symbolizing the obverse of 'us': 'they' are also like 'us', part of the imagined universal code of nationhood. Because nationalism involves this universal perspective, or this imagining of the international world of nations, it differs crucially from the secluded ethnocentric mentality.

Historically, the rise of nationalism entailed the creation of internationalism. Robertson has claimed that nationalism involves 'the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism' (1991, p. 73; see also Robertson, 1990, 1992). He argues that historically "the idea of nationalism (or particularism) develops *only* in tandem with internationalism" (1991, p. 78). The era of the nation-state is not characterized by growing isolation of national polities. Quite the contrary, the emergence of the nation-state coincides with the emergence of international relations (Der Derian, 1989). The Congress of Vienna in 1815, at which the powerfully victorious nations of Europe decided upon their continent's map, was the first modern international political settlement: it provided rules for the operation of frontiers, the exchange of envoys and navigation on international rivers (Hinsley, 1986). The Congress heralded not merely the era of the sovereign nation-state, but that of the international system, in which each state officially recognizes the internal sovereignty of its neighbours. By virtue of its sovereignty, each state becomes "one among other states which rule their communities in the same sovereign way" (Hinsley, 1986, p. 225). To this day, 'the global political order' continues to be based upon the assumption of sovereign nation-states existing in mutual recognition (Giddens, 1990). As Wallerstein (1987) argues, the racism and

chauvinism developed in this new order differs from earlier prejudices of xenophobia, which were based upon rejection and fear, rather than constitutional separation and hierarchy.

Not surprisingly, the new forms of community necessitated the production of new discourses. Traditional ways of talking were inadequate for a world which was creating a system of interrelating sovereign nations. Thus it was that Jeremy Bentham, not for the only time in his life, invented a word – one which today possesses such linguistic solidity, and such apparently concrete signification, that it is hard to imagine it ever absent from the vocabulary. In *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789/1982), Bentham discussed the need for the laws of different nations to coincide in an "international jurisprudence". He added, by way of an explanatory footnote, that "the word *international*, it must be acknowledged, is a new one, though it is hoped sufficiently analogous and intelligible" (1982, p. 296, emphasis in original).

In this new nationalist outlook, not only is the nation imagined as an integral whole, but so is the world, in ways that would have been unthinkable in earlier times. The whole world, no longer lying in the hands of the Deity or Satan, can be imagined as a natural order of independent nations. Moreover, the 'natural' order of nations could be imagined to be subverted by international conspirators. The British cartoonist James Gillray depicted this fear in his famous 'The Plumb Pudding in Danger' (1805). Pitt and Napoleon are seated at a dinner table carving up the globe for themselves. Gillray's cartoon was much copied throughout Europe, inspiring many imitations (Hill, 1966). As Gillray's image was enjoying huge success, so conspiracy theories were being formulated: de Barruel and Robison were claiming that the freemasons were taking over the world, overthrowing the old orders of the aristocracy and seeking to mix the 'naturally' separate nations (Lipset and Raab, 1970; Roberts, 1974). Fantastic though these ideas of world conspiracy might seem, they have had a powerful hold in the past 200 years (Finn, 1990, 1993; Graumann and Moscovici, 1987).

Nazism, the most virulent of all nationalism's forms, involved more than the imagining of stereotypes about 'us', the master race, and 'them', the inferiors. The stereotypes on their own did not lead to a policy of systematic extermination. There was also a global story of conspiracy: the whole world was imagined to be falling into the grip of Jews, who were seeking to destroy races and nations (Billig, 1989a; Cohn, 1967; Katz, 1980; Poliakov, 1974). The covers of anti-semitic tracts portrayed the image of Jewish hands grasping the world, in a manner resembling Gillray's image of Pitt and Napoleon. The mixture of conspiratorial and racial themes ensured that Nazi ideology contained an internal dynamic for extermination: the world could only be saved by destroying the conspirators, who were driven to world conspiracy by their unchanging and unchangeable racial natures. These strange notions cannot be explained away as an anachronistic reversal to an earlier mediaeval way of thinking.

Nazism was intrinsically modern in its nationalist depiction of an international world.

The case of Nazism illustrates the general point that nationalism, even at its most extreme, is never completely inward-looking. To claim to be a nation is to imagine one's group to fit a common, universal pattern. Thus, nationalism has a mimetic quality. This can be seen most clearly in the creation of new nations, especially those that are formed in the wake of an imperial collapse. Colonies, in struggling for independence, fit themselves to a mould which is not of their making, appropriating the model of the Western nation-state (Mercer, 1992). The universal principles of national sovereignty can be turned against colonial masters. John Chilembwe, during the First World War, wrote tracts as a self-proclaimed nationalist, specifically basing his case for Nyasaland's independence on the principles of the Enlightenment (Rotberg, 1966). It was a pattern to be much repeated in Africa and elsewhere. The leaders of independence movements often conceive themselves as creating a new nation on the site of the colony. For example, to Spartacus Monimambo, an early leader of the MPLA in Angola, political education was crucial, and it should be "first of all, nationalist". Talking about the revolutionary struggle shortly before his death, Monimambo explained: "The people must understand that we are all Angolans", so that "tomorrow we will have cultural unity throughout Angola" (1971, pp. 382–3).

After independence, the new states tend to keep their colonial boundaries. The policy of 'cultural unity' often involves, as it did in the creation of established European nations, the attempt by one section of the territory to imposes its hegemony over the rest. Not surprisingly, and again following the European model, civil war frequently is the result. After the old order has been overthrown, the radical rhetoric is sometimes maintained, not to widen the focus of liberation, but to bolster repression in the newly independent state (Akioye, 1994; Ihonvbere, 1994). As Harris (1990) points out, even nationalist movements battling against imperialist exploitation are marked by a deep conformism. They are essentially reformist, because their aspirations are limited to accepting the conventional forms of nationhood and thereby taking for granted "a world order of national states" (1990, p. 276).

Nations do not have to pass a theoretical test of nationhood, showing that they possess some notional criterion of internal unity, whether of ethnicity, language or culture. The tests are concrete, based upon the ability of the state to impose order and monopolize violence within established boundaries (Giddens, 1985, 1990). The major test is international, for the nation will seek recognition from established nations, who, in their turn, will recognize their own nationhood in the successful new claimant. In consequence, the new nation has to resemble other nations to gain their recognition. It must adopt conventional symbols of particularity, which, because of their conventionality, are simultaneously symbols of the universality of nationhood. For example, each nation is

expected to have its own flag and national anthem. The new interim constitution of South Africa, which was proposed in November 1993, carefully specified that "a national anthem and flag will be introduced by an act of the new parliament" (*Guardian*, 18 November 1993). When Palestinian and Israeli leaders met officially for the first time in Washington, the Palestinians had to choose which of their anthems would be played (*Independent on Sunday*, 12 September 1993). The universal code forbade the playing of two anthems for one nation: becoming a 'proper' nation would mean selecting a single 'official' anthem.

A national anthem is a universal sign of particularity. The conventions of the oeuvre demand that the uniqueness of the nation be celebrated in a universally stylized manner. The old Soviet anthem fitted praise for communism into a celebration of the nation and its people. Its chorus proclaimed: "Sing to our motherland, home of the free, Bulwark of peoples in brotherhood strong!" Its author, Sergei Mikhalkov, is quoted as saying that "an anthem is a prayer sung by people worshipping their country" and "every nation must have this prayer" (*Independent on Sunday*, 14 February 1993). After the Soviet system fell, the words of the old anthem were deemed inappropriate for the new Russia. Accordingly, the government announced a competition for a new anthem. Recognizing this to be a minor modern art form, whose aesthetics transcend political divisions, the government appointed the elderly Mr Mikhalkov to select the winning entry. Whatever his past political mistakes, he could be trusted to recognize a suitable prayer for the nation.

National anthems not only fit a common pattern, but it is part of their symbolism that they are seen to do so. They flag the nation as a nation among nations, as flags themselves do. Each flag will have its own particular symbols like the *chakra-dhavaja*, or wheel, in the Indian flag, or the Protestant orange and Catholic green in the flag of Éire. Even as a flag indicates particularity, with its own individual patterns (whether the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, the Tricolor or whatever), it also flags its own universality. Each flag, by its conventional rectangular pattern, announces itself to be an element of an established, recognizable series, in which all the flags are essentially similar in their conventions of difference. The odd exception, like the pennant-shaped flag of Nepal, only serves to confirm the general rule. New nations, in designing their flags, tend to follow heraldic convention of colour as well as shape: they avoid certain shades like shocking pink and kingfisher blue (Firth, 1973). The hoisting of the newly designed flag indicates that another nation has joined the club of nations: 'we' have become like 'you' (no longer 'them'); 'we' are all nations, with 'our' flags and 'our' anthems, 'our' seats in the United Nations, and 'our' participation, with appropriately designed vests, at Olympic Games and World Cups.

This international consciousness is integral to the modern consciousness of nationalism. The banal symbols of 'our' particularity are also banal symbols of 'our' universality. Nationalism does not provide a single way of

talking about the world. In consequence, there are infinite discursive possibilities for talking about 'us' and 'them': and, indeed, 'you'. 'We' are not confined to simple differentiating stereotypes, which downgrade the foreigner as the mysterious Other. Foreign nations are like 'ours', but never completely alike. 'We' can recognize 'ourselves' in 'them'; and, there again, 'we' can fail to recognize 'ourselves'. 'We' can become allies, 'they' becoming 'you'; and 'we' can become enemies. And 'we' can debate amongst 'ourselves' about the value of 'our' allies. 'We' can accuse 'them' of threatening 'our' particularity or of failing to act like proper, responsible nations like 'we' do. And 'we' can claim that 'they', in threatening 'us', threaten the idea of nationhood. In damning 'them', 'we' can claim to speak for 'all of us'.

Syntax of Hegemony

The infinite possibilities for talking nationally about 'us', 'you' and 'them' illustrate the dilemmatic character of nationalism. It is a mistake to think that an ideology is characterized by a single voice, or a particular attitudinal position. In common with other ideologies, nationalism includes contrary themes, especially the key themes of particularism and universalism. Its contrary themes provide the wherewithal for dilemma and, thus, for controversy and debate (Billig et al., 1988). The debate, however, is conducted within parameters that take nationhood for granted as the natural context of the universe. In this sense, the argument is conducted within, and not against, nationalism.

This is easy to overlook if nationalism is seen in a restricted sense, which expects the ideology to be represented by the 'pure' tones of irrationality, small-mindedness and opposition to internationalism. Nationalism has always had its own, nationalized voice of reason and of hegemony. The national principle of sovereignty has presented itself as a reasonable principle; and within the history of nationalism, one part of the imagined national whole has always sought to present itself as the universal voice of the whole. When a leader claims that 'we are all Angolans' (or all Americans, Peruvians – it matters not) and that a cultural unity needs to be created, the leader is speaking in a voice which is not particularly Angolan (or whatever). Also, in attempting to construct a national, cultural unity, one part – one aspect of the cultural and linguistic mosaic – will become the dominant, metonymic representation of the whole. As was discussed in Chapter 2, other ways of being national will be repressed, forgotten or relegated to the status of dialect.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) claimed that utterances generally contain different voices, often simultaneously voicing 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' tendencies. Nationalist utterances could be said to comprise universal (centripetal) elements and particularist (centrifugal) ones. The French Revolution, with its claim that the French nation stood for the rights of man (sic), has been hailed as the classic example of the way that the

universal aspirations of the Enlightenment could be given national expression (for example, Kedourie, 1966; Schwartzmantel, 1992). 'We' the French, linguistically and rhetorically, coincide with 'we', the whole of humanity. Some analysts have claimed that the combination of universalism and particularism was so contradictory that it was bound to collapse. Thus, nationalism moved towards the right, as the universal was rejected in favour of the particular (Dumont, 1992).

Other examples of this apparent movement towards the right could be given. In Greece, the earliest nationalists, like Rhigas Velestinlis, were cosmopolitan in spirit, but their liberal nationalism was brushed aside by forces of absolutism and dogmatism (Kitromilides, 1979). The radicalism of English patriots like John Wilkes in the eighteenth century was overtaken, in the following century, by a John Bull Toryism (Cunningham, 1986). So, one might think that nationalism resolves its early, internal contradictions by discarding its liberalism, and, thereby, becoming an internally consistent ideology.

This sort of account has a problem. It tells of nationalism passing from universal, radical beginnings to parochial endings (with renewed bursts of radicalism from later anti-imperialist nationalisms). The problem is that the tale tends to leave nationalism exclusively in the hands of the right-wing. It also assumes that ideologies operate by some law of cognitive dissonance, which suggests that inner contradictions must inevitably be resolved, so that the contradictory ideology splits into two consistent parts. In the case of nationalism, there is a case for saying that the split between the universal and particular was never fully accomplished. Indeed, it is preserved in the commonplace discourses of nationalism. Right from its earliest times, nationalism used a 'syntax of hegemony', by which the part claimed to represent the whole. One form of speaking might claim to be the language of the whole nation, or one district claim to represent the national culture (see Chapter 2). A further extension can be made. The particular nation can claim to talk for the whole world: 'our' particular interests can appear as the interests of universal reason. The very syntax of the first person plural seems to invite such claims.

The voice of universal reason can accompany the voice of national self-glorification in the most mundane, banal clichés of contemporary political discourse. Immediately after the result of the 1992 US presidential elections had been declared, the candidates gave short addresses. President-elect Clinton, hailing "my fellow Americans", spoke about the "clarion call for our country" and ended by accepting with a full heart the responsibility of being "the leader of this, the greatest country in human history". Outgoing President Bush used a similar rhetoric, addressing "all Americans", who "shared the same purpose, to make this, the world's greatest nation, more safe and more secure" (reported in *Guardian*, 5 November 1992). The self-worship of 'our' nation, 'our' country, as the greatest in history was not a cynical appeal for votes, for, by then, the polling booths had been closed. Both politicians were answering a higher

rhetorical duty: they were aware that this is the way American presidents should speak on such occasions. Their phrases of national self-praise contained an unsaid implication: if there is a greatest nation in history, then so there must be all those other nations, overshadowed and imperfect.

Bush, in conceding electoral defeat, talked about respecting "the majesty of the democratic system". This is not merely 'our' majesty, or something which might appear majestic in 'our' eyes; but 'our' democracy is universally 'majestic'. In speaking to 'us', his fellow Americans, Bush was also appealing to what rhetoricians have called 'the universal audience' (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971; Perelman, 1979; Shotter, 1995). The speaker assumes that any audience of reasonable people, or the hypothetical 'universal audience', would find the arguments persuasive. The outgoing president spoke as if any reasonable person – whether listening or not, whether American or belonging to a less than greatest nation – should recognize this majesty, 'our' democratic majesty. The rhetoric, in reaching towards the audience of 'fellow Americans', also treated that particular audience as a universal audience, and the American greatness as a universal greatness.

If nationalism involves imagining an international context, or international order, as well as imagining 'ourselves' and 'foreigners', then 'we' can claim 'ourselves' to be representing the interests of this international, universal order: 'we', in our great particularity, can be imagined to stand for 'all of us', for a universal audience of humanity. Thus, the modern nation does not go to war merely for particular interests, but claims to be acting in the interests of 'all nations' or the universal order of nations.

Margaret Thatcher, addressing a rally of Conservative Party supporters in Britain after the Falklands War, spoke with the tones of national self-congratulation. The national 'we' was rhetorically and smugly evident. 'We' had shown "that Britain has not changed and that this nation still has those sterling qualities which shine through our history". Again, the details of the history were deemed superfluous to the persuasiveness of the case. Yes, "Britain had rekindled that spirit which has fired her for generations past". At the start of the speech, the Prime Minister had declared that "we are entitled to be proud" because "this nation had the resolution to do what it knew had to be done – to do what it knew was right". She explained: "We fought to show that aggression does not pay and that the robber cannot be allowed to get away with his swag." And 'we' did so with "the support of so many throughout the world" (speech delivered 3 July 1982, text reproduced in Barnett, 1982, pp. 149f.).

Thus, there was a universal principle and a universal audience applauding 'us': 'we' were acting on behalf of a universal morality of right. 'Our' stance and the position of universal morality coincided. From the other side, a similar claim could be heard. The Argentinian news claimed the invasion of the Malvinas to be "a rebirth of Argentine values and simultaneously of Western ideals" (quoted Aulich, 1992, p. 108). 'Western ideals' metonymically stood for universal ideals in this statement of double

hegemony. In both cases, 'our' particular rebirth, or rekindling, was claimed to be co-extensive with a wider, universal morality in the world of nations.

The syntax involved in such discourse is not always straightforward. 'We' can become an ambiguous term, indicating both the particularity of 'we', the nation, and the universality of 'we', the universally reasonable world. In this way, 'our' interests – those of party, government, nation and world – can appear to coincide rhetorically, so long as 'we' do not specify what 'we' mean by 'we', but, instead, allow the first person plural to suggest a harmony of interests and identities (Billig, 1991; Maitland and Wilson, 1987; Wilson, 1990).

There has been an extra theme in contemporary, international politics since the fall of the Soviet Union. 'A new world order' is being invoked. The claim to represent the 'world order' appears as a moral claim, which depicts some sort of unity between 'ourselves' and a universal morality. However, the universal aspect of the new order is also highly particular. As Der Derian (1993) points out, the term 'new world order' started appearing in George Bush's speeches in August 1990 and "it was used to describe an American-led, United Nations-backed system of collective security" (p. 117). For example, Bush announced to a joint session of Congress, on 11 September 1990, the new world order to be "an era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony". As was mentioned in the opening chapter, this is an order of nations in which one particular nation seeks a leading role.

The new world order is producing its own commonplace discourses, which routinely repeat reassuring ambiguities. However, the syntax, by which 'we', the United States, lay claim to a leading role, is of necessity complex. In claiming to represent international principles of justice, order and sovereignty, 'we', as an individual nation, cannot directly lay claim to the world: 'we' cannot appear as a Pitt or a Napoleon tucking into the global plum pudding. 'We' must locate 'ourselves' humbly within that world. 'We' must recognize the rights of others, whilst speaking for these others, and while reminding 'ourselves' that 'we', the greatest nation in history, stand for 'our' own interests.

When President Clinton spoke of US military intervention in Haiti, he declared that "the military authorities in Haiti simply must understand that they cannot indefinitely defy the desires of their own people as well as the will of the world community". He went on: "that path holds only suffering for their nation and international isolation for themselves" (quoted in *Guardian*, 16 October 1993). The American President was speaking in the voice of universal morality: there was a right and a wrong way for nations to behave; and 'the international community', for which he was speaking, upholds the right way, as if it could be imagined as a single actor with a single will. But this was not all. In the same speech, the President commented on "important American interests at stake in Haiti". These

included the restoration of democracy and the security of American citizens. 'Our' particular, nationally defined, interests were represented as coinciding with the universal morality of the 'international community'.

General Colin Powell, the chief of US military staff, commented that American withdrawal from Somalia "would be devastating to our hopes for the new world order and our ability to participate in multinational organisations to deal with problems like this" (*Guardian*, 11 September 1993). 'Our ability to participate' clearly refers to the US participation at the head of multinational operations. But 'our hopes for the new world order' are more ambiguous: they are not merely US hopes, although they include such hopes, but they are also the hopes of all reasonable people. These hopes – and the world order itself – rest upon 'us', the Americans, the reasonable people of the world. Through unremarkable cliché and a syntax which does not draw attention to itself, the unity of all 'our' hopes and 'our' American world is economically depicted.

These ambiguities were apparent in the speeches made by President Bush during the Gulf War. As he announced that the US, together with its coalition partners, was attacking Iraqi forces, the blurring of 'we' was apparent. Sometimes, 'we' were clearly American: "our sons and daughters" were going to war; and Bush was careful to mention the damage which Hussein had done to "our economy", or our interests. Sometimes 'we' were the coalition: "we will not fail". Sometimes it was a universal 'we', which could have been either the nation or the coalition or both: "when we are successful . . . we will have a real chance at this new world order" (speech delivered 16 January 1991, text in Sifry and Cerf, 1991, pp. 311f.). At times, 'we' seemed to be equated with 'the world'. Bush mentioned particular American soldiers: "Tonight, America and the world are deeply grateful to them and their families." 'The world', of course, did not include Iraq.

'Our' enemies do not merely oppose 'us', in 'our' particularity, but they can be said to oppose the very moral order which 'we' claim to represent. Accordingly, 'they' are demonized as more than just a foreign 'them' (Edelman, 1977). Nation-states may commit far more violence than terrorists, but the figure of the international terrorist is used to represent a threat to moral order and reasonableness itself (Reich, 1990). Each terrorist act threatens more than individual lives: it challenges the mono- poly of violence, claimed by nation-states. Similarly, nations and their leaders can be placed outside this order of nations. Saddam Hussein stood beyond the moral order, which Bush was depicting and laying claim to lead. According to Bush, "while the world waited", Saddam Hussein raped and plundered a tiny nation; "while the world waited" Saddam added chemical weapons to his arsenal; "while the world waited", Saddam did damage to our and the world's economy (Sifry and Cerf, 1991, pp. 312– 13). Repetitively, Bush placed his enemy outside the world, accomplishing rhetorically what Gillray had depicted graphically: the enemy was not of the world, but was playing with the world.

This rhetoric suggests that those nations that oppose 'us' are more than parochial competitors: they can be transformed into enemies of international morality. Thus, Libya and Iraq, in US rhetoric, are not merely rivals or strange foreigners with different folkways. Like the Soviets before them, they are demonized as threats to the moral order of the world itself (Silverstein and Flamenbaum, 1989). This order is explicitly a world of nations. Its enemies – nations themselves, as well as 'terrorists' – are the obverse of 'the universal audience': they are depicted as the universal enemy.

In the rhetoric of the new world order, the theoretical consciousness of nationalism is reproduced in the banal, commonplace cliché of the contemporary politician. This consciousness includes assumptions about how a nation should behave; how 'we' should behave; and the world, or the whole 'international community', should behave. Debate on these matters of behaviour is narrowed into the framework of nationhood. There is another theme. A nation that seeks international hegemony must deny that it is nationalist. It must claim to speak with the voice of universality, whilst protecting its own particular interests. Thus, the familiar syntax of hegemony slides together 'our' different identities. In this sense, the politics of international hegemony, as well as the politics of national hegemony, is a form of identity politics. Its rhetoric habitually assumes that there is an identity of identities.